



MassDOT Turnpike Air Rights Parcels 12-15
CAC Working Meeting #25
Wednesday, April 4, 2018, 6:00 p.m.
Location: Saint Cecilia's Parish Hall

CAC Attendees:

Fritz Casselman, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay (NABB)
David Gamble, Boston Society of Architects
David Lapin, Community Music Center
Meg Mainzer-Cohen, Back Bay Association
Teri Malo, Fenway Studios
Barbara Simons, Berklee Task Force
Gil Strickler, St. Cecilia's Parish
Steve Wolf, Fenway Community Development Corporation

Ex-Officio Attendees:

Kate Bell, Office of Boston City Councilor Josh Zakim

City of Boston Attendees:

Phillip Hu, BPDA
Michael Rooney, BPDA
Lauren Shurtleff, BPDA
David Carlson, BPDA
Jonathan Greeley, BPDA

Commonwealth of Massachusetts Attendees:

Mark Boyle, MassDOT
Anthony Christakis, MassDOT

Development Team Attendees:

Dave Bohn, VHB
Jayda Leder-Luis, Samuels & Associates
Kevin Lennon, Elkus Manfredi Architects
Donny Levine, D. Levine Management, LLC
David Manfredi, Elkus Manfredi Architects
Abe Menzin, Samuels & Associates
Steve Samuels, Samuels & Associates
Peter Sougarides, Samuels & Associates

Public Attendees:

Eric Daniel, Fenway Resident
Mark Fuechec, Boston Guardian
Nina Garfinkle, South End Resident
Toni Gaspard, The First Church of Christ, Scientist
Rich Giordano, FCDC
Tracy Heibeck, Back Bay Resident
Chris Janes, Back Bay Resident
Mia Jean-Sicard, Fenway Resident
Tina Leonard, Back Bay Resident
Richard Nieber, Back Bay Resident
Sue Prindle, NABB
Ellen Yee, Boston Architectural College

Project Website: <http://www.bostonplans.org/planning/planning-initiatives/massdot-turnpike-air-rights-parcels-12-15>

Meeting Summary

On Wednesday, April 4th, 2018, the 25th meeting of the MassDOT Turnpike Air Rights Parcels 12-15 Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) commenced at approximately 6:07 p.m. with an introduction by Michael Rooney, Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) Project Manager, at the Saint Cecilia's Parish Hall. Michael announced that the 1000 Boylston Project, also known as Parcel 15, will be reviewed at a public hearing before the Boston Zoning Commission on April 11, 2018. Tonight's meeting would be the first opportunity for the designated development team, Samuels & Associates, to present an updated proposal for Parcel 12 and hear initial feedback and questions from the CAC and public.

After a round of introductions, in response to a question from a CAC member, Lauren Shurtleff, BPDA Senior Planner, noted that all of the CAC members will remain on the CAC, adding that Valerie Hunt had moved away and will be replaced before the proposal for a project on Parcel 12 begins its Article 80 review process.

Next, Lauren reiterated the role of the CAC, which will also serve as the Impact Advisory Group (IAG) for the project on Parcel 12, as they had for the 1000 Boylston Project on Parcel 15. Lauren noted that this meeting was the first CAC meeting focused on Parcel 12 since October 2016. With this being the 25th CAC meeting, the CAC brings a lot of knowledge about the prior process to the upcoming review process for the next proposal. The development team has not filed a Letter of Intent, so the project is currently in the "Pre-File" stage. The purpose of this meeting was for the development team and BPDA staff to hear what the CAC and public thought about the direction of the project. Michael added that while the review process has not officially begun, he would be happy to receive any questions and comments that come up after the meeting through email.

Steve Samuels, Samuels & Associates, introduced himself. He explained that the development team's approach for this project was to first resolve key issues with access and connections. Finding a transportation solution that will be safe for all users (pedestrians, transit passengers, cyclists, and drivers) and functional is a priority. The site is complicated because of the major multi-modal networks that intersect adjacent to the site, such as major roads, an active MBTA Green Line station, a key bus route, and an on-ramp to the Massachusetts Turnpike.

Steve outlined the presentation, which is available on the project website. The development team would first go through each transportation mode, show how they conflict today, and then show a potential solution where they can all fit together. After understanding a solution to transportation, the development team would prioritize creating an active, hospitable place. Then the massing and the design of the project is shaped by these solutions. One key move of the proposal is the relocation of the entrance ramp to the Turnpike. The current on-ramp has visibility and length issues, forcing drivers to accelerate very quickly in order to merge onto the highway. The relocated ramp will also be lengthened to increase visibility between drivers merging from the ramp and drivers on the Turnpike. This relocation will open up more "terra firma," or solid land on which to build. Instead of one big building, the proposed project will be two smaller buildings that respect the scale of the adjacent Fenway and Back Bay neighborhoods.

Next, David Manfredi, Elkus Manfredi Architects explained the neighborhood context of the air rights project and how the project is positioned to transform an inhospitable bridge and a hole in the city's fabric into a complete, active streetscape fronting on Massachusetts Avenue and Boylston Street.

Abe Menzin, Samuels & Associates, then presented a series of slides detailing the existing conditions for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and drivers, particularly at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue, Newbury Street, and the Turnpike on-ramp. He mentioned that there have been more than 30 accidents over the past 4 years, and that two of them recently resulted in fatalities. One problem is that the 70' crossing distance on the west side of the intersection is very wide for pedestrians, because it combines both an on-ramp and an extension of Newbury Street. Another problem is where cyclists must share the bus lane with buses pulling over. In addition, many pedestrians cross mid-block. There is also limited sidewalk width on the east sidewalk, right outside where the Green Line entrance is and where bus users wait. The western side is in poor condition and is not a comfortable sidewalk to walk on.

Abe presented solutions for these problems. The first solution presented would be to relocate the on-ramp further from the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Newbury Street. This would dramatically narrow the crossing distance on the west side of the

intersection from 70' to 32'. The goal is to build a properly sized intersection that remains functional for drivers and yet is safer for pedestrians and cyclists. This reconfiguration would give drivers more time and visibility when merging onto the Turnpike. The second solution would be to set the proposed building further from the street. This extra space would be used for a comfortable, wide sidewalk with planters, a protected bike lane, and a bus stop. There would also be adequate space for two buses to pull in to ensure that no bus blocks the intersection. The third solution would be to repair the existing pedestrian tunnel under Massachusetts Avenue and create a new, accessible entrance to the Hynes Convention Center MBTA Green Line stop in the new building. Finally, by removing the existing median, the sidewalk on the eastern edge of Massachusetts Avenue could be expanded from 9' to 13' to alleviate pedestrian crowding in front of the bus stop and Green Line entrance.

David Manfredi followed with an overview of proposed uses for the project, with the goal of creating a continuous, active edge with uses such as retail, restaurants, and a new entrance to the Green Line, while reducing the width of less active programs, such as lobbies and parking and loading access. The first two levels (i.e., the podium) would be mostly retail and restaurant, with a flexible configuration, so some stores might span two levels. All parking would be below grade. The massing strategy would be to put the taller building elements on the available terra firma while spanning across the Turnpike with the lowest elements of the building. Another important design decision is to integrate the MBTA station inside of the building with a prominent entrance on Massachusetts Avenue, so there will not be an MBTA entrance interrupting the sidewalk. The existing vent for the Green Line would still function and would be incorporated into the building as well.

David explained the building's massing, noting that the two taller building elements on the edges would sit on the podium, which will span Massachusetts Avenue. On top of the podium is a shared roof top open space for building occupants. The team proposes a south building with office uses and a north building with hotel or residential uses. The buildings will be designed to be as slender as possible, with the building cores located further from Massachusetts Avenue to concentrate active ground floor uses nearer to the street. The north building will act as a key end cap to connect the energy of Newbury Street to Boylston Street.

David then presented a series of perspective views of the proposed building, as well as several sections. The proposed office building is 207' tall. The proposed residential or hotel building is 150'. In context, the project on Parcel 15 and the Berkeley Crossroads project (290') were pointed out as significantly taller. David also provided the initial shadow studies, noting that the proposed project will comply with all applicable regulations.

Finally, Steve expressed that the development team is excited for the opportunity to fix the safety and logistical issues at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue, Newbury Street,

and the Turnpike on-ramp and the opportunity to bridge the Fenway and Back Bay neighborhoods with this project.

Questions and comments received from the CAC in response to the development team's presentation included:

- A CAC member asked whether the development team was coordinating with MassDOT about the feasibility of the on-ramp relocation. Abe responded that MassDOT would prefer to see a proposal first and then work out the details, but from initial conversations, they are confident that it is feasible.
- A CAC member asked what step of the process the separate Parcel 13 project is in and emphasized that coordination to renovate the Hynes Convention Center MBTA Green Line station is important. Mark Boyle, MassDOT, replied that MassDOT and the Peebles Corporation have made significant progress in their negotiations, noting that an agreement on station improvements has been signed. He added that the lease will not be executed until the project's permitting is complete.
- In response to a question from a CAC member, David replied that the most of the shadows casted on Fenway Studios will be from the southern office building.
- A CAC member asked for clarification on the location of the MBTA Bus No. 1 stop and the protected bike lane. Abe replied that the design would look similar to the No. 1 bus stop further down Massachusetts Avenue at the Christian Science Center, where passengers would wait at a shelter and then cross the protected bike lane to board the bus, so the paths of the bus and cyclists would not conflict.
- A CAC member stated that this proposal represented a positive change from the previous proposal. They also thought the development team has done a good job embodying the principles of the air rights development guidelines established in the Civic Vision for Turnpike Air Rights. Another CAC member agreed that the transformation was a positive direction. Steve thanked them for their comments about the positive direction of the project and stated that the development team is committed to listening to and addressing CAC and community input to create the best project possible.
- A CAC member expressed their concern that solar glare could potentially affect Fenway Studios, and added that some shadow during summer mornings might be beneficial due to less solar glare, which could help cool Fenway Studios.
- In response to a comment from a CAC member, David replied that they have not yet done a full environmental analysis because they wanted to first see how the CAC and community responded to the direction of the design. He added that he anticipates that the podium will substantially mitigate wind effects on the Massachusetts Avenue side of the building, but stated that further study would be needed to predict the impacts on the Newbury Street and Boylston Street sides. The wind, shadow, and solar glare study will all be included as part of the BPDA's Article 80 Development Review process.

Questions and comments from the public included:

- A member of the public stated that they thought the direction of the multi-modal transportation improvements associated with the proposed project was positive.
- In response to a follow-up question from a member of the public, a CAC member replied that the redesign of the Hynes Convention Center MBTA Green Line station is part of the proposal for Parcel 13, which sits across Massachusetts Avenue from Parcel 12.
- In response to a question from a member of the public, Dave replied that a full traffic study will be included as part of the project's Article 80 filing, to ensure that there is a coordinated and balanced multi-modal strategy. Michael added that someone from the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) will be at future project meetings.
- In response to a question from a member of the public, Steve replied that the project will fund improvements in order to reopen the existing tunnel underneath Massachusetts Avenue to connect to the Green Line station.
- A member of the public asked for more detail on how hotel guests would arrive or be dropped off by taxis or rideshare services. David replied that any loading and garage access will occur on the Boylston Street side. He added that the development team has conceptually thought of a loading space for drop offs and pick-ups on Massachusetts Avenue behind the bus drop off space, but will be working with the BTD to ensure the configuration works.
- A member of the public commented that the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue, Newbury Street, and the Turnpike on-ramp is difficult because drivers are unsure of how to merge onto the on-ramp or continue down the Newbury Street extension when turning left from Massachusetts Avenue. They thought that better signage would help. Dave replied that clearer markings and signage would help and that the reconfiguration of the intersection will also give drivers more time to merge on to the on-ramp.
- In response to a question from a member of the public about how the bus drop-off and protected bike lane will work, David replied that the bikes will be contained in a marked cycle track, so there is will not be any conflict between buses and cyclists. Examples of similar cycle tracks can be found in Cambridge near MIT on Vassar Street and near the Christian Science Center further down Massachusetts Avenue. Abe added that there will also be a designated drop-off zone for residents or hotel guests. While enforcement will depend on the City of Boston, good design can encourage good behavior.
- A member of the public asked for clarification about the design of the relocated westbound Turnpike on-ramp. Abe estimated that the reconfiguration could eliminate between 30 and 50 on-street parking spaces. He added that the development team preliminarily studied the occupancy and found that on average half of the total spaces were being used during the night. Overnight users would typically be residents. The member of the public was concerned whether the loss of on-street parking on the Newbury Street extension would affect the Harvard Club.

Dave replied that they are still in the process of finalizing the design, but stated that the redesign would have to eliminate some parking spaces because there is a needed width for the ramp and they are constrained by the bridge at the end in order to make the merge possible.

- A member of the public expressed their belief that a new building would be welcome to improve the western edge of Massachusetts Avenue. In response to a follow-up concern about parking, traffic, and transportation, Peter Sougarides, Samuels & Associates, replied that the team wanted to first see whether the project was moving in the right direction and added that they hope to address everyone's comments and questions in future meetings.
- A member of the public stated that they would like to see the project have less parking.

After confirming that no one else had more comments or questions, a member of the development team expressed their appreciation for the CAC and public's comments and stated that they look forward to starting the formal development review process soon. Lauren noted that there will likely not be another CAC meeting until the development team has filed their Project Notification Form (PNF).

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:47pm.