

http://www.townonline.com/somerville/news/local_regional/sj_covsjgreenlinems03182004.htm

Next stop, Union Square?

By Brock Parker / Journal Staff

Thursday, March 18, 2004

Green Line extension talked

Local officials are praising a move by the MBTA to study extending the Green Line through Somerville.

Locals want a subway stop in Union Square. But routing the Green Line through Union Square might not be easy.

Last week, the MBTA approved a \$391,000 feasibility study that will be performed by Watertown-based firm Vanasse Hangen Brustlin and will explore extending the Green Line from the Lechmere stop through Somerville and into Medford.

The study will explore three different routes for the MBTA to take through Somerville, said Joe Pesaturo, a spokesman for the Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority, and will be completed by the end of the year.

One route would travel alongside the Lowell commuter rail tracks through East Somerville, winding through Magoun Square, Ball Square and on to Tufts University in West Medford. Another route would travel along the Fitchburg commuter rail tracks to Union Square. The third route would travel along the Fitchburg rails to Union Square and then cross to the Lowell rails and onto Medford, according to a joint press release by Mayor Joe Curtatone and state Sen. Jarrett Barrios.

Curtatone and Barrios lauded the Green Line extension, but both said locating an MBTA stop in Union Square is essential.

"If the Green Line is going to come through Somerville, it's got to stop in Union Square," Curtatone told the Journal Tuesday. "The revitalization of Union Square is key."

Barrios said Union Square is the priority spot for a Green Line stop in Somerville because of its small businesses and growth potential.

"The potential there is the Davis Square explosion after the extension of the Red Line," Barrios said.

But running the Green Line through Union Square and into Medford might not come cheap.

Routing the train to Union Square might be simple enough, said Wig Zamore, a member of grassroots group Somerville Transit Equity Partnership. But if the MBTA wants to stretch the Green Line into Union Square and beyond, it might have to tunnel through Prospect Hill.

"Tunneling under Prospect Hill just doesn't make sense," Zamore said.

So Zamore said the Green Line should run to Union Square and stop there.

The MBTA could then build commuter rail stops in Magoun Square and Ball Square, Zamore said.

Magoun Square activist Joe Lynch said the route the Green Line takes through Somerville should be decided by all of residents in they city. Lynch said running the Green Line through Union Square would be "cost prohibitive" because the MBTA would have to take too much land.

Curtatone said running the Green Line through Union Square and tunneling through Prospect Hill "is an expensive proposal."

But Curtatone said Somerville deserves a stop in Union Square.

"We don't get our share of public transportation," Curtatone said.

Somerville, Zamore said, has eight rail lines running through it, but only one stop in Davis Square on the Red Line.

"It's just pathetic," Zamore said. "It's an unbelievable history of burden and no benefit."

Pesaturo said Massachusetts made a commitment to the federal government in the late 1980s to extend the Green Line by the beginning of the next decade.

The clock is ticking," Pesaturo said.

But how much the project will cost, or where the funding will come from, hasn't been decided, Pesaturo said.

"No one has identified funding for the extension," Pesaturo said.

The MBTA won't have an idea of the cost of the project until the study is completed, Pesaturo said. When the study is completed and a route for the Green Line extension is chosen, the MBTA will then begin an environmental impact report on the project and begin trying to find funding for it.

Barrios said he's working with Curtatone to set up a community meeting, possibly in Union Square, to discuss the Green Line extension.

"I'm so psyched," Barrios said. "This is the best story of the decade for Somerville ... Every elected official, every neighborhood, small business and resident needs to follow and support the Green Line extension."

Ward 2 Alderman Maryann Heuston said neighborhood support for a train stop in Union Square might depend on where in the square the MBTA wants to put the stop.

But any boost to the businesses in the area from an MBTA stop would be a big help, Heuston said.

"Something's got to jump-start things down there," Heuston said.

http://www.townonline.com/somerville/news/local_regional/sj_covsjgreenlinems03182004.htm

SOMERVILLE JOURNAL

on TOWNONLINE.com

Copyright by TownOnline.com and Herald Interactive Advertising Systems, Inc. No portion of TownOnline.com or its content may be reproduced without the owner's written permission. [Privacy Commitment](#)