

Meeting Summary

Project: MHD 77866 - Rose Kennedy Greenway Ramp Cover Project (Parcels 6, 12, 18)

Subject: Public Meeting No. 4

Date: Thursday, January 08, 2015

Location: Boston City Hall/BRA Board Room

On the above noted date a public meeting was held at City Hall in the BRA Board Room (9th floor). There were about 45 attendees including residents, MassDOT, BRA, City, and State officials. An attendance list has been attached for reference.

The presentation/PowerPoint slides have been posted on the BRA website at:

<http://www.bostonredevelopmentauthority.org/getattachment/3a9ad113-dff9-45dd-a47f-be57d63a85c2>.

The presentation was used to provide a brief review of concepts developed through the first three public meetings for the Parcel Cover Study and to show the revised concepts generated through the comments received from the last public meeting, which included a workshop session. The meeting was then opened to comments from the public, with the reminder to file formal comments with John Romano at MassDOT by Wednesday, February 11th.

The following items were discussed; however, it should be noted that this summary is not intended to be a complete record of the topics discussed. The entire presentation can be viewed at the site noted previously.

1. Opening Comments

- Lauren Shurtleff (BRA) and John Romano (MassDOT) opened the meeting with introductions and a brief overview of the purpose of the meeting.
- Roch Larochelle (HDR) followed by providing a brief overview of the content of the previous three public meetings, including methodology, observations, and suggested refinements to prior alternatives generated from the public workshop session at the October 2014 public meeting.

2. Refined Deck/Cover Concepts

The meeting next shifted to a presentation of refinements to the various deck concepts presented in October 2014 by Roch Larochelle and Matthew Littell from Utile. Refinements were based on the public's noted preference for proposed pedestrian facilities on both Parcels 6 and 12 and for minimal work on Parcel 18 in order to maintain current pedestrian facilities and park amenities on that parcel.

Desire lines that were sketched by attendees at the October workshop for both parcels 6 and 12 were depicted on maps for each site. The same maps also depicted surface walking route lengths and the resultant number of intersection crossings for parallel walking paths traversing over current pedestrian routes versus the conceptual path routes over the two parcel decks.

The disposition of existing overhead highway signage was also discussed in detail for Parcels 6 and 12, including how the existing and proposed signage would interact with the proposed deck concepts. For Parcel 12, Roch discussed specific challenges in trying to provide for pedestrian access to both corners of the Armenian Heritage Park on the southern end of the parcel. By moving the existing overhead guide signage on the northbound off-ramp to the north, beyond the proposed cover, it would then become possible to lower the height of the proposed deck and provide for an accessible pedestrian connection across it to the Cross Street corner of the parcel. He stressed that this eastern connection is not possible without maintaining an outside position for the northbound off-ramp overhead signage. As such, two separate concepts were presented for Parcel 12, one with a Cross Street connection and new “outside” overhead sign structure at the northbound off-ramp, and one without the Cross Street connection and no new “outside” overhead sign structure.

For the southbound off-ramp, it was noted that although some overhead signage can be placed inside the new tunnel cover, it has been determined through meetings with the State Traffic Engineer that due to sight distance constraints, it will be necessary to place an overhead sign structure outside of the new tunnel cover, just south of the new deck. John Romano added that the Team will be looking for feedback from the public on the two separate alternatives.

For each parcel, Matthew Littell followed Roch’s discussion with detailed schematic overviews of the proposed cover concepts, discussed the various screening options that were under consideration, and provided photo renderings of existing versus proposed conditions for each of the three parcels. Emily Ashby (Utile) also presented 3-dimensional views and a “flyover” for each parcel from a model that the team has developed for the project.

3. Public Comment and Discussion

Following the team’s presentation, John Romano opened the meeting to questions from the audience. He noted that, for Parcel 12, he had specifically asked for input on the inclusion of the second pedestrian access point to the Cross Street corner.

Parcel 6 Discussion (Haymarket/Government Center)

- Peter Gori, Resident, stated that for Parcel 6, he would be more willing to sacrifice multiple pedestrian routes across the site, if it meant that MassDOT could then afford better quality materials for the proposed cover: He also noted the screening options displayed were a step in the right direction.
- Jeannette Herman, Resident of Beacon Hill, noted that pedestrian desire lines might change at Parcel 6 due to the redevelopment of the Government Center garage, but that could not be determined at this time. She also offered that the team should review pedestrian access at the northwest corner of the parcel, at the end of New Chardon Street. Specifically, Jeannette asked for a solution to the “pedestrian dead-end” produced by the ramp entrances across from New Chardon Street. John responded that the State was not able to redesign any intersections outside of the parcel limits as part of this project, and stated that any such work would need to be part of a separate project. She then asked whether any more cover could be provided over Parcel 6. John noted that in general, the proposed cover limits shown reflect the maximum extent possible, due to various site design constraints, such as accommodating the existing tunnel ventilation system.
- In a follow-up comment, Jeannette noted that it may be desirable to look to the new Government Center Garage redevelopment for financial help, and recommended a “High-Line” type elevated

walkway in the median of New Chardon Street, similar to that in New York City, to cross over the parcel. John stated that this idea was out of the scope of what MassDOT was required to do on these parcels and would result in difficulties in getting grades to work across the sites. She then inquired if any kind of mid-block connection perpendicular to the ramps at the northern end to cross directly west to New Chardon Street. John noted that new mid-block crossings at this location would not be desirable from an operations and safety standpoint.

- Rachel Szakmary, BTD, commented that, in terms of the bus ways at the adjacent Haymarket MBTA Station, in the future there will be improved pedestrian crossings from what exists today.
- Jane Forrestall, West End Resident, noted that the existing overhead sign above the northbound on-ramp at Parcel 6 blocks the view of the Zakim Bridge from the North End Park parcels and wondered if those signs could be reduced in size.

Parcel 12 Discussion (Quincy Market/Dock Square)

- Danny Nuzzo, North End Resident, stated his belief that more refinement in the design of the single path/dual path option to the Armenian Heritage Park was needed before a decision could be made on which situation was preferable.
- Peter Gori offered compliments to the team, and stated that for Parcel 12, more pedestrian routes across the parcel would be better than less routes.
- Danny Nuzzo asked whether the team could push more on reducing the sizes of the overhead signs, and inquired as to whether the signs were designed using similar criteria to the FHWA-waiver used for the existing in-tunnel signage. John responded that through recent meetings with the State Traffic Engineer, HDR and MassDOT officials had been pushing the envelope with the proposed signs and added that the team would continue in this regard for reduced visual impacts but also noted that ultimately, FHWA approval was required for the proposed signs. Danny then asked to see renderings of what the proposed signs would look like from the adjacent roadways, and not just from the proposed covers.
- Another attendee commented that these overhead signs do not belong on city streets, as they are highway signs. John stated that although they may result in some visual obstruction, the signs need to be there to safely direct the travelling public and reminded the group that this location reflects a park over a highway, which is the primary function.
- Another attendee asked if the supplemental guide sign proposed for the Parcel 12 southbound off-ramp had to be an overhead sign. John noted that it did, based on the team's meeting with the State Traffic Engineer, due to the sight constraints and curved nature of the ramp.
- Tom Nally, A Better City, applauded what the team is trying to do with the signage, noting that there had been a huge discussion during the original Central Artery project regarding the placement and size of the signs. He noted that the team was pushing the envelope here, and again applauded them for doing so.
- Dan Wilson, WalkBoston, acknowledged that the project was very complicated, with many moving parts, and asked whether there would be a public process or competition considered to define what activities would be desired for the proposed gathering spaces. John replied that the team first needs MEPA to approve their idea of "cover", in this case, a pedestrian facility with selective screening. It is not intended that the team approach MEPA with a final design. Roch added that material types and specific area uses would come after the MEPA process is complete, adding that there is general consensus with the overall idea at this point. John also stated that that final design will take some time to complete and there will be opportunities for additional input on uses along the way.
- In a follow-up question, Dan then asked whether the team was preserving the opportunity for a building on Parcel 6, and whether or not the building option was no longer under consideration.

John replied that, while the team does not want to preclude a kiosk at any location, there has not been a strong desire or consensus from any public or private entity for a building atop any of the parcels.

- David Roderick, North End Resident, stated that he believed that the original cover purpose was proposed to address acoustic and air quality concerns. Bill Tuttle (MassDOT) stated that air quality and noise impacts were not the drivers for this project, and that the environmental commitments that this project seeks to address are solely for aesthetic purposes to cover or screen the open boat sections of the highway ramps. David then noted that the proposed cover/walls could end up reflecting additional noise back onto Cross Street, and asked whether the covers would be designed for all four seasons, to accommodate plows, etc., and whether people on the covers would be subject to glare from headlights on passing vehicles. The team responded that the uses will be designed for all seasons and associated maintenance needs will be factored in. Actual screening and wall designs and materials (including sound-reflecting properties) will be more thoroughly evaluated during final design.

Parcel 18 Discussion (Financial District/Rowes Wharf)

- Anne Fanton noted that the Parcel 18 vertical element discussed during the previous public meeting needed better definition. John replied that the team would not be defining the vertical element as part of this project, as it was merely a single suggestion. Should a group come forward with a specific idea and the funding to complete it, this could be considered in the future, but no such alternative will be brought forward by MassDOT.
- There was some discussion about the desire to better screen the western side of the southbound off-ramp wall (along the Surface Artery). The team will be looking to further refine planting/screening options but no structural improvements are contemplated for Parcel 18 at this time.

General Comments

- Anne Fanton expressed concern that the proposed concepts for both parcels 6 and 12 may ultimately resemble the Elevated Central Artery that was taken down and that the walls to support the proposed covers would look similar to the construction boards that were present during the original construction period if screening is not properly designed, particularly from Fulton Street. She added that bikes and skateboards would be drawn to the proposed paths as shown.
- Rachel Szakmary noted there had been requests from local artists desiring access to on-site hooks and utility points for future installations at other parcels.
- Jane Forrestall asked how the covers will be lit, whether solar or electric-powered, and if the team was looking to put utility connections on the proposed covers. Roch replied that utilities will likely be provided for ancillary uses, such as irrigation, drainage, power for lighting and public uses, and possibly connections for future kiosks. It was further noted that these items have been discussed with the Greenway Conservancy as an area of concern for the future designs. John added that the project is not yet in the final design process, and that we are just looking at concepts at this stage, but that these were all great comments that would be incorporated into the process.
- Danny Nuzzo asked whether future maintenance for the parcels would be undertaken by the Greenway Conservancy or by MassDOT. John acknowledged that it is likely that Parcels 6 and 12 may ultimately become the responsibility of the Greenway Conservancy, however at this time they remain “option parcels,” subject to future maintenance agreements between MassDOT and the Conservancy.
- Jane Forrestal asked about the possibility of federal funding for the ramp parcel covers, or whether the funding would be split between the State and the City. John commented that the City

is helping to fund this Ramp Parcel Study, but that future City capital funding for this project is unlikely, and that there was no funding currently identified for construction in the State program. He did mention the possibility of either Metropolitan Highway System (MHS) or other federal funding, but also reminded the audience that this project would have to compete for State funding with every other project within the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

- Douglas Johnson, Boston Cyclists Union, asked about bike access along and on the Greenway; John noted that within the area, bikes currently utilize the adjacent bike lanes on each of the northbound and southbound Surface Arteries and are not currently allowed on the Greenway itself. He did add that as the design for Parcels 6 and 12 move forward, it would not necessarily preclude future bike access, noting that this could be revisited at some point in the future.

4. Next Steps

John encouraged all participants, residents and community members to send formal written comments to MassDOT within the coming 30-day period, and that MassDOT would formally address all comments received. He added that the comment period will remain open until February 11, 2015 and directed participants to the email and hard-mail addresses noted on the slides.

John thanked everyone for attending and invited all to attend the next meeting that will be held at a date to be determined in March 2015.

The meeting was concluded at 8:00 PM.

Meeting Attendees

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Patrick Lyons, Office of Massachusetts State Representative Aaron Michlewitz
Maria Puopolo, Office of Massachusetts State Senator Anthony Petrucelli

City of Boston/State of Massachusetts Attendees:

Emily Ashby, Utile
George Batchelor, MassDOT
Robbin Bergfors, MassDOT
David Carlson, BRA
Deneen Crosby, CSS
Meera Deean, Utile
Stephanie Denezio, MassDOT
Michael Trepanier, MassDOT
Mark Gravalles, MassDOT
Roch Laroche, HDR, Inc.
Matthew Little, Utile
Mark McGonagle, BRA
Lara Merida, BRA
Kevin Morrison, HDR, Inc.
Alwin Ramirez, MassDOT
John Romano, MassDOT
Lauren Shurtleff, BRA
Skip Smallridge, CSS
Bill Tuttle, MassDOT

Members of the Public:

Anne Fanton, Former member of the Central Artery Environmental Oversight Committee
Jane Forrestall, West End Resident
Dave Goggins, Responsible Urbanites for Fido
Peter Gori, Resident
Laura Jasinski, Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy
Douglas Johnson, Boston Cyclists Union
Gabor Korodi, NorthEndWaterfront.com
Ken McClure, Halvorson Design Partnership
Ian McKinley, The HYM Investment Group
Tom Nally, A Better City
Michael Nichols, Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy
Danny Nuzzo, North End Resident
Julie Proulx, The HYM Investment Group
David Roderick, North End Resident
Rachel Szakmary, Boston Transportation Department
Dan Wilson, WalkBoston
Nina Zannini, Paul Revere House