



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE**  
**MAYOR**

September 12, 2008

Mr. Stephen Woefel  
Executive Office of Transportation  
10 Park Plaza, Suite 3170  
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

**Re: Public comment on the annual update and status report for transit projects required by 310 CMR 7.36 (2) (f) through (j).**

Dear Mr. Woefel:

The purpose of this letter is to offer written public comment to Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection regarding the status of the Commonwealth's transit commitments. More specifically, I would like to express the City of Somerville's concerns associated with the current Executive Office of Transportation (EOT) proposal for the Green Line Maintenance Facility.

For many months, I and my colleagues have repeatedly conveyed the City's priorities regarding the Inner Belt and Brickbottom areas – and the crucial role that the Green Line Extension and its associated infrastructure will play in the future economic vitality of the area. From the beginning, I have taken the position that, should your office make a compelling case that there were no other viable alternatives, Somerville would be willing to consider locating such a facility within our borders, provided that it would be designed and operated so that:

1. It would not impede or deter future economic development in these prime districts;
2. It would not augment the existing access barriers between Inner Belt and Brickbottom (and instead, it would help reduce barriers); and,
3. It would allow for air rights development so that the facility would not be visible to abutters and the acreage could be used for economic development for the City.

I have also made clear on several occasions that we believe that, as a matter of environmental justice, the City of Somerville should absorb only those functions and facilities related to the extension project -- and that under no circumstances should Somerville be further burdened by regional-serving infrastructure that does not serve its residents and business community.



EOT's current maintenance facility proposal fails to address every one of these criteria and would deeply compromise the economic and environmental future of the very communities that the Green Line Extension is intended to assist.

Take, for example, the questions of what size facility is needed and where it might be located: For months, we have been seeking a detailed explanation of why other potential sites – including the Boston Engine Terminal and Yard 7 – would not be acceptable alternatives. You have declined to provide this information so that it could be properly analyzed by the City and members of the Somerville community. Further, information regarding the required size of the facility has been scant at best, leaving us with a host of unanswered questions. Principal among these is the question of why storage for 80 cars has been planned. The *Beyond Lechmere* study indicated that 32 cars would be required for the extension (note that we are attempting to independently validate this figure) and that the 20 cars presently stored at Lechmere Station would need to be relocated to this location for some reason.

In looking at the proposed maintenance facility it appears that it is EOT's intent for Somerville's scarce developable land to be consumed in order to remedy existing and system-wide MBTA maintenance and storage issues – and that this proposal calls for the storage of approximately 50 cars beyond the amount needed to support the extension alone.

For months, we have stressed repeatedly to state officials that any plan to develop a maintenance facility in Inner Belt or Brickbottom must protect the long-term economic potential of this key development district. Yet the plan that you have prepared would not only fail to preserve the area's potential but would appear to do the maximum possible damage to the districts' – and indeed, our larger community's – economic prospects and quality of life. Further, we are uncertain how the facility as designed would meet the requirements of the upcoming environmental impact report given its certain impacts on its surroundings. I also have interest in understanding the anticipated cost of the facility and how it impacts the overall cost effectiveness of the project.

Our analysis of your proposed design indicates that:

1. It includes 10+ feet of fill for the entire length of Yard 8 and the rail corridor from the Fitchburg line overpass to Washington Street. Your office proposes to construct a retaining wall along the length Inner Belt Road thereby creating a new wider and higher barrier than existing today.
2. It would require tunnels 300 to 600 feet long and 30 to 60 feet wide to move pedestrians and vehicles between Inner Belt and Brickbottom.
3. It places the maintenance building on top of the fill, making it 40 feet high (minimum) when compared to the existing street level. At approximately three acres in size, it would have dimensions of approximately 350 to 400 feet on a side.



4. It would place a 24 hour per day (24/7) operation immediately adjacent to the Brickbottom Artists Collaborative, literally the only residential building in the entire area and one which has been identified by the EOT itself as a “special building” where sensitive uses exist that will be adversely affected by increased noise, light, and vibration.

While I recognize that the entire Green Line extension project must meet transportation and engineering objectives, it is not in the Commonwealth’s best interest to diminish the economic opportunity that would arise were the Inner Belt and Brickbottom Districts developed to their full potential. That potential development, in turn, would actively support the Green Line extension by providing thousands of daily riders.

We recognize the need to be flexible and creative in working with you to address the need for a maintenance facility, and have taken the extraordinary step of asking potential developers with an interest in the Inner Belt and Brickbottom Districts to contribute funds to an analysis of how such a facility might be accommodated there. This analysis has demonstrated that a properly configured maintenance facility could preserve the districts’ economic viability and actually promote additional ridership on, and revenue for, the Green Line Extension. But whether or not the alternative we have prepared is the best possible solution, it is certainly more viable, more appropriate and more thoughtful than the plan you have shown us. At the very least, it demonstrates that there are other potential solutions that should be examined.

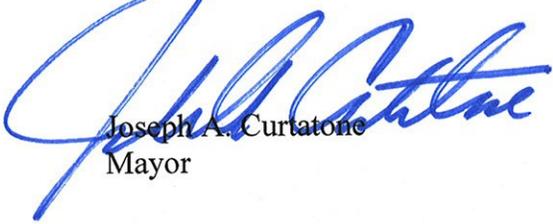
The City of Somerville remains strongly committed to close cooperation with the Commonwealth in achieving expedited completion of the Green Line Extension, but we see no long-term advantage to any stakeholder of a maintenance facility plan that would significantly impede the future economic development, multimodal accessibility and environmental quality of one of the very communities that the Green Line Extension is designed to serve.

I therefore renew my request that your office provide more information about alternative sites, and that you also examine alternatives to the plan you have shown us – a plan that fails to fulfill any of the conditions that must be met in order for an Inner Belt or Brickbottom site to be considered as a viable possibility.

It is my sincere hope that we can resolve these outstanding issues in a mutually supportive manner. It is incumbent upon us to work together to eliminate environmental obstacles - certain to generate community concern - in order to ensure that the Green Line Extension remains on its 2014 timeline. Please let me know when you will be able to fulfill our longstanding and critical request for more information and when we can expect to see a more refined alternative that addresses the needs of the Green Line Extension while optimizing opportunity for the Somerville community.



Sincerely,



Joseph A. Curtatone  
Mayor

cc:

Mr. Michael E. Capuano, United States Representative

Mr. Ian A. Bowles, Secretary, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

Mr. Bernard Cohen, Secretary, Executive Office of Transportation

Mr. Daniel A. Grabauskas, General Manager, Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

