

Friends of the Community Path (FCP)

<http://www.pathfriends.org/scp/>

Thursday, December 9th, 2010 Meeting  
Visiting Nurse Association, 259 Lowell St, Somerville

## MINUTES

- **Next meeting is January 13th, 2011, 7:00 to 9:00 pm**
  - Jonah Petri taking minutes
  - When a person has volunteered for a task, it will be in ***bold italics***.
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### **Current status of the path (Lynn Weissman)**

- The proposed 2½-mile Community Path extension from Lowell Street to Lechmere/North Point cannot be designed and built without sharing infrastructure (such as retaining walls and bridges), right-of-way, and basic construction with the Green Line extension (GLX).
- MassDOT has said they will design the Community Path from Lowell St. to (but not crossing) the Fitchburg line but it's not clear whether this design will be in the upcoming MBTA design contract.

### **Great Neighborhood Initiative (GNI) – (Lynn Weissman)**

- GNI is a project of the Mass Smart Growth Alliance (<http://www.massmartgrowth.org/>)
- FCP applied with STEP, the Community Corridor Partnership (CCP) and Somerville CDC
- GNI is not a grant program, but an initiative to create access to local organizations other resources, such as technical assistance, grant givers, etc.

### **Update on the DEP sites on the existing path between Grove and Cedar St., next to Lexington park playground (Alan Moore)**

- ***Alan and John Wilde will work with the City to move forward on cleanup of those sites.***

## **Update on Cedar St to Lowell St (Lynn Weissman, Joe Lynch, Alan Moore)**

- On 12/5, the City put out a bid for the design contract for this segment. The City will soon be hiring an engineering firm to design the Community Path from Cedar St. to Lowell St.
- The design requires a graded ramp up to Lowell St due to the active commuter rail line beyond the Lowell St bridge.
- Update on the MaxPak site in this section (Joe Lynch)
  - Background: the MaxPak site is a former industrial site to the west of the Lowell St bridge. It is currently in the hands of new private developers. The MaxPak land abuts proposed Path
  - The agreement between the city and the original developer of the MaxPak site held that the developer would receive \$489k to fund an automobile ramp from Lowell St to the site, for traffic mitigation and for moving construction equipment. The agreement also provided for access to the Community Path through the site. Under the deal, the developer would have full access to the Path from Cedar to Lowell for construction traffic until the city says they don't. However, the original developer backed out of the deal, citing financing concerns.
  - Additionally, the Lowell St bridge needs to be widened. It is structurally considered to be two bridges (though it looks like one), with one spanning over the active commuter rail line (and future Green Line Extension route) and the other spanning the underpass for the inactive railroad right of way where the Path will hopefully run.
  - It is unknown how the timing of the building of the SCP's Cedar to Lowell segment, the widening of the Lowell St bridge, and the new MaxPak developer will interplay. It's also unknown what the new developer may propose with respect to their use of the Lowell St. ramp, especially during the bridge widening.

12/9 Update on MaxPak development:

[http://www.boston.com/yourtown/news/somerville/2010/12/maxpak\\_project\\_may\\_finally\\_be.html](http://www.boston.com/yourtown/news/somerville/2010/12/maxpak_project_may_finally_be.html)

## Update on Inner Belt (Lynn Weissman)

- Inner Belt is the name for the industrial area southeast of the Washington St. Lowell line commuter rail (and future GLX) bridge. Rail in the Inner Belt area is a complex design task, as there is live rail for freight, Amtrak, commuter trains, and future Green Line Extension. We need to ensure that the Somerville Community Path has space to go through Inner Belt near Brickbottom, as this is a significant bottleneck for getting to Boston. MassDOT's current plans through Inner Belt have tracks leaving very little room for the Path.
- ***Lynn will find out specifics of what area of the Inner Belt segment falls under this MassDOT design funding.***

12/14 Update on Inner Belt from Lynn Weissman: As part of the Green Line extension, MassDOT is so far committing to fund the design and basic infrastructure construction of *part* of Community Path extension: from Lowell St. through Inner Belt to as close as possible to the Urban Ring Bridge over the Fitchburg commuter tracks— but that is a non-existent bridge that won't be built in the foreseeable future. If this design is what happens, the Path would lead to a perpetual dead end in the middle of Inner Belt, with no way of getting into Boston.

Instead, the Friends will be urging MassDOT/MBTA to design the Community Path extension through Inner Belt or along Brickbottom and over the Fitchburg tracks somewhere near the site of the former Red Bridge. *If the Path does not go over the Fitchburg tracks, the Path cannot link (via paths through North Point) to the Charles River Paths in Boston. Consequently, both local and regional connectivity of the Path would be lost.* (That is, we cannot connect the Minuteman Trail to the Charles River paths.)

- MassDOT/MBTA is expected to announce the GLX preliminary-engineering team in January of 2011. Therefore, this is a critical time to convince MassDOT/MBTA to perform the extra engineering (at least to a 10% design) of bringing the Community Path to North Point/Lechmere. The preliminary-engineering design will set the stage for the eventual full design and construction of this section of the Community Path extension with the Green Line, and will preserve project continuity.
- A question was raised about sources for maps of the proposed SCP & Green Line Extension (GLX) routes.

Updates from Jonah Petri and Alan Moore: Sources for good maps include:

- STEP: <http://www.somervillestep.org/map/>
- City of Somerville website:  
[http://www.somervillema.gov/cos\\_content/documents/Community%20Path%20-%20Somerville%20Context.pdf](http://www.somervillema.gov/cos_content/documents/Community%20Path%20-%20Somerville%20Context.pdf)
- 2010 MassDOT GLX Final EIR:  
[https://www.commentmgr.com/Projects/1228/docs/136\\_Appendix\\_E\\_Plans\\_and\\_Feasibility\\_Analysis\\_for\\_Proposed\\_Community\\_Paths.pdf](https://www.commentmgr.com/Projects/1228/docs/136_Appendix_E_Plans_and_Feasibility_Analysis_for_Proposed_Community_Paths.pdf)
- 2008 MassDOT preliminary Comm Path design:  
[http://www.pathfriends.org/scp/CmtyPath\\_Tutorial\\_slides.pdf](http://www.pathfriends.org/scp/CmtyPath_Tutorial_slides.pdf)
- 2006 Feasibility Study:  
[http://www.somervillema.gov/cos\\_content/documents/A-1CommunityPathFeasibilityStudy2006.pdf](http://www.somervillema.gov/cos_content/documents/A-1CommunityPathFeasibilityStudy2006.pdf)

**Upcoming meetings with good potential for advocacy or information gathering** (Lynn Weissman)

- 12/13 Somerville Board of Aldermen meeting.

<http://www.somervillevoices.org/2010/12/05/events/121310-boa-housing-and-community-development-committee-meeting/>

- Brickbottom is an Artists' Live-work Building in Inner Belt, next to live railbeds on two sides; part of the new GLX extension will run past there. Their site is sandwiched between the Fitchburg commuter rail line to the south, and the Lowell commuter rail line/GLX/SCP corridor to the north. Space is very tight here, and it's important for advocate (to MassDOT) for a viable path next to Brickbottom.
- ***Rebecca Schrumm and Lynn volunteered to attend this meeting.***

Update: Lynn, Rebecca, several other Friends and community members attending this meeting. Housing and Community Development committee came to a unanimous decision to bring a resolution to the Board of Alderman for approval. The resolution would recommend that MassDOT/BTA design the Community Path extension through Inner Belt, along Brickbottom and straight over the future Green Line bridge (the site of the former Red Bridge). Lynn and Alan emailed proposed language for the resolution to the Alderman on December 16 2010

- 12/15 Grand Junction Info meeting with MassDOT

<http://www.somervillevoices.org/2010/12/05/events/121510-informational-meeting-on-grand-junction-tracks/>

- Alan Moore gave some background: The Grand Junction freight railroad comes thru Cambridge and joins the Fitchburg Commuter line near Brickbottom. This line, the Fitchburg line, the GLX spur to Union Square and the future Grand Junction path all are competing for space.
  - We hope the Grand Junction path will connect with the Community Path someday. Lynn emphasized the importance of advocacy for this future connection.
  - Alan mentioned the 2007 Feasibility Study the City of Cambridge did concerning rail width which dealt with the feasibility of a path next to the Grand Junction freight rail line.
  - Alan mentioned the possible future routing of passenger trains from the Worcester CR line through Cambridge. That could impact the Grand Junction path if it involved construction of more tracks than currently exist.
- 12/20 STEP meeting <http://www.somervillestep.org/background/>
    - Karen is a STEP member and will go and report back.

### **Upcoming events with significant impacts on the SCP (Lynn)**

- The MBTA will seek permission from the MBTA Board at an upcoming board meeting to get approval for the design contract and timeline. This might happen in January or February 2011.
- In January, MassDOT will announce its proposal for its interim offset project. The GLX has been delayed until late 2015. Because of this, MassDOT is required to implement an additional project to offset the additional emissions caused by the delay in the GLX project. We would like the Path to be part of that project, and have expressed that to MassDOT.

Update: Interim offset proposal may not happen for a while.

## Online Social networking (Lynn)

- **Shoshana volunteered to coordinate some work for Facebook and the FCP web site.**
  - Raised possibility of using Facebook as the primary or perhaps sole web presence.
  - **Ken volunteered to help and to share his experiences with not-for-profit websites.**
- **John and Shoshanna can be responsible for much of the online technical aspects of the FCP presence.**
- There was general consensus that the email list was a good way to communicate and should continue.
- Lynn wanted volunteers to help her format and distribute her Facebook wall posts to various community online newspapers, blogs, lists, sites, and news organizations.
  - **Several volunteers came forward (Update: Could these folks please email Lynn at friendspath@yahoo.com?), and it was agreed that Lynn would email the mailing list with an initial listing of contacts, and others would augment that list, and then the final list would be split amongst the volunteers.**

## In-person Social networking (Lynn)

- Rebecca reported on the Community Corridor planning meeting. It was sparse on details, and seemed to be mostly an overview. There were many very basic questions from the attendees.
- Chelsea Clarke (not at this meeting) would like the Friends to make use of her connections with the roller derby community.
- Ken encouraged the FCP to reach out to residents of Boston and other surrounding communities to join the FCP, in order to diversify our membership and broaden our reach.
  - Additionally, we could try to recruit members of related groups in the region to join ours, to aid our cause.
  - Karen Molloy and Alan Moore noted that many related groups had been responsive in the past when contacted about advocacy opportunities, and it was unclear what the benefit of their membership here would be.
  - Lynn noted that what we need are members from outside Somerville. She called on the attendees to help recruit those people through their personal networks.
- Ken raised the possibility of partnering with Tufts, as they have a campus in Medford near the North terminus of the SCP, and two campuses in Boston.

***Michelle volunteered to investigate if any groups at Tufts would match well with our Path group.***

- Ken advocated for a “roadshow presentation” to take to other related groups to encourage their involvement and advocacy on SCP issues.
- ***Ken volunteered to work with Alan to develop a presentation.*** Alan has many of the raw materials: maps, photos, etc.
- Karen suggested a presentation and fundraiser event, perhaps a pizza & bowling night and Flatbread in Davis Sq to get other groups to learn about our efforts. Groundwork had one recently like this.
- Lynn noted that we need to lay groundwork for our advocacy contacts in advance of the interim offset project proposal announcement in January. We may need to campaign strongly on behalf of the path in the early months of 2011.
- Lynn asked everyone to contact their Alders about the Brickbottom site plan. William Roche is the Alderman for Ward 1, which includes Brickbottom.  
Correction: William Roche is the Alderman for Ward 2, north of Brickbottom. MaryAnn Heuston is the Alderman for Ward 1, which includes Brickbottom.

## **Fundraising**

- Lynn said that our top priority is advocacy, not fund raising. The path extension to Lechmere is a \$30M project; we probably can't buy it. But, we can push it along through our advocacy efforts and by wisely using the funds we raise.
- 501(c)3 status is tabled for the present. Its overhead is too high and we are a small group.
  - Michelle concurred from her experiences, but Ken pointed out that in his experience, 501(c)3 status conferred significant benefits of group identity and community trust which outweighed the overhead.
  - Alan suggested asking Bruce Freeman Trail folks and other like groups for their experiences and advice.
- Streamlining donations page on our web site (Lynn).
  - It's confusing to require users to designate FCP as the recipient of the funds, and it looks like the funds are going to Groundwork, with no mention of FCP on the page.
    - We should check into whether it's possible to make the process smoother.
  - Michelle noted that it's most productive when we drive people to the donations page.