



Friends of the Community Path www.pathfriends.org/scp/

Thursday, February 10, 2011
Meeting Minutes

Jonah Petri taking minutes.

Present: Jonah Petri, Alan Moore, Lynn Weissman, Joe Lynch, Ken Carlson, Karin Molloy (also in STEP), Ronald Leaks (Groundwork Somerville/CCP?Green Working Group), Mark Jaquith (East Cambridge Planning Team),

Next meeting: March 10, 2011 (2nd Thursday each month) at the VNA

I. Facebook

- A. Lynn Weissman has been putting a lot of good content on Facebook. Web site is good for archiving history, minutes, etc, but Facebook is good for up-to-the-minute stuff. 118 people “Like” us; the numbers are increasing steadily.

II. News

- A. **2/7/2011 MBTA/MassDOT Board Meeting: MBTA approved (part of) next stage of GLX (Lynn)**

“MBTA officials agreed today to advance a \$21 million proposal to initiate the extension of the Green Line but opted against approving the full \$95 million authorization sought by staff. MBTA board members said they wanted more information about federal funding and contingency plans.”

Some articles from the local news:

<http://www.medfordgreenline.org/>

http://66.105.150.70/cgi/as_web.exe?REV2011+D+1551150

http://news.bostonherald.com/news/regional/view/2011_0208debt_forces_mbt_a_to_think_outside_the_box/

1. \$21M out of \$95M approved. Some of \$21M will likely go towards ramp-up costs for the project, for the primary contractor and subcontractors. This \$21M is for initial design and engineering of the GLX.
2. Unknowns: How much will \$21M accomplish? How much of Path design is included in the contract. How will the remainder (= \$74M) be funded?

B. January 2011 MassDOT Annual Report to the MA DEP (Dept. of Environmental Protection) on SIP commitments, including Green Line extension

1. Responding to comments that the Community Path should be built in advance as an interim offset project, MassDOT responds,

"Construction of the extension of the Community Path prior to the construction of the Green Line Extension project would significantly complicate the construction of both projects....Early Path construction would mean that necessary retaining walls may not be in place and bridge abutments may not yet have been widened (such as for the underpass at Walnut Street). These issues would complicate the construction and increase the costs of both projects."

This was not what we wanted to hear. We hoped for the path to be mentioned as potential an interim offset project.

At several public meetings in 2010, MassDOT has asserted that interim offsets would be proposed in the DEP Annual Report in January. However, to the disappointment the Friends of the Community Path and others, the DEP Annual Report did not propose *any* interim offset projects.

2. Responding to our request to design the Community Path from Brickbottom to Lechmere, MassDOT considers the design of this section premature before Somerville's commitment to specific plans in Inner Belt.

"Connections on the southern end of the proposed Path extension have been discussed extensively with the City of Somerville, and MassDOT is working to design the Path extension with the long- term urban development goals of Somerville in mind. Any discussion of further Path connections beyond Inner Belt Road is premature until Somerville establishes a future vision for the Inner Belt area and necessary new infrastructure is constructed."

A large portion of this undesignated section is in Cambridge. We will need to continue to involve Cambridge on advocacy.

C. MassDOT has said many times that they will fund the construction of "Shared Infrastructure" (GLX/CommPath)

1. At a later date, we will seek clarity on this construction issue. We hope that "Shared Infrastructure" includes the full height of the infrastructure needed for the Community Path, and not only the lower part of the Green Line infrastructure that is shared with the Path, since it seems unlikely construction machinery will be brought into the Green Line corridor again later to finish the Path infrastructure.

D. MPO Clean Air and Mobility grant application

1. This is a \$500K grant application for Community Path funding submitted by the City on 2/3/2011 with mega-help from Alan Moore of Friends of the Community Path. We already have \$4.5M allocated through MPO Transportation Improvement program (TIP) funding to the Community Path already, but the City requested another \$500K for construction to complete the path from Cedar to School St, which can probably be built earlier from the rest.

Update: We are lost this \$4.5 M in MPO money because path design for this section was not ready, and we are trying to get it re-allocated in the next TIP year. We are pleased, though that the funding was shifted to the Assembly Square Orange Line station. See this post for more info:

<http://pathfriends.org/scp/MPO%20Public%20Comment%2002182011.doc>

2. Need to get Cambridge & Boston on board, as letters from them may increase our prospects. Maybe from Cambridge City Hall, Mayor Menino? **Alan to discuss with Walk Boston who will know how to get Boston involved.**

III. Updates

A. Cedar/Lowell Section / Max Pak update (Joe Lynch)

1. The newspaper misstated agreement between city and developer. They said that Max Pak will be able to limit access during night hours. The actual covenant provision says 24-hr access/7 days per week, but developer will have the right to petition the city later to have this changed if there is disquiet on the Path next to the development.

Friends' consensus is that we're ok with the language. The actual covenant, the most recent document pertaining to this (**DATE unclear**) reads:

Consistent with the Usable Open Space Covenant and Restriction Applicable to Max Pak Square, the Extended Hours Usable Open Space (the ramp from Lowell Street and the street adjacent to Building A leading to the Community Path and the sidewalk along Warwick Street) shall be accessible for pedestrian and bicycle access twenty-four hours per day. In the event that use of the Extended Hours Open Space by the public between the hours of 1:00 am and 5:00 am (the hours when the MBTA is not operating) interferes with the quiet enjoyment of the Property by Max Pak Square residents, and if the City and Owner cannot resolve said problem, then the Planning Director can modify this condition if notified that the Mayor has agreed to prohibit public access between 1:00 and 5:00 am. The rest of the Usable Open Space shall be accessible for pedestrian and bicycle access between the hours of 7:00 am and 6:30 pm daily, or during Daylight Savings Time from dawn to dusk, whichever is longer."

2. Max Pak is accelerating the building of the ramp. They report that this will be constructed this year (2011).
3. Plans (11/23/2010 and 12/3/2010, see link below): These proposed layout and landscaping plans show the same (on both plan submission dates; other details might have changed) sidewalks and connections from the proposed CPX through the development to Lowell St.

http://www.somervillema.gov/cos_content/documents/RevisedPlans12.16.10.pdf

[http://www.somervillema.gov/cos_content/documents/Plans%20All%20\(POST\).pdf](http://www.somervillema.gov/cos_content/documents/Plans%20All%20(POST).pdf)

There are 3 connections from the path to the development as agreed to in the covenant. Note that 2 of the connections are 5 feet wide and bi-directional, thereby probably mainly to be used by pedestrians. The third connection has 2 parallel paths, each 10' wide, which is plenty wide for uni-directional multi-use (bicyclists and pedestrians). However, the plans have a note that appears to indicate that one of the 2 connections is concrete stairs (for pedestrians?). Hopefully the other one is a ramp that bicyclists can use. There is no detail showing how bicyclists will go from this "sidewalk" to the street, i.e., a curb cut. Alan will contact the City and/or the developer to check on this detail.

IV. Debriefings

A. 1/19 Grand Junction mtg, East Cambridge

1. Lynn went to the meeting, and reported that it went well.
2. Mark Jaquith (ECPT) gave background on the Grand Junction Trail and the proposed Commuter Rail route from Cambridge to Worcester along that line
 - a) East Cambridge Planning Team is the local planning committee, and all developments and new businesses in East Cambridge go through them to increase their chances with the zoning and planning board. They're respected in Cambridge City hall.
 - b) Grand Junction route: Earlier this year, the State of Massachusetts bought this rail route from CSX as part of a larger property deal. CSX retains freight rights along the single-track line, and freight lines can't mix with light rail. The state wants to run commuter rail from Worcester to North Station, but there are no perceived benefits to Cambridge, so it's a tough sell there. There are many disadvantages to this proposed Commuter Rail line for Cambridge: People from Cambridge generally do not go to Worcester. The proposed commuter rail (a project that Lt. Gov. Tim Murray wants to get done) will bring to Cambridge more noise, more air pollution, more traffic stoppage –especially at rush hours when commuter lined are most active, and hazardous train crossings. It would also be a very expensive project for the State.

B. 1/18 (Community Corridor Partnership (CCP) Green Working Meeting: (Ron Leaks, Groundwork Somerville)

1. CCP GWG is a new group. One of their goals is to help get the GLX and Community Path extensions through to Boston. Ron has many interested people, especially youth, and is looking for ideas from FCP to direct their energies. Alan and Lynn suggested that Ron

could get people to show up at public meetings to support the Path and GLX. Alan suggested the 2/16 meeting on the Rt 16 Station.

C. 1/19 (Wed., 5:30 pm) Cambridge Bike Committee Meeting (Alan)

1. Alan met with Cambridge Bicycle Committee on the 2/19. He spoke about more cooperation on the Somerville Community Path and the Grand Junction Trail. We hope to get the City of Cambridge more involved with Green Line Extension and the Community Path.

V. Upcoming Meetings

A. 1/21 moved to Mon 2/14: Great Neighborhoods Initiative (GNI)

1. This is an organizational meeting only

B. 2/16/11 (Wed) Green Line Extension Public Meeting regarding Parkway/Route 16 Station/ Mystic Valley

1. 6:00 - 8:00 PM, Brooks Elementary School, 388 High Street, Medford.
2. Good opportunity for public / grassroots support.
3. Ask for Community Path along RR tracks from Route 16 to West Medford - compare to existing and proposed Community Path.

C. 2/16/11 (Wed) Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Open House: 2 Meetings

1. 12-2 presentation and workshop
2. 5-7 presentation and workshop (repeat)
3. Presentation is Paths to a Sustainable Region, and workshop is on Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Building.
4. Background: The Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization is conducting an assessment of the region's transportation needs as part of the update to the region's Long-Range Transportation Plan, Paths to a Sustainable Region. The MPO will hold a series of public meetings in February to present the draft transportation needs assessment and seek input from the public. The MPO will use the final needs assessment in developing a set of projects and programs to address the needs. The public meetings include two workshops, an open house, and a transportation equity forum.

Update: Lynn and Alan attended the workshops and learned much about the MPO funding process.

D. 2/17/11 MPO Meeting

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-the-Community-Path/129724153751066#!/event.php?eid=164138053638991>

E. 2/17 (Thurs) Arlington Bicycling Advisory Committee, 7:00 pm

Whittemore Robbins House, 670R Mass Ave, Arlington

Presentation on East Coast Greenway by noted Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC) advocate Craig Della Penna of the East Coast Greenway. Someone should attend to improve contacts w/ Arlington.

Jonah may attend and make connection. Report at next SCP meeting.

F. Meeting w/ Capuano TBD

G. 2/28 Conservation Law Foundation meeting of GLX Stakeholders

A CLF lawsuit (from years ago) is a principal reason the GLX project exists. The scope and intended attendees of the CLF meeting is to discuss the status of the GLX project and make sure it continues in the manner that all the advocates want. Alan has attending these CLF meetings in the past.

H. Community Path Naming: Branding/Identity

Lynn Weissman and Ken Carlson: We might wish to consider a new name that better communicates its regional nature and its importance for the regional network, not just to Somerville. Brainstorm ideas at a later meeting, and maybe online.