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January 25, 2010

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Committee on Housing and Community Development held a meeting on January 25, 2010 with Chairman Rebekah Gewirtz presiding and Committee members Aldermen Walter Pero and Dennis Sullivan also present and voting. Also present were Aldermen Maryann Heuston and Sean O'Donovan, State Representatives Denise Provost and Carl Sciortino, State Senator Patricia Jehlen, Director of Transportation Michael Lambert, Wig Zamore and interested members of the public.

188300 – 2nd headhouse for Assembly Sq. Orange line

Mr. Lambert gave a status report on the Orange Line stop for Assembly Square and told the members that a 2nd headhouse would serve the overall development and would also access IKEA. The MBTA will be working to facilitate the final design and will eliminate unnecessary extras. Mr. Zamore said that tremendous progress has been made regarding the 2nd headhouse and he urged the Board of Aldermen to pay attention to 70% design and keep their eyes peeled. It's also important to keep "green" talks with IKEA. 1.2 million people can access IKEA from public transportation and could help discourage vehicular traffic coming to the development. Mr. Zamore said that there needs to participation in next meeting. The Accesibility Committee was instrumental in access for pedestrians in accessibility.

188637 - statement in support of a Green Line station stop at Rt. 16:

Mr. Lambert said the Secretary of Environment released the certificate and asked MEPA to look into the maintenance facility, air quality, the connections at Lechemere and East Cambridge and College Avenue as a terminus and to have a robust public process. The Secretary wants all 4 issues to be analyzed. Before federal funding is received, the secretary wants support for project. There is an issue as to the locations of the stops proposed at Winthrop Street and Ball Square.

Representative Sciortino said the money has been appropriated for the stop at College Avenue but the location doesn't meet STARTS regulations. Ward 7 is under utilized and legal options could result in forcing the state to live up to its obligations under the original plan. Breaching Hillside neighborhood would impact Ward 7 adversely. Representative Sciortino said city should have a unified voice for the proposed extension and added that he will file a Freedom of Information act with DOT on Rt 16 stop.

Funding for the project is in place but if the state does not live up to its commitment, the funds can be pulled back. Representative Provost said that if the project is not extended to Rt 16, the state could be in violation of their agreement. The state is already in violation of the Clean Air Act. Representative Provost said that the Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) doesn't believe that the College Avenue terminus goes far enough

or satisfies the legal requirement. The state's legal commitment of extending the Green Line into Medford has to be flushed in the next environmental report.

Mr. Zamore informed the committee that the new STARTS is funded 50% by the state for application and the balance could be shifted from the highway fund into the station. In the MPO, there is opposition from suburban areas to Somerville receiving excessive funding. According to Mr. Zamore, at last week's MPO meeting there was a call for more analysis for the Route 16 stop. He also stated that the stop has been taken out of the project. Medford would like the project to be more robust and would like it to be studied further.

Mr. Kraus stated the Mayor of Medford is stating different things to different parties. He claims Mayor McGlynn is not against the Route 16 station, but insists on more analysis and wants assurance that 216 Boston Avenue is not taken by eminent domain. Mr. Kraus also stated that the Route 16 station is the only stop on the proposed line that got a haphazard analysis and is puzzled why the Route 16 station is not part of the project.

Mr. Lambert and the Administration firmly believe that the Green Line extension should commence as soon as possible and hope that the Route 16 terminus will be included. The City is advocating to the DOT to commence the project. Mr. Zamore stated a watershed decision was made last week to take Route 16 out of the project. He firmly believes more analysis needs to be completed in order to put the Route 16 station back into the project. The MPO can vote to study and analyze it. He also said the DOT appeal to MPO is an avenue to force the analysis.

Rep. Sciortino stated that the Green Line extension will be a violation of a legal commitment by the state if the Route 16 station is not included. A 2 phase project will not fulfill the legal commitment. He stated that legal avenues may have to be utilized to force the state to complete the project. Chairman Gewirtz requested the action steps needed to force the state to complete the project. She also asked what unified action her committee can take to help the administration move the project forward.

Alderman Pero's motion *that the Administration report back to the Committee by Feb. 1, 2010 regarding a written correspondence from the State on the study for Route 16* was approved.

No papers were acted on.

Alderman Rebekah L. Gewirtz, Chairman
Committee on Housing and Community Development