

July 28, 2009

Joseph Cosgrove, Director of Planning/Development
Room 5750, MBTA
10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116

Delivery by Adobe PDF via email to jcosgrove@mbta.com

Subject: Assembly Square Station

Dear Mr. Cosgrove:

We would like to take this opportunity to provide a number of comments and suggestions regarding the Assembly Square Station design, as presented to the public on June 29, 2009.

First and foremost, we would like to thank the MBTA for their collaboration with Federal Realty, IKEA, and the City of Somerville to make this project happen. Providing a new MBTA station on the Orange Line at Assembly Square will have a profound positive effect on how development and growth in this area takes place.

The amount of land encompassed by the Assembly Square area and the number of new residents, employees, and visitors that new development will support could not happen without transit as an appealing and easily accessible option. It primarily means that fewer cars need to be planned for and accommodated as part of any new development, freeing up valuable land, reducing the necessity to build costly parking lots and garages as well as reducing mobile pollution for residents and workers at Assembly on the Mystic.

Overall, we are pleased with the configuration of the initial station design. However, we hope that the MBTA will use materials that reduce the construction costs for the single headhouse so that a second headhouse can be constructed. There are a number of important elements that we feel are missing at this time.

A second headhouse near IKEA

We feel quite strongly that a second headhouse at the end of IKEA Way is warranted. A headhouse at this location could provide direct access into IKEA with a pedestrian walkway, eliminating the need of T riders to navigate down to street level and then back up again into the IKEA store (which is located on top of its parking garage). IKEA will without a doubt draw a significant amount of new car traffic to the area, so making transit access as easy as possible is key to reducing this traffic.

In addition, a second headhouse will also allow for redundancy in elevators, which is of particular importance for those with disabilities. If an elevator in one headhouse fails or is under repair, there will be another option available for them.

Direct access to Draw 7 Park

The current headhouse design provides access into the area of new development. However, it does not provide direct access to Draw 7 Park. Park users will have to walk along the multi-use path on the south side of the T tracks, and then cross underneath the tracks at the end of B Street, a rather circuitous route. We ask that another exit to the station be provided on the north side, over the commuter rail tracks, exiting directly into Draw 7 Park, to better serve current park users and to draw more people to this now hidden asset.

Bicycle parking

Our understanding from the June 29 presentation is the bicycle parking will be provided inside the parking garage of future building A1, not far from the T station. This is a pretty good location for indoor bike parking, however, it's key that (1) enough parking is provided to meet the needs of T riders and employees, customers, and residents of the future development, and (2) that signage be very clear as to where this parking is located. Signage around the T station entrance(s) should direct bicyclists to this indoor parking. We would also ask that additional outdoor bicycle parking be provided as close to the T station as possible.

Furthermore, we think that a bicycle share station adjacent to the T station would be a much-used facility. This would be part of the bicycle share program that is currently being developed by the cities of Boston, Cambridge, and Somerville, planned to be rolled out in 2010. Having the ability to bicycle to or from the T station without bringing one's own bicycle would benefit both the T and the mobility of people in the general area.

Station visibility and wayfinding

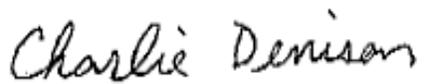
The final component to maximizing the number of trips taken to and from Assembly Square on the T is clear wayfinding to and from the station. Particularly because the location of the Orange Line at what is essentially the "back" of the development, it is extremely important that pedestrians and bicyclists can easily find their way to and from the station and their destinations in and around Assembly Square. Pedestrian and bicycle-specific signage should direct people to and from the T station, IKEA, Assembly Square Marketplace, Home Depot, and key locations as the area is built out. This could include area maps, general directional guidance, and time and distance information to and from various destinations.

We hope that you will keep our suggestions in mind as the station design progresses and as the development in the area continues. With strong links to transit, and a walkable, bikeable

environment around the station, this area could easily become a model of multi-modal, sustainable urban development for our region.

If you have any questions on the above comments and suggestions, please contact Charlie Denison, Board Member & Advocacy Director, LivableStreets Alliance, who may be reached at 617.852.6125 and charlie@livablestreets.info.

Sincerely,



Charlie Denison
Board Member & Advocacy Director
LivableStreets Alliance



Ellin Reisner
President
Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership

cc: Monica Lamboy, City of Somerville
Steve Winslow, City of Somerville