



## Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative Corridor Advisory Group Meeting #2

Wednesday, August 1, 2012

Location: ABCD Mattapan Family Service Center, Mattapan

### **CAG Attendees:**

Milly Arbaje-Thomas, Paul Filtzer, Dorthea Hass, Glenn Knowles, Victor Karen, Paul Malkemes, Paul McManus, Thomas Nally, H. Marcus Owens, Steve Roller, John Sullivan, Matthew Thall, Marcia Thornhill, Michelle Waldon, Christian Williams, Daryl Wright

### ***CAG Members Not in Attendance:***

Jeffrey Gonyeau, John Marston, Marvin Martin, Neil McCullagh, Marzuq Muhammad, Karleen Porcena, Ethel "Peggy" Santos, Pete Stidman, Azzie Young, Victor Karen

### **Ex-Officio Attendees:**

State Representative Russell Holmes; Ashley Burris, Office of U.S. Congressman Mike Capuano; Marie Gay, Office of State Representative Linda Dorcena Forry

### **City of Boston Attendees:**

Inés Palmarin, BRA; Jeremy Rosenberger, BRA; Marie Mercurio, BRA; Kenya Thompson, BRA; Mary Knasas, BRA; Lara Merida, BRA; Brian Daly, BRA

### **Consulting Team Attendees:**

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

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

Jessica Powell, MBHP; Paul Meehan, Upham's Corner WAG; Joan Tighe, Fairmount; Max McCarthy, Upham's Corner Main Streets; Janet Smith, FHNA; Joseph Smith, FHNA; Gail Latimore, Codman Square NDC; Marcella Brown, Woodhaven Neighbors' Association; Anne Greenbaum, Sportsmen's Tennis & Enrichment/Healthy Dorchester; Carlene Roberts Barbara Fields, Woodhaven/Regis/Culbert Neighborhood Association; Allentza Michel, MAPC Christopher Jones, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative; Nancy Conrad

### **Meeting Summary**

On Wednesday, August 1, 2012, the Corridor-wide Advisory Group (CAG) for the Fairmount Indigo Planning Initiative held its second meeting at the ABCD Mattapan Family Service Center in Mattapan Square. 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. Inés told the meeting that Mayor Menino recently named the Upham's Corner Working Advisory Group, which will be having its kickoff meeting August 8, 2012 at the Kroc Center. Milly Arbaje-Thomas then welcomed the CAG to the ABCD and discussed the social services it provides. Jeremy Rosenberger then discussed 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 that information back to their organizations and communities.

Steve Cecil introduced the consultants and the topic of their presentation, the existing conditions of the Fairmount Corridor. Josh Fiala introduced the citywide context, discussing demographics of the Corridor and the history of the Fairmount Line. Pam Young followed by presenting the economic context.

A member of the public questioned whether the team had information on the numbers of different types of business establishments for the Corridor excluding South Station and Pam responded that the numbers are not in this presentation, but the team will send them. Gail Latimore asked whether the group knew what percentage of Fairmount Corridor residents work downtown, and the team said they do not yet have that data. Nancy Conrad asked for a definition of the South Station area and, when told that it is the area within one half-mile of the Station, noted that it includes a large part of downtown Boston. She then asked whether the purpose of the study is to find discrepancies between the Corridor and the rest of Boston that the Planning Initiative can target. Pam responded that they are trying to describe the Corridor and identify ways that what has been successful in much of Boston can be brought to the Fairmount Corridor. Steve said they are trying to get a handle on the characteristics of the Corridor, and there are many topics to think about and a great deal of depth to all of them. Because the amount of information might be overwhelming, they are trying to sift through it, present, and provide additional resources to anyone interested in going deeper in any particular topic. Steve discussed South Station as an opportunity to connect residents to the economic center of the New England region and to regional transportation connections to the greater Boston area.

A member of the public asked whether the City would be helping residents start businesses by coordinating between departments to reduce red tape and permitting hassles. Inés responded that DND Main Streets and Business Development departments will all be involved in the effort, with more information to come at meetings this fall. Steve noted that the team would present on the specifics of existing businesses within the Corridor and that outside the South Station area, few businesses and jobs presently exist. Marcia Thornhill expressed her belief that a question at the heart of the FIPI is whether the focus would be on getting Corridor residents to South Station and the Innovation District or on growing local businesses and employment within the Corridor. Joe Smith followed by requesting data on the unemployment rates and percentage of population below the poverty line. Another member of the public said the MBTA's involvement and presence at these meetings is crucial. Steve agreed that the MBTA's involvement is important, but reminded the CAG that they will be the ones advocating for service to the area. Tom Nally asked the team whether they would compare growth trends from MetroFuture with the actual 2010 Census data; Steve said MetroFuture's growth projections do not take into account the potential changes the Fairmount Line could bring to the Corridor.

Glenn Knowles told the team the question of including or excluding the South Station area is confusing. To him, people living in lofts in the Leather District don't seem to be part of the Fairmount Corridor. Steve agreed that excluding the South Station area from the economic analysis might be best. Pam agreed, saying the team is coming to that realization as they see

the dramatic effect including the area has on the analysis. Victor Karen suggested including consideration of Boston's Back Streets program and how it could tie in to the FIPI.

After Josh continued the presentation on the Corridor context, Marcus Owens asked for clarification of the proposed stations map. Steve confirmed that several stations on the map are proposed but that their development is not funded. Joan Tighe asked whether the area described as south of Newmarket includes South Boston and Josh responded that it mostly does not, as it is a half-mile buffer from Newmarket south. Steve discussed that desire to include Newmarket in economic analysis due to the industry and jobs located there, but that for demographics it is the area to the south of it that is important. Marcus questions why the population figure had dropped and Steve responded that there will be variation in specific numbers based on how a study draws the boundaries of the Corridor.

Barbara Fields raised the question of how the lack of stations in construction between Fairmount and Morton Street affects the definition of the Corridor, which had been discussed in terms of the Newmarket and South Station areas. Steve explained the idea of the half-mile catchment area and how people who live north of Newmarket will likely not walk more than half a mile south just to catch a train to South Station. Barbara asked whether that is being taken into consideration in the study, given that the proposed station River Street station has not been funded. Steve responded that counting or not counting that station could be important for transit advocacy within the corridor. Glenn Knowles expressed his thanks that the meeting was getting into the specifics of the corridor and stated that a half-mile buffer may be an oversimplification, because barriers can push pedestrians to walk in certain directions, the way I-93 divides neighborhoods into being served by Andrew or JFK on the Red Line.

Victor Karen asked the consultants how many Corridor residents work in the Newmarket area as well as from where non-Corridor residents who work in Newmarket might be coming. Michelle Waldon requested a breakdown of business and the numbers of employees, which would be helpful for housing planning. Christian Williams asked how many people who currently ride the line work in the South Station area; given the cost and distance, he believes the line is not the most feasible way from someone in the Morton Street area to get to work. Tom Nally stated that the bus network complicates the commuting picture.

Nancy Conrad encouraged the group to think of the Corridor as an economic desert, similar to a food desert, and think of how to fill the needs of the Corridor. If there is a need for housing, it does not necessarily depend on current train riders, but increased ridership will stimulate the transit and start a positive cycle. Dorteia Hass would like to treat Newmarket differently from the rest of the Corridor since it is not a neighborhood hub, not easily reachable by foot, and not really a community.

Speaking as a Corridor native and a representative from MAPC, Allentza Michel brought up the need to provide regular notice of CAG activities to the Haitian-American community. Many of the Corridor's unemployed residents are from immigrant backgrounds, and creating new stations may not be enough to guarantee access due to language barriers, the education gap, and the high cost of commuter rail. Allentza and Steve also discussed to the CAG that French Creole speakers are almost all Haitian, but that some Haitians speak French. Allentza also discussed the need to empower and create opportunities for Corridor residents to own property and start businesses, not just provide access to downtown.

In addition to transit, Victor Karen told the group they should also think about accommodating cars. He believes Newmarket poorly addressed cars, but that if the goal is to help businesses, serving customers who do not travel by foot is important. Steve responded that transit access is a means for positive change, but not the only means. He agrees that the CAG should focus on more than just transit access, but that defining the Corridor based on the Fairmount Line raises other opportunities. "Back Bay" is more than just a series of Green Line stops. The goal should be to take what the study finds about the Corridor area and plan for how to address the needs it identifies.

Many of the attendees expressed agreement when Christian Williams said that the CAG's efforts are missing something when the MBTA is not present, and asked that the MBTA send a representative to every meeting. Rep. Holmes requested that the CAG make it an action item that MassDOT or the MBTA needs to be at meetings. Inés responded that she will speak with Joe Cosgrove, the MBTA's representative on the project, to make sure he is connected to the CAG's work. Steve agreed with the comment, but encouraged the group to focus on the good they can do for the Corridor as advocates even without the MBTA's presence. Marcia Thornhill disagreed with de-emphasizing transit, saying that despite non-transit needs, the Fairmount Line defines the Corridor and that absent a transition from commuter line to rapid transit, the Corridor will not attract businesses. She asked the consultants to show them the impact that poor service and high fares will have on the area. A member of the Upham's Corner WAG said that getting a vision statement and list of first principles from the Mayor would help guide the CAG's work.

Steve wrapped up the discussion by restating the team's goal of getting the CAG the information that will help them develop the vision, and told them that the next meeting will include more detail on specific locations along the Corridor. Given that he did not have time to present all of the Corridor Context, Josh suggested that members look at the slides on the project website, including the case studies from other cities. Several members of the CAG suggested additional case studies in the Twin Cities, Amsterdam, and Los Angeles' Blue Line.

Marcus Owens expressed his concern that the planning efforts will be futile without action on the questions of fares, service, and timing. Steve agreed that there is a need to advocate on those grounds, but that planning should not wait until fares decrease. A member of the public asked whether the current infrastructure plan precludes future developments such as light rail. Inés responded that we would have to ask the MBTA. Steve added that the City is advocating the Corridor be adaptable for future technologies that could improve service. After hearing the Fairmount Line arose from the Big Dig mitigation lawsuit, Steve Roller asked for clarification of the MBTA's obligations. Marcia said they must build and fund four stations. Steve asked whether there was an obligation to improve service; Jeremy believes there is not, only the commitment to build four stations and remodel two more to create options other than I-93.

Dorthea told the CAG not to overlook the need for opportunities for residents along the line, looking at case studies as guidance. She wants to avoid creating opportunities only for new people moving into the area. Inés pointed out that displacement will be a topic of an upcoming meeting. Not only keeping residents but helping them flourish, responded Dorthea, should be the goal. Jeremy added that non-displacement of businesses, not just residents, should be a priority.

While the CAG should not seek unreachable goals, said Victor Karen, some lines in Boston feature both rail and rapid transit and the CAG should not lose or abandon the best future options. Daryl Wright reminded the CAG to look not just at economic development, but workforce development as well. A member of the public mentioned the shopping center on River Street that has only a Price Rite and a bank, to which transit access would help bring tenants. Christian Williams agreed that the example showed the diversity of the Corridor and the possibility of making it more vibrant. Harry Smith said that the CAG is the group that can ask broader process questions and make sure the needed people are part of the discussion.

Inés then informed the group of the upcoming bus tour of the Corridor on September 15. Joe Smith told the meeting that Fairmount Hill Day, a flea market, yard sale, and festival, will be the same day. Jeremy asked the CAG to think about ideas for outreach and topics for the fall's community planning charrette. Marcus Owens named the Haitian-American Public Health Initiatives (HAPHI) as one mode of outreach to the Haitian-American community.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:40 PM.