

**Comments from
Union Square Green Line Meeting 1-08-08**

COMMENTS, QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS FOR FOLLOW-UP:

URBAN DESIGN IN SQUARE/PEDESTRIAN ACCESS/OPEN SPACE

Preserve the character of Union Square

Recognizing that pedestrian distances are not that great.

Balance the needs of pedestrians and cars

Keep heights low, not even over 4 stories

Pedestrian access must be given careful consideration

Re-engineer Webster and Prospect St to 2-way streets for better traffic flow and improve Sq's ambiance

Keep safe and accessible – disabled, bikes, strollers, little kids

Avoid brick sidewalks for better disability access

Encourage walking and movement without destroying fabric of neighborhood

Weigh needs of drivers and non-drivers

Linking with the community path

How do people feel about density and building height for Union Square?

Is there coordination between Somerville Avenue construction and Green Line regarding sidewalk improvements?

Will there be a building height limit?

More info on development (landscape, architecture, environment) of Union Sq after the T is here.

Look at Best Practices – Pollution (air and noise), look at diversity of housing/mixed use/commercial, access sidewalks

What are constraints caused by pollution

What is link of decisions of Green Line design with other urban planning for Union SQ

How to address noise?

How does the Green Line fit in with larger transportation plan for Union Sq? What is impact on development?

Zoning – If we go up, what is the impact?

Somerville Ave reconstruction – is there coordination in design, what are plans? Any sidewalk improvements through this?

TRAFFIC/CONGESTION

How will congestion on Somerville Ave be addressed if the Green Line runs on street?

We should be concerned about limiting cars as we plan for current and future land use

Help reduce traffic congestion in the Sq

Re-engineer Webster and Prospect to 2-way streets for better traffic flow and improve Sq's ambiance

What will happen with traffic congestion when construction goes on?

What happened to the Bluestone study? Inexpensive traffic options?

Concerns about congestion on Somerville Ave
Limit car traffic
Create incentives to get people out of cars
Could we narrow/limit traffic in Union Square

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/LAND USE ISSUES

We need to know more about constraints for developing the Kiley Barrel site due to serious pollution.

Considerations for station siting are determined by who and what you are planning for – residents, business mix, residents and people with disabilities that impact access to some proposed station locations. Need to consider access between buses and Green Line.

Need to clarify densities and best practices for factors such as housing value and cost, retail and mixed use, urban design including sidewalks

How do people feel about density and building height for Union Square?

Somerville should consider engaging in a planning process such as being done around the Jackson Square Orange Line stop in Jamaica Plan to make the best use of TOD for Union Square.

Can zoning be planned for the larger infrastructure?

Will there be a building height limit?

More info on development (landscape, architecture, environment) of Union Sq after the T is here.

Smart economic development – small businesses and human scale buildings – not bank branches (see current Harvard Sq) and no high rises! Do not turn Union Sq into an urban canyon.

Factoring in affordable housing

Keep SCAT in Union Square – great cultural resource

Avoiding displacement of current residents

Keep heights low, not even over 4 stories

Look at Best Practices – Pollution (air and noise), look at diversity of housing/mixed use/commercial, access sidewalks

Details on current business mix chart

We need to separate transportation from development

Zoning and planning by the city will be critical to determine future residential and economic development

What are interests for each Union Square station alternative?

Look at present and future land use

What are constraints caused by pollution

Compare various station locations for Union Sq on potential of business development

Compare economic impact of other stations on their neighborhoods

What is future vision for business uses

Look at residential and business uses – what are boundaries for uses, create through zoning

Zoning needs to anticipate the station

What resources (\$, grants) are available for TOD (transit oriented development)?

How does the Green Line fit in with larger transportation plan for Union Sq? What is impact on development?
Jamaica Plain, Jackson Sq as best practices case for housing/commercial/mixed use
What is impact on housing – on existing housing, on developing new housing within 10 minute walk
Zoning – If we go up, what is the impact?

STATION DESIGN/TROLLEY AND TRAIN ISSUES

How will the station location affect bus connections?
Can commuter rail pollution be reduced with hybrid technology
Who is looking at and what criteria are being used to address accessibility for people with disabilities for siting stop along the Fitchburg line vs. in the center of Union Square?
Somerville should consider engaging in a planning process such as being done around the Jackson Square Orange Line stop in Jamaica Plain to make the best use of TOD for Union Square.
Concern about pollution caused by commuter rail stops in Somerville
A small footprint Head house would work for Union Square
Can the community get access to studies and best practices for light rail from the US, Europe and Canada?
Link with commuter rail – if only a few stops a day
frequency of trains?
Pedestrian access must be given careful consideration
Keep safe and accessible – disabled, bikes, strollers, little kids
Avoid brick sidewalks for better disability access
Ensure that new T stations meet or exceed ADA
Use quality construction
Ensure good lighting, police presence, keep stations safe
Disability access
How will the two lines impact current green line service operationally – timeliness, peak hour capacity.
Concerns about congestion on Somerville Ave
Foster bus and trolley connections
Make station accessible
Emphasize pedestrian access
Station head houses – look at “Courthouse” as an example

ALIGNMENT AND STATION PLACEMENT QUESTIONS/SUGGESTIONS

Why not curve the Green Line at Union Square so that there is only one line and it goes right to Union Square?
Several questions about the Harvard/subway Urban Ring connection and implications
Several questions about extending Green Line to Harvard, Porter and Davis
Can the community get access to studies and best practices for light rail from the US, Europe and Canada?

Why didn't you ask whether people want a Somerville Ave route or Fitchburg alignment and if they want a station stop right in the middle of the Square or off the Fitchburg line? Station location is important. Close to center of Union Square. Bicycle accessible. What is purpose of current construction in Union Square. Lights cause chaos at times. No cops to direct traffic.

Linking Union to Porter makes a lot of sense, creates a real transportation link, improves commuter rail, will help bring people to Union Square

Link with commuter rail – if only a few stops a day

I really want to push for a Union Sq station that comes right into the heart of the square. I would feel much more safe and would use the service more.

Keep things close in to the businesses, not even two blocks away.

Is there an engineer employed by the City to have the City's interests in mind? The MBTA's engineers will not have the City's interests as a high priority

Intermodal connection at Webster Ave and Kingman Rd would connect existing bus routes to Sullivan, Inman, Central Sqs. Purple line/Green line would permit bicycle access to commuters. Union and Inman Sq would benefit greatly from this, bringing people from Fitchburg, Waltham, Belmont, Porter, No. Station, East Cambridge, Boston.

Disability access

What are interests for each Union Square station alternative?

What are constraints caused by pollution

Perhaps curve the alignment off Fitchburg line and loop back on Washington St?

Encourage walking and movement without destroying fabric of neighborhood

What is relationship between light and heavy rail – why not combine/change over?

Webster Ave – create dual platform for commuter and light rail – a possible site?

Downeaster line?

What ways could draw people from the station – Dunkin' Donuts site to draw to Somerville Ave

Connecting to Porter

Comparative analysis of catchment areas of various stations – what is expected/current ridership for each?

Compare various station locations for Union Sq on potential of business development

How to address noise?

Linking with the community path

Who owns the old Union Sq station land on Webster beside the condos?

Create document on proposed station locations – pros and cons of each

CONSTRUCTION AND TIMING

Can/should the Union Square spur be built at the same time or separately from the Lowell line?

Is there coordination between Somerville Avenue construction and Green Line regarding sidewalk improvements?

Several questions about the Harvard/subway Urban Ring connection and implications

Is there an engineer employed by the City to have the City's interests in mind? The MBTA's engineers will not have the City's interests as a high priority

What will happen with traffic congestion when construction goes on?

STATE & FED PROCESS/TIMELINES/FUNDING

There are budgetary constraints on how the project will be carried out

Questions about status of project funding

What other infrastructure issues are there that affect the project, for example McGrath-O'Brien Highway and Miller's River?

What interests are being used to drive decisions about station location?

Are the state/feds committed to both the Union Sq and Medford lines? Is there still a risk there?

What is the probability of the Union Sq station being built by 2014?

What are budgetary constraints? Is money set and how much?

Is there an engineer employed by the City to have the City's interests in mind? The MBTA's engineers will not have the City's interests as a high priority

What could stop the Green Line from coming to Somerville? Impact of McGrath reconstruction, Miller's River?

Compare real and actual timelines of Green Line with other transit timelines

What is timeline of decisions from here

EOT studies on-line

COMMUNITY DECISION MAKING ISSUES

Need to clarify densities and best practices for factors such as housing value and cost, retail and mixed use, urban design including sidewalks

Ensure that abutters are present in decision making– need to reach out to them

Develop and share decision point timeline from now going forward with the community.

Are the state/feds committed to both the Union Sq and Medford lines? Is there still a risk there?

What can Somerville residents do to make sure the project proceeds?

Pull together many groups for joint planning

What could stop the Green Line from coming to Somerville? Impact of McGrath reconstruction, Miller's River?

What happened to the Bluestone study? Inexpensive traffic options?

How do we go about getting technical assistance to go with our wishes? Is there funding for such a thing? We need engineers on our side.

What aspects of this project do we have control over?

Abutters should be involved

Do a walking tour of the areas

What resources (\$, grants) are available for TOD (transit oriented development)?

Compare real and actual timelines of Green Line with other transit timelines

What is timeline of decisions from here

Develop sub groups of this group to look at some of these issues

Find studies/examples that would inform our process from Europe and Canada

WANTED FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Intensive overviews and opportunity for questions was helpful

Would like “where do we go from here?” for future meetings to capture interest with follow-up handouts, business cards with websites

Next time have hand-outs with maps, timelines, diagrams

Helpful: where people can get information

Have a different moderator

Need more time and opportunities for community input

A concise, clear write up of some of these issues/presentations (proposed stations, environmental impact, timeline of what’s happening) would be very helpful

Would like to know what control the community has, what decisions have already been made, rough budget, estimates of station choices