

## **EXTENSIONS OF THE SOMERVILLE COMMUNITY PATH & MBTA'S GREEN LINE**

Status - The extension of the existing 1-mile long Somerville Community Path east of Cedar Street was first evaluated in 2001 and a feasibility study was completed in 2006. The 2.5-mile extension of the Path to North Point and the Charles River in Cambridge is supported by the State, Somerville, Cambridge, and community advocates and is shown on all municipal, regional and statewide greenway plans. The November 2009 Draft Green Line Extension (GLX) EIR included a 10% design of the Path. **However, the GLX project does not now include it.**

Relationship with the Green Line - the Path will connect to 4 of the 6 stations on the Medford branch of the GLX and be the major access for pedestrians and bicyclists to the stations, providing direct and pleasant access, increasing ridership for the MBTA and lessening dependence on private vehicles. Because the Green Line and Path are in or along the same depressed corridor and will share much of the same infrastructure such as retaining walls and bridges, the Path and Green Line must be constructed at the same time. Otherwise, it will not be logistically or cost-effective to ever build it. Only by being constructed as one integrated project will the Green Line/Community Path improve sustainable and healthy active transportation in Somerville. **However, the GLX project does not now include it.**

### Policy Statements:

- 10/1/2006 - EOT's Expanded ENF: *"The project will be coordinated with the Somerville Community Path project such that development of Phase 1 and future phases of the path will not be precluded, if at all possible, by the Green Line extension."*
- 12/1/2006 - MEPA Certificate on the Expanded ENF: *"Therefore, I am directing EOT to work proactively with the proponents of the Community Path and to include conceptual designs in the DEIR."*
- 2/24/09 - MassDOT (EOT then) agreed to pay for the actual design of the Path (but not construction).
- 10/16/09- the Draft EIR states that *"Construction of the Path is not intended to be part of the Green Line construction project"*.
- Sec of Transportation Ray LaHood: *This is the end of favoring motorized transportation at the expense of non-motorized."*  
[http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/policy\\_accom.htm](http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/policy_accom.htm), <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/2009/dot8009.htm>

Funding - the "additional" costs for the Community Path elements are estimated at about 2 % of overall Green Line extension project costs. At present there is about \$3.5 million in CMAQ funding and \$1 million in SAFETEA-LU funds reserved in the 2010 – 2013 TIP for the Path. MassDOT has said that they will not pay for the Community Path elements and not include them in the New Starts application even though the Federal Register (58680) says: *"FTA grantees may use any of the following programs to fund capital projects for pedestrian and bicycle access to a public transportation facility: Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program Section 5309 New Starts and Small Starts Major Capital Investment Programs"*.

Precedence – the Linear Path over the Red Line to Alewife and the Southwest Corridor path along the Orange Line was constructed together with the transit infrastructure using federal transit money in the 1980s.

**Conclusion – The Commonwealth should make a commitment that the Somerville Community Path will be constructed concurrently with the Green Line and MassDOT should work with the Commonwealth and Somerville and Cambridge to identify funding sources, including GLX funding by FTA's New Starts program.**

**Challenge:** Federal funding for the Green Line extension is presently being requested by the State. One design aspect of this multi-modal transit corridor is the co-located Somerville Community Path which will encourage healthy and active (pedestrian and bicycle) access to the stations. Constructing the Green Line and Community Path expansions concurrently is supported by all and is the only cost-effective and practical way to build the Path. Path related costs represents less than 2% percent of the overall project but will deliver significant benefits to the whole project and become a national model of active transportation. However, based on financial concerns, MassDOT has concluded that “Construction of the Path is not intended to be part of the Green Line construction project” (DEIR, 10/09). Secretary’s Boyle certificate on the DEIR (1/10) said “I strongly encourage MassDOT and the City of Somerville to work together to seek State and federal funding opportunities to facilitate construction of the Community Path concurrently with the project.”

**Request:** that the Commonwealth make a commitment that the Community Path be constructed concurrent with the Green Line and that federal New Starts funding be requested, at least for Path design elements that provide access at and to the stations from the neighborhood.

**Green Line** - the Green Line will be extended from its present Lechmere terminus to Somerville and Medford, mostly along the Lowell commuter line corridor (with a spur to Union Square in Somerville). The draft Environmental Impact Report (and 10% design) is being finalized and the application for federal New Starts funding is in process. There is a \$600 million State bond for costs over that the federal government will pay.

**Somerville Community Path** - the existing Somerville Community Path (a mile in Somerville and continuing another mile in Cambridge to Alewife station) provides a major access route and a pleasant walk or bike ride for MBTA riders to the Davis Square station on the Red line. Due to this superb access (from Somerville and Cambridge) to transit, Davis Square ridership is more than triple of what was expected, only 13% of riders arrive by automobile and about 60% of the area’s residents do not use a car to commute to work. By extending the Path eastward through Somerville to Lechmere in Cambridge, it will provide the same wonderful access to four of the new Green Line stations, increasing ridership for the MBTA and lessening dependence on private vehicles. When extended, the Path will also become the largest open space for the City of Somerville, the densest City in New England with very little open space and parks. In addition to these local benefits, the Path will also connect many of the greenways and paths in the metropolitan area to Boston and the Charles River. It will also be the eastern end of the 104-mile cross-state Mass Central Rail Trail. The extension of the Path east of Cedar Street was first evaluated in 2001, a feasibility study was prepared in 2006 and the draft Green Line EIR described above includes a 10% design of the Path.

**One Integral Project** – In February 2009, MassDOT (EOT then) agreed to pay for the actual design of the Path (but not construction). These two extensions are dependent on each other as the Path is the way that many riders will access the T safely from local neighborhoods. The State, the city, and the residents all agree that the Path should be extended along with the Green Line extension. It is shown on all city, regional and statewide greenway and bicycle plans. Because the Green Line and Path are in or along the same depressed corridor and will share much of the same infrastructure such as retaining walls and bridges, the Path and Green Line must be constructed at the same time. Otherwise, it will not be logistically or cost-effective to ever build it. Without the Path, access for many MBTA riders to Green Line stations will be much longer, less safe or unpleasant. Only together will the project greatly improve sustainable and healthy active transportation in Somerville.

**Funding Status** – Depending on how one separates costs between Green Line and the Path infrastructure, the “additional” cost for the Path elements is estimated at approximately \$20 million, or about 2 % of overall project costs. At present there is \$3.5 million in CMAQ funding and \$1 million in SAFETEA-LU funds reserved in the 2010 – 2013 TIP for the Path. Therefore another \$10 – \$15 million in funding is needed and must be identified soon so that the Path design can continue. MassDOT has indicated that the State cannot afford the additional costs of the Path elements and that the federal New Starts will not fund a Path. However, federal policy is changing to value more sustainable transportation designs. There is also precedence for entire paths being funded with federal transit money in the 1980s (Linear Path over the Red Line to Alewife and Southwest Corridor path along the Orange Line). Therefore it’s reasonable to include in the federal funding application, at a minimum, the Path design elements that provide access to the stations from the surrounding neighborhoods while looking for additional State or federal funding for the design elements that New Starts may truly not fund.

