

TO: BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND
PETER MEADE, DIRECTOR

FROM: KAIROS SHEN, CHIEF PLANNER
PRATAAP PATROSE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR URBAN DESIGN
JILL OCHS ZICK, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

SUBJECT: CITY HALL PLAZA, GOVERNMENT CENTER URBAN RENEWAL
PLAN, PROJECT NO. MASS R-35

SUMMARY: This Memorandum requests that the Boston Redevelopment Authority (“BRA”) adopt a confirmatory order of taking for the portions of Scollay Square and Cambridge Street, and New Sudbury Street in connection with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (“MBTA”) Government Center Improvement Project and associated street improvements (the “Proposed MBTA Project”).

PROPOSED PROJECT

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) plans to make upgrades to the Government Center MBTA station. The upgrades include the complete reconstruction of the head house which will make it accessible for people with disabilities, as well as improvements to the surrounding surface areas on City Hall Plaza, and the reconstruction of Cambridge Street and adjacent sidewalks from New Sudbury Street to Court Street.

To accommodate needs for emergency egress, the MBTA’s project proposes to narrow the curb-to-curb dimension of the road right-of-way along Cambridge Street to accommodate a new Blue Line Emergency Egress (BLEE) stair and head house. The plans show that a majority of the existing Cambridge Street median width will shift to the eastern edge of Cambridge Street and increase the public sidewalk area to approximately 18-20 feet in width along the entire length. It is within this expanded sidewalk that the BLEE structure will be located.

The design for surface restoration of the widened sidewalk around the BLEE head house maintains a 12-foot wide, concrete public sidewalk and proposes a double row of new street trees along the brick-paved “plaza” edge. The proposed trees will replace an existing tree planting and upgrade both the subsurface and surface-level growing

conditions for the proposed trees in an effort to maximize their acclimation and longevity. The plans include details for special soils, irrigation and aeration systems, and a permeable brick pavement to aid in the collection and management of storm water runoff from the adjacent sidewalk and plaza areas.

In order to clarify jurisdiction and management of the improvements proposed within the “bricked surface”, a 6-8 foot ribbon of land starting at the back of the proposed concrete sidewalk at the edge of Cambridge Street and ending at the existing limit of City Hall Plaza less that area surrounding the Blue Line Emergency Egress totaling 16,524.38 square feet (see attached plan) is proposed to be discontinued from the public ways and be incorporated into the “plaza” area (“New Plaza Area”). The existing Commencement Agreement between the BRA and the City of Boston for City Hall Plaza dated July 3, 1996 would be amended to include the New Plaza Area, and the City of Boston Property Management Department would manage the New Plaza Area along with the current City Hall Plaza area. These actions will be brought before the BRA in the future.

To prepare for the eventual conversion from public way to part of City Hall Plaza, a confirmatory order of taking is necessary to confirm the BRA’s title to said area.

RECOMMENDATION

It is the staff recommendation that the BRA adopt a Confirmatory Order of Taking confirming the BRA’s title to the New Plaza Area.

An appropriate vote follows:

VOTED: That the Boston Redevelopment Authority (the “Authority”) hereby adopts the resolution that states “BE IT RESOLVED by the Boston Redevelopment Authority that an ORDER OF TAKING dated JANUARY 17, 2013 relating to a portion of Scollay Square/Cambridge Street, and a portion of New Sudbury Street in the GOVERNMENT CENTER URBAN RENEWAL AREA, PROJECT NO. MASS. R-35, in Boston, Suffolk County, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, be executed and made a permanent part of these proceedings, a copy of which the Secretary shall cause to be recorded in the Office of the Registry of Deeds for the County of Suffolk.”