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February 7, 2008

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

The Committee on Housing and Community Development held a meeting on February 7, 2008 with Chairman Rebekah Gewirtz presiding and Committee members Aldermen William White and Thomas Taylor also present and voting. Also present were Alderman Robert Trane, Monica Lamboy, Phil Ercolini, Rob May and Mark Friedman from SPCD, Ellen Reisner from the Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership (STEP), Acting Secretary of the Executive Office of Transportation David Moller and Thomas Bent from the MPO.

Green Line / Commuter Rail:

Ms. Reisner informed the members that a study would be conducted regarding the linking of the Green Line to the Commuter Rail line and she expressed her concern about the Commuter Rail line, noting that most people traveling to Boston don't use the Commuter Rail. She also maintains that the Commuter Rail line would put more pollutants into the air since it runs on diesel fuel, thereby forcing an environmental review. Alderman White suggested that since the Green Line extension project is being extended 3 years, (to 2014), the Commuter Rail option may be mitigation and a stop gap measure for the delay.

Mr. Moller stated that the state is legally and morally obligated to complete the Green Line extension by 2014 and he told the members that there is no legal requirement for mitigation by the state for the 3-year gap from 2001 to 2014. He stated that, regardless of the 3-year gap, the plan would be better for the city and the state. Mr. Bent stated that the MPO has been communication with the state regarding the 2014 completion date is pleased with the cooperation being received.

Orange Line:

The MBTA is currently finalizing its letter to the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) to initiate the formal application for the Orange Line station at Assembly Square. The FTA recently completed a site visit and is reportedly enthusiastic about the project. The MBTA anticipates receiving application approval by this spring and would then begin the preliminary engineering. Upon completion of the preliminary design, the MBTA would submit a formal grant application to the FTA, triggering the request to recommend that the

funds be appropriated by Congress. IKEA is scheduled to begin construction this spring and anticipates a 2009 completion. Shuttle service would be provided until the Orange Line station is completed in 2013.

Tax Credits:

Mr. Ercolini and Mr. May addressed the committee regarding the New Market Tax Credit, established as part of the Community Renewal Tax Relief Act of 2000. The purpose of the program is to attract private equity investments over the next 7 years to distressed communities by providing a 39% tax credit on qualified equity investments, taken over a 7-year period. A handout was distributed outlining the guidelines, requirements and penalties of the program. Mr. Ercolini noted that the city of Gloucester was able to secure some funding for a fire station from this program.

Community Action Plan:

Ms. Lamboy gave a brief overview of the 1 and 5-year Action Plans, informing the members that significant community outreach has been performed. The plan describes the activities to be undertaken by the city from 2008 to 2013 in the areas of housing, economic and community development, transportation, infrastructure, parks and open space, public services and historic preservation. The deadline for submission to HUD is February 15th.

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

COMMITTEE REPORT

Report of the Committee on Housing and
Community Development, February 7, 2008

In Board of Aldermen

Clerk