



**Back Bay / South End Gateway Project  
CAC Working Meeting #7  
Thursday, October 6, 2016, 6:00 p.m.  
Location: State Transportation Building, 10 Park Plaza**

**CAC Attendees:**

Ann Beha, Boston Society of Architects (BSA)  
Kenzie Bok, Bay Village Neighborhood Association  
Jim Cochener, The Salty Pig Restaurant  
Jack Fitzgerald, Ellis South End Neighborhood Association  
Susan Gilmore, Resident of Back Bay  
Elliott Laffer, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)  
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association  
Scott Mustard, Saint Botolph Neighborhood Association  
Russ Preston, Congress for the New Urbanism

**Ex-Officio Attendees:**

Elizabeth Corcoran-Hunt, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Byron Rushing  
Kate Bell, Office of Boston City Councilor Josh Zakim

**City of Boston Attendees:**

David Carlson, BPDA  
Jonathan Greeley, BPDA  
Catherine McCandless, BPDA  
Lauren Shurtleff, BPDA  
Christopher Tracy, BPDA  
Josh Weiland, BTDA

**Project Members:**

Jim Batchelor, Arrowstreet Architects  
Michael Cantalupa, Boston Properties  
Keir Evans, Boston Properties  
David Newman, Mott McDonald  
David Newman, The Strategy Group  
Melissa Schrock, Boston Properties  
Susan Tracy, The Strategy Group

**State of Massachusetts Attendees:**

Mark Boyle, MassDOT  
Jim Kersten, MassDOT  
Peter Paravalos, MBTA

### **Members of the Public:**

Libby Blank, Resident  
Joe Byrne, Carpenter's Union and Resident  
Carol Card, Resident  
Lee Ann Coleman, Resident  
Anne McKinnon, Resident  
Ben Siegal, Ellis South End Neighborhood Association  
Elaine Sullivan, NABB  
Marvin Wool, Resident

**Project Website:** [bit.ly/BBSEGP](http://bit.ly/BBSEGP)

### **Meeting Summary**

On Thursday, October 6, 2016, the seventh meeting of the Back Bay / South End Gateway Project Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was called to order at approximately 6:10 p.m. by Lauren Shurtleff, BPDA Senior Planner, at the State Transportation Building at 10 Park Plaza.

Lauren began the meeting by thanking everyone for attending. She explained that this meeting would include a Q&A between the CAC members and the BPDA Planning and Urban Design staff, followed by a brief presentation by MassDOT and the MBTA on the ventilation and concourse improvement projects planned for Back Bay Station, separate from this process.

Lauren then clarified a few points that had been misunderstood by a number of people in their comment letters, stating that the potential closing of the I-90 on-ramp beneath the garage is actually being proposed by MassDOT, not the proponent, and that the tunnel connection from below grade to Copley Place will actually undergo a cosmetic renovation performed by the Simon Property Group.

Lauren turned the meeting over to Elliot Laffer, CAC Co-Chair and NABB. Elliot asked David Carlson, BPDA Deputy Director of Urban Design, to speak a bit about the BPDA's Scoping Determination, and more specifically, the comments put forth by the Planning and Urban Design staff on the project. David asked members of the CAC to take a look at a copy of the Scoping Letter (which can be found online with the other comment letters: <http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/128608cb-8091-4c19-979b-375897eeaf15>) and look specifically at comments relating to Urban Design, as they were crafted by members of the Planning and Urban Design staff at the BPDA. The comments are categorized by topic. The Boston Civic Design Commission (BCDC) meeting minutes are also copied as a part of that letter. It is the responsibility of the proponent to respond to all letters, which represent various points of view; the responses enrich the understanding of the project. He explained that he is available to answer questions about comments in the Planning and Urban Design section. David added that the BCDC review is ongoing and that the BPDA Urban Design team

anticipates that a much more in-depth design will be presented in the Draft Project Impact Report (DPIR).

Chris Tracy, BPDA Senior Project Manager, stepped forward and reminded everyone that the comment letters have been posted online (see link above) and that the proponent will respond via the DPIR. In response to a question regarding the length of the comment period/public review once the DPIR has been received, Chris explained that this is generally based on the square footage of the proposal, and stated that for the Back Bay/South End Gateway Project, there will be a 75-day comment period, with associated CAC and public meetings when the DPIR is received.

CAC questions and comments made in response to the discussion included:

- In response to a question about above-grade connections, David explained that there needs to be a net positive impact on the public realm, rather than a negative impact.
- A CAC member expressed concern that the DPIR will be released and there will not be enough time to address specific questions, especially those relating to the construction phasing of the various buildings. Lauren explained that there will be meetings after the DPIR is released, but before the comment period closes. She also explained that a combined comment letter from the CAC is something that the group should strive to accomplish and would be appreciated. David noted that it is very fair to ask the developer about the building phasing, to the extent that this information is known, so that CAC members understand what the interim conditions might be.
- A CAC member asked if the housing component will be developed with the help of a partner. Melissa Schrock, Boston Properties, explained that Boston Properties is increasingly developing the residential components of their projects by themselves, with no additional partners.
- A CAC member asked for clarification on the phasing and how the order of the buildings might impact the existing garage. Michael Cantalupa, Boston Properties, explained that the different project components (i.e., office, retail, residential) are subject to diverse market pressures, which will naturally contribute to the ultimate phasing of the project.
- In response to a question from a CAC member, Chris explained that if something in the project was to significantly change, the proponent would consequently issue a Notice of Project Change, which is also part of the Article 80 process and subject to public review.

Public questions and comments included:

- A member of the public asked Boston Properties to tell the room more about their policies and experience with affordable housing. Mike replied that Boston Properties develops in different communities and abides by affordability restrictions in each municipality. The DPIR will include more specifics on the affordable housing component.

Peter Paravalos, MBTA, stepped forward to give a presentation on the ventilation and concourse improvement projects (which is available on the project website: <http://www.bostonplans.org/getattachment/cbe1a51c-9d86-4ea3-a6a5-ff4ddcc7f931>). Today, the station serves approximately 30,000 people per day. Because of a lack of dedicated maintenance over time, the station is in poor condition. Additionally, finding one's way around the space is confusing and there are ventilation issues. New leadership at the MBTA has resulted in a new partnership with Boston Properties, who has taken over management of the station under an amended 99-year lease. Under the amended lease, Boston Properties is contributing \$37 million to Back Bay Station: \$32 million will go to the concourse improvements and \$5 million will go to the ventilation repairs. Under this revised agreement, station management costs will be paid from revenue generated by the new commercial space to be constructed within the station concourse.

Peter invited David Newman, an engineer with Mott McDonald, to step forward. He explained that the primary project objective is to improve air quality at the station concourse and platforms. The project includes Back Bay Station, the East Portal that goes to Columbus Avenue, the Southwest Corridor Tunnel (Tracks 1, 2, and 3), and the West Portal along Mass Avenue. The key problem is that the existing ventilation system is largely non-functional. The volume of trains using the station has greatly increased from the original demand. Piecemeal attempts to fix the problem over the years have been unsuccessful. This is the first time the MBTA has taken a more holistic approach to fix it. The existing ventilation system has three mechanical ventilation structures and two air-intake structures, as well as two exhaust fans that no longer function. The solution is to rehabilitate the existing system and return it to service. In addition, pressurizing the stairs will prevent the migration of diesel exhaust to the concourse and the installation of jet fans in the tunnel will flush the platforms with fresh air. The construction packaging will be broken down into two packages. The first stage will include the stair pressurization, which is anticipated to be complete in mid-2018. The second phase will include the rehabilitation and jet fan installation, which will be complete in spring 2019.

Jim Batchelor, Arrowstreet Architects, next came forward to present the concourse renovation goals, which are to create a first-class transit hub of "airport quality," improve customer experience and access, generate revenue to support station

operations, and allow the MBTA to focus on train operations while Boston Properties focuses on property management. In order to improve access, the design will double the number of doors into the station, increase waiting area space, and add an open waiting and retail section as a way to improve the experience of station-goers. The amount of circulation space will not be dramatically increased, but it will be much more functional. He explained that the team has brought an expert on board who will assist in treating the exterior arches in order to restore and preserve the original structure. He explained that the advertising on the concourse is not under Boston Properties' control at this point, but conversations are underway in order to change that. He added that the primary goal is to have the architecture be the greatest priority, noting that the advertising should not detract from it. Finally, he stated that the bathrooms will be renovated as well.

CAC questions and comments made in response to the presentation included:

- A CAC member asked if the Stephen Antonakos neon sculpture can be returned to the station. Melissa replied that it is unfortunately damaged beyond repair. As the artist is deceased, Boston Properties reached out to his estate for their permission to remove the art, which they gave. Melissa noted that Boston Properties wants public art to be a part of the future concourse, and explained that there is a conceptual idea of rotating art within the station. The CAC member expressed that she hopes the conversation with the Stephen Antonakos' studio is not over, as he is an important artist and added that the Mass Cultural Council should have a voice in the station restoration.
- A CAC member asked what will prevent a relapse of the issues in ventilation, especially since the MBTA has historically had preventive maintenance problems. Peter replied that the system has been exposed to 30 years of diesel fumes and weather, and the concourse work will not move forward until the ventilation piece is addressed. The retail revenue will help contribute towards ongoing maintenance of the system, as well as the advertising revenue. The MBTA is responsible for track-level operations while Boston Properties is responsible for the concourse-level operations. David Newman explained that the fans are operable and could work if returned to service. Noise complaints have been a major reason that the fans are not running, and the MBTA is committed to assessing concerns over noise. There is no practical way to make the fans silent, but the use of fans should be able to be linked to peak train operations. They will look to see how loud the noise levels are if the fans are turned back on and compare the levels against noise ordinances.
- A CAC member asked about the MBTA's ability to accommodate the increase in capacity. David Newman replied that there will be an increase in Orange Line rolling stock, although there is not a plan to electrify the trains in the Northeast Corridor. Another CAC member explained that he lives nearby and acknowledges

that noise is simply a part of living in the city, although he knows that for some it is unbearable.

- A CAC member expressed concern about targets for an acceptable condition for air quality. David Newman explained that the air quality will be predicted to a high level of accuracy and will be compared to acceptable, published standards of air quality. They will quantify the performance of the system before they begin construction. The CAC member emphasized the importance of having a metric or goal to reach regarding air quality.

A CAC member asked how the seating will modify people's interactions and stated that they would like to see moveable seating rather than fixed seating. Melissa explained that the MBTA does not like that people at South Station move the seating into the path of travel, so it is likely that the seating will be fixed.

Lauren concluded the meeting by reiterating that the proponent needs more time to complete the DPIR and noted that the next meeting will be scheduled by email.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:50 p.m.

### **Project Milestones:**

March 29, 2016	PNF Filed with BPDA
April 15, 2016	ENF Filed with MEPA
June 17, 2016	MEPA ENF Public Comment Period Closed
June 17, 2016	BPDA PNF Public Comment Period Closed
August 30, 2016	BPDA Scoping Determination Issued
Winter 2017 (anticipated)	DPIR to be Filed with BPDA
	DEIR to be Filed with MEPA