

TO: BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY AND
PETER MEADE, DIRECTOR

FROM: KAIROS SHEN, CHIEF PLANNER
PRATAAP PATROSE, DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR URBAN DESIGN
JILL OCHS ZICK, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

SUBJECT: CITY HALL PLAZA, GOVERNMENT CENTER URBAN RENEWAL
PLAN, PROJECT NO. MASS. R-35

SUMMARY: This Memorandum requests that the Boston Redevelopment Authority (“BRA”) authorize the Director to (i) co-petition the City of Boston Public Improvement Commission (“PIC”) for the vertical discontinuances necessary for the Blue Line Emergency Egress (“BLEE Discontinuance Area”); (ii) execute a Permanent Easement with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (“MBTA”) for the BLEE Discontinuance Area; (iii) co-petition the PIC for the discontinuance of a portion of Scollay Square/Cambridge Street in connection with the construction of the new MBTA Government Center Headhouse (“Headhouse Discontinuance Area”); and (iv) execute a License Agreement for the Headhouse Discontinuance Area and a portion of City Hall Plaza in connection with the construction of the new MBTA Government Center Headhouse and related improvements.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (“MBTA”) plans to make upgrades to the Government Center MBTA station. The upgrades include the complete reconstruction of the headhouse which will make it accessible for people with disabilities, as well as improvements to the surrounding surface areas on City Hall Plaza, and the reconstruction of Cambridge Street and adjacent sidewalks from New Sudbury Street to Court Street.

To accommodate needs for emergency egress, the MBTA’s project proposes to narrow the curb-to-curb dimension of the road right-of-way along Cambridge Street to accommodate a new Blue Line Emergency Egress (“BLEE”) stair and headhouse. The plans show that a majority of the existing Cambridge Street median width will shift to the eastern edge of Cambridge Street and increase the public sidewalk area to

approximately 18-20 feet in width along the entire length. It is within this expanded sidewalk that the BLEE structure will be located.

The design for surface restoration of the widened sidewalk around the BLEE headhouse maintains a 12-foot wide, concrete public sidewalk and proposes a double row of new street trees along the brick-paved "plaza" edge. The proposed trees will replace an existing tree planting and upgrade both the subsurface and surface-level growing conditions for the proposed trees in an effort to maximize their acclimation and longevity. The plans include details for special soils, irrigation and aeration systems, and a permeable brick pavement to aid in the collection and management of storm water runoff from the adjacent sidewalk and plaza areas.

In order to clarify jurisdiction and management of the improvements proposed within the "bricked surface", a 6-8 foot ribbon of land starting at the back of the proposed concrete sidewalk at the edge of Cambridge Street and ending at the existing limit of City Hall Plaza less that area surrounding the Blue Line Emergency Egress totaling 16,524.38 square feet (see attached plan) is proposed to be discontinued from the public ways and be incorporated into the "plaza" area ("New Plaza Area"). The existing Commencement Agreement between the Boston Redevelopment Authority ("BRA") and the City of Boston for City Hall Plaza dated July 3, 1996 would be amended to include the New Plaza Area, and the City of Boston Property Management Department would manage the New Plaza Area along with the current City Hall Plaza area. These actions will be brought before the BRA in stages.

PRESENT ACTIONS

At the present time the MBTA and the BRA are co-petitioning the City of Boston Public Improvement Commission to discontinue a portion of Scollay Square/Cambridge Street in connection with the construction of a new Government Center Headhouse on City Hall Plaza and the vertical portions of Scollay Square/Cambridge Street in which the BLEE structure will be located. Upon the discontinuance of the portion of Scollay Square/Cambridge Street in connection with the construction of a new Government Center Headhouse on City Hall Plaza, the MBTA, the BRA and the City of Boston shall enter into a License Agreement for the construction of the new Headhouse and related improvements. Upon the discontinuance of the vertical portions of Scollay Square/Cambridge Street in connection with the BLEE construction, the BRA shall give the MBTA a permanent easement to the discontinued areas.

RECOMMENDATION

It is the staff recommendation that the BRA authorize the Director to (i) co-petition PIC for the vertical discontinuances necessary for the Blue Line Emergency Egress ("BLEE Discontinuance Area"); (ii) execute a Permanent Easement with the MBTA for the BLEE

Discontinuance Area; (iii) co-petition PIC for the discontinuance of a portion of Scollay Square/Cambridge Street in connection with the construction of the new MBTA Government Center Headhouse (“MBTA Government Center Headhouse Discontinuance Area”); and (iv) execute a License Agreement with the MBTA for the MBTA Government Center Headhouse Discontinuance Area and a portion of City Hall Plaza in connection with the construction of the new MBTA Government Center Headhouse and related improvements.

Appropriate votes follow:

VOTED: That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to a co-petition the City of Boston Public Improvement Commission for the vertical discontinuance of portions of Scollay Square/Cambridge Street necessary for the Blue Line Emergency Egress (“BLEE Discontinuance Area”); and

FURTHER

VOTED: That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to a Permanent Easement with the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (“MBTA”) to transfer permanent easement rights in the BLEE Discontinuance Area; and

FURTHER

VOTED: That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to execute a co-petition the City of Boston Public Improvement Commission to discontinue a portion of Scollay Square/Cambridge Street in connection with the construction of the new MBTA Government Center Headhouse (“Headhouse Discontinuance Area”); and

FURTHER

VOTED: That the Director be, and hereby is, authorized to enter into a License Agreement with the MBTA and the City of Boston for the Headhouse Discontinuance Area and a portion of City Hall Plaza in connection with the construction of the new MBTA Government Center Headhouse and related improvements.