

Not all on board Green Line growth

By Robin Washington
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Next stop, Medford.

That's the announcement Green Line riders can look forward to if the [MBTA's](#) board approves a \$391,000 study this week on extending the route from Cambridge, laying the groundwork for the first trolley expansion since the 1950s.

"I feel pretty comfortable today telling you, yes, it's going to be extended," T General Manager Michael Mulhern said yesterday of the plan to run trolleys into Medford by 2011.

“Anything to encourage more people to use public transportation would be a positive thing.”

- Deborah Wachenheim

But, he said, how far they'll go and what route they'll take hasn't been figured out, nor has the T determined where it will find the tens of millions of construction dollars needed beyond the study funds.

"We're being right up front. We don't have the money to build it," Mulhern said.

While the project currently has no construction budget, the state long ago agreed to build it - along with other plans including the Greenbush commuter rail line and restoration of the Green Line's Arborway branch - as federally mandated transit commitments as mitigation for the [Big Dig](#).

Though Gov. [Mitt Romney](#) [[related](#), [bio](#)] gave Greenbush the go-ahead last year, the administration has been less enthusiastic about Arborway and other commitments.

Mulhern called the T a "proponent" of the extension to Medford - currently served by the Orange Line on the east and the Lowell commuter rail on the west.

"We'll look at all the pros and cons," he said of options to run the trolleys adjacent to either the Lowell tracks or the Fitchburg commuter rail bed.

Due by year's end, the study will also look at projected ridership numbers, likely to include Medford Square bus rider Franklin Allien.

"They should extend it," he said, though he questioned the need for a study. So did Somerville's Deborah Wachenheim.

"That's a lot of money," she said, though she added, "Anything to encourage more people to use public transportation would be a positive thing."

But Green Line rider Justin Vogel called the expansion "unbelievable," saying the T should follow Romney's "fix it first" motto and address current needs.

"They should take care of inside the city, where all the poor people live," he said.

Fred Moore, a longtime rail advocate and member of the T's Advisory Board representing Saugus, called the study unnecessary.

"They've been studying this since 1966," he said, referring to a long-ago T annual report touting the extension. "We've built thousands of miles of interstate highway in less time than it takes to build five miles of track."

The 1966 report came as the T began abandoning trolley lines, such as the Green Line's A branch, despite the 1958 opening of the widely popular Riverside branch.

“It was the most whopping success for the least amount of money of anything they've done,” Moore said.
“I can't see why it wasn't duplicated.”