



**Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative
Corridor Advisory Group Meeting #3
Wednesday, September 12, 2012**

Location: Kroc Salvation Army Community Center, Dorchester

CAG Attendees:

Paul Filtzer, Dortha Hass, Victor Karen, Glenn Knowles, Paul Malkemes, Neil McCullagh, Paul McManus, Marzuq Muhammad, Thomas Nally, H. Marcus Owens, Steve Roller, Pete Stidman, John Sullivan, Matthew Thall, Marcia Thornhill, Michelle Waldon, Christian Williams, Daryl Wright, Mela Bush-Deonorian (for Marvin Martin)

CAG Members Not in Attendance:

Jeffrey Gonyeau, John Marston, Marvin Martin, Karleen Porcena, Ethel "Peggy" Santos, Pete Stidman, Dr. Azzie Young

City of Boston Attendees:

Inés Palmarin, BRA; Jeremy Rosenberger, BRA; Marie Mercurio, BRA; Kenya Thompson, BRA; Mary Knasas, BRA; John Dalzell, BRA; Alvaro Lima, BRA; Patrick Hoey, BTB

Other Agency Attendees:

Joe Cosgrove, MBTA

Consulting Team Attendees:

Steve Cecil, The Cecil Group; Josh Fiala, The Cecil Group; Pam Young, HDR

Members of the Public:

Jeremy Levine; Megan MClair, BPHC; Joan Tighe, Fairmount Collaborative; Max McCarthy, Upham's Corner Main Streets; Sue Sullivan, Newmarket Business Assoc.; Patrick Russo, Boston.com; Liz Hanagan, Boston Cyclists Union; Courtney Curran, Upham's Corner WAG; Inez Foster; Beverly Hilaire; Carlene Roberts; Nancy Conrad; Bernard Mayo; Sherina Hendrix

Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, September 12, 2012, the Corridor-wide Advisory Group (CAG) for the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative had its third meeting at the Kroc Center in Dorchester. Inés Palmarin (BRA) called the meeting to order at approximately 6:40 P.M.

Inés and Jeremy Rosenberger (BRA) introduced themselves and briefly described the project and developments since the previous meeting. Introductions of City and State Staff and Advisory Group members along with the general public attending were done. Jeremy restated the objectives of the Planning Study and reiterated the role of the Advisory Group. He discussed the Study's community process and timeline, the organizational chart including the consultant team and City Staff (and others) overseeing the Study. Jeremy then reviewed the agenda for the meeting and encouraged the CAG to think about the issues to be presented, but also to keep in mind their role of communicating information back to their organizations and communities.

Joe Cosgrove (MBTA) talked about the opening of the three new stations in the near future (Talbot Avenue in October 2012; Four Corners in April 2013; and Newmarket in June 2013), with one additional station (Blue Hill Avenue - Mattapan) still being in the design phase. He also acknowledged the ongoing budget crisis that exists with the T, and talked generally about their daily functions and operations. He also mentioned the T was recently awarded a federal grant toward increasing ridership on the Fairmount Line.

Jeremy then handed the presentation over to the Cecil Group to present slides on existing conditions within the Corridor (continued from the August 1, 2012 CAG meeting).

Steve Cecil, Josh Fiala and Pam Young described the slides in the Power Point presentation. Steve talked about the different themes that should and will be emerging from the planning process with more detailed topics within each theme, and the Corridor vision. He explained that once the themes and topic areas are deciphered amongst the staff and consultant team through CAG and public input, the Study goals will be obvious.

Steve went through various existing slides involving economic development, land use, housing and transportation/transit. On one of the transportation slides which explained mobility and modes of transit, Pete Stidman from the CAG asked if the "other" category could be further broken down and explained. Josh responded that "other" includes bicycling and taxi rides.

On the open space needs and access slide, a member of the CAG asked if playgrounds were included in the computation of open space within the Corridor. Josh responded that likely they were not, and would probably only increase the number marginally.

On the quality of life slide that further explained community health, Matt Thall from the CAG asked what the size of grocery store was being used for the data analysis. Josh responded that likely the GIS data set didn't break down the size of grocery store, the argument being that the small bodegas and smaller neighborhood convenience type stores were not being accounted for (and are a true asset to the communities and do improve quality of life – i.e., data may be skewed in this instance). Consultant will get back on this data point.

Paul McManus from the CAG asked if the City averages being presented to compare Corridor averages included the Corridor, and the consultant team responded affirmatively.

Pete Stidman from the CAG suggested that, along with access to healthy food, can the Study address access to good nutrition and bike share programs too (he mentioned the prospect of a bike sharing station being installed in Upham's Corner which could then be used to reach other stations in the Corridor).

Victor Karen from the CAG questioned the economic development slide that showed the number of jobs in Boston vs. the number of jobs in the Corridor. While so many of the jobs in Boston are filled by commuters coming into the City, he questioned the significance of those numbers. Pam Young agreed and suggested that the slide was just meant to provide a sense of the differences, and is one of many observations. She suggested that she can take another look at the analysis and try to get a better sense of where people, who are working in Boston, are living and coming from.

Matt Thall from the CAG said that it is upmost importance to figure out how to create more jobs in the Corridor, a resounding theme. He also wants to know how many jobs in the Corridor are filled by residents of the Corridor.

Daryl Wright said the need is to focus on middle skill opportunities for residents within the Corridor.

Dorthea Hass from the CAG asked if it was known how much land was available in the Corridor for development. She asked where the land is located and what the potential opportunities for development along the Corridor are. She also wanted to know if economic development studies had been done to understand future industry sectors that may locate in the Corridor in the future.

Jeremy stated that a third of the property in the Corridor is owned by the City's Department of Neighborhood Development (DND) and they are not the most desirable properties. This planning process will provide the chance to have open discussions with DND about these properties, and one of the outcomes of the Study will be to propose land use recommendations for these properties so they can become opportunities instead of eyesores and nuisances.

Mela Bush-Deonorian (for Marvin Martin of the CAG) asked if any of these properties include private property too, specifically thinking of private properties that could be made available for development/redevelopment in Cleary and Logan Squares of Hyde Park. Jeremy responded private property will be part of the discussion.

Glenn Knowles from the CAG thanked the MBTA (Joe Cosgrove) for coming to the meeting, and also for taking the data for South Station out of the analysis.

Pete Stidman from the CAG suggested that the Main Streets organizations in the Corridor would have good small business data to add to the economic development analysis of the Corridor so as to understand the trends of small business. BRA staff suggested that we are working with DND-Main Streets closely.

John Sullivan from the CAG suggested that both Newmarket and Readville have room for expansion and are the two biggest areas within the Corridor for job creation and employment. Steve Cecil said that we will eventually need to start thinking of the Corridor as "sub-areas". What is the clustering (i.e., light industrial, biotech, IT, medical, etc), clumping or pairing of uses in today's mix, and what could and will they be in the future. The clustering analysis will tie into the potential for Newmarket and Readville to expand into larger job growth areas.

The issue of fare structure came up several times in the night's meeting. Mela Bush-Deonorian suggested that while that is not an objective of this planning study, the fare structure of the Fairmount Line is still the elephant in the room. She continued that it is a huge deterrent for many residents of the Corridor in obtaining employment and getting to that employment. Monthly passes are upwards of \$170/month depending on which zone you need to travel to and where you are coming from. There are major employment centers like Legacy Place in Dedham and the new Vertex Pharmaceuticals campus (approx 10 mill sf of new development in the next decade) in South Boston Waterfront; yet residents in the Corridor can not arrive there in a timely and cost-effective manner.

Alvaro Lima (BRA) stated that we need to determine, what are the employment centers? From there we can conduct an analysis that looks at the relationship of job types, what education levels are need for those jobs, and salaries paid.

Victor Karen from the CAG stated that job location decisions are difficult to control. In thinking through ways to figure out the fare structure issue, what could be some of the tools to provide job opportunities? How do we bring jobs from outside of the Corridor to residents within the Corridor?

Pete Stidman from the CAG stated that a Corridor that is walk able and bike-able and transit friendly will inherently improve the economic development standpoint. That is the case with so many other neighborhoods and cities, and should be the case for planning within the Corridor.

Christian Williams from the CAG asked about the South Station expansion project and how far along that project was. Joe Cosgrove responded that MassDOT is working with the MBTA on the study with the Federal money received. Joe said the study, an assessment to improve the capacity at South Station, is an 18 month process. Mr. Cosgrove spoke that South Station is at capacity and expansion will greatly increase the future of the Fairmount Line.

Michelle Waldon from the CAG asked if the South Station expansion project was a major factor in decreasing service on the Fairmount Line, and asked if there was a way to do the expansion project without decreasing the service on the Fairmount Line. Joe responded that just the preliminary design phase alone for the expansion project is \$200 million over the course of several years.

Mela Bush-Deonorian stated that before the construction of the Fairmount Line started, there were more service and less cancellations. She asked if the residents will get the service reinstated back to normal levels after the construction of the final station is completed. Service has gone from 22 trips to 16 trips per day. She also asked if there are operating funds available for the three new stations and how is the morphing of a traditional commuter rail to a rapid transit rail going to happen. Joe Cosgrove responded that they are hoping for a global fix to all of the concerns and questions being raised. He also stated that the more data and vision the CAG can provide to the MBTA the better chance of seeing the Study's recommendations realized.

Dorthea Hass from the CAG asked if there is something that the Study can offer people living in the Corridor right now; otherwise, the outcomes from the planning recommendations of this Study could take 25 years to implement.

Sue Sullivan, the Executive Director for Newmarket Business Association, stated that Newmarket has a lot of data available for purposes of the Study. She stated that most of the workers in Newmarket are driving to their jobs due to lack of public transportation. Ms. Sullivan also mentioned that she had a concern on the industry slides regarding jobs and residents in that the data didn't include Newmarket businesses. Newmarket has identified vacant properties. Pam Young responded they used GIS coded zip-code based data and it's possible that Newmarket was left out of the mix. She would take a look at this.

Marzuq Muhammad from the CAG stated the data for access to job training centers is very important for this Study when looking at the educational attainment slide. Pam Young stated they would try and figure this out from the GIS database.

Victor Karen stated the BRA's Backstreets program may want to start getting involved in the Study, and to ask them if they had any insight or institutional knowledge as to why BackStreets type of employment is not locating within the Corridor. He asked what the locational disadvantages might be with locating employment within the Corridor. The clustering of employment is essential as mentioned before.

Paul McManus from the CAG wants to hear more about expenditure patterns of residents within the Corridor. Pam Young said she would look into this.

Nancy Conrad from the public stated that she is concerned about the marketing of the fare structure for the commuter rail. She suggested that there is no way to even try to increase ridership because the commuter rail doesn't function like a MBTA's subway train or a bus. She also echoed that it is essential to change the fare structure as it is acting like an economic barrier for the Corridor. For the \$200 million South Station expansion to be successful, the T has to get it right. For "quality of life" and "sustainability", Ms. Conrad responded the study needs make sure these items have economic ties and implications for the Corridor to make sure the Fairmount Line is successful.

A resident of the Corridor added that the Corridor is viewed as a dangerous place, and it needs to be re-marketed so as to attract people in to patronize local businesses.

A member of the public asked if there were any other processes and end products from Corridor studies that we could be looking at. Ironically, that was the next slide that Steve Cecil was advancing to. The consultant team is looking at 5+ other corridor studies in the nation and would report back on their findings. Matt Thall asked the consultant team to figure out what the other case studies accomplished, and if they have been transformative for their respective corridor, and how will they benefit their respective corridors. He also wants to know what their failures are too.

Victor Karen from the CAG stated the perception of the Blue Line in Los Angeles's Watts neighborhood was of note and should be looked at.

Michelle Waldon from the CAG wanted to reiterate that it is important that we look at the cultural assets in the Corridor and how they could benefit the MBTA and vice versa. Christian Williams from the CAG added that perhaps the MBTA could subsidize the advertising for cultural institutions on the Fairmount Line although he realizes it would take a grant to make it happen.

Steve Cecil suggested that yes, there are major destinations associated with the MBTA subway lines. He asked the group to think about what the major destinations are for the Fairmount Corridor. We need to think about this and market it. Or is the Fairmount Line just the conduit to South Station? He suggested, when looking at the other corridor case studies, they will see if there are destinations associated with the corridors being studied.

Matt Thall suggested the group look at the Greenway Concept Plan because it has a lot of relevance to the Study at hand. He asked if there could be a presentation of the Greenway Concept Plan to the Advisory Group at a future meeting.

Inés then informed the group that the upcoming bus tour of the Corridor on September 15 was cancelled and that the BRA is looking into hiring a Trolley for a date in October. Jeremy suggested that future CAG meeting may be held on the 2nd Wednesday of every month, but that is still under discussion as the Mattapan Action for Community Development meetings on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:40 PM.