



April 9, 2013

Secretary Richard K. Sullivan, Jr.  
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston MA 02114

RE: Comments on ENF for the Union Square Urban Revitalization Plan, Somerville, MA  
EEA #15032

Dear Secretary Sullivan:

WalkBoston has reviewed the ENF document for this project and is very pleased that Somerville is moving to incorporate new approaches to urban development as part of its participation in the plan for the extension of the Green Line into Union Square. As the design is still quite general, our comments focus on basic design elements that should be observed to build a strong set of improvements for pedestrians walking in the area.

Underlying Assumptions

The new emphasis on design for this neighborhood will be based on walking to and from the new transit station. New parking will be quite limited and will not include open parking lots which might diminish future walkability.

Walking and transit access are significant elements of the project design, and the orientation of the new development should encourage walking links between existing retail activities and the new transit station. The project's "transit oriented development" (TOD) approach is in keeping with the Commonwealth's goal of reducing auto dependence by tripling the share of walking, biking and transit trips in the state. The strong walking links between the site and transit should be further detailed as designs progress and explore the best methods for improving access to and from the proposed MBTA station, the retail and office areas and the bus routes that serve the area. Walking access between the site and adjacent residential areas should also be addressed.

Good information about the projected volumes of pedestrians (and bicycles) should inform the design and size of facilities.

WalkBoston has been promoting the need for up-to-date information about future pedestrian traffic to ensure that it is included in all project planning. We hope that this project will develop projections that include the number of transit riders anticipated to move between the new Green Line station, the retail areas of the square and nearby residential areas. The walkway between the station and the other portions of the site should be designed to accommodate the anticipated volume of walkers (and bicyclists if they will use the same route). Projected pedestrian volumes should be included in all designs including those for intersections and traffic signal timing.

The design of walkways and walk routes should be attractive, include high quality landscaping, and feel inviting both day and night, winter and summer. The designs should

consider:

- A network of walkways that encourage people to walk on the site.
- Lighting for safety, using designs that do not spill into residential areas or obscure the night sky.
- Smooth surfaces on all walkways.
- Year round maintenance including shoveling.
- Shade for walkers between the site and the transit station. The possibility of providing shelters or coverings along walkways should also be explored.
- Benches along walkways.
- Signage to help pedestrians find their routes within the site. Signs should also encourage the use of MBTA bus routes and subway facilities. Specific locations of interest should be designated, such as the Prospect Hill Park.
- Sidewalks should be significantly wider than in residential areas because Union Square is a major retail center, and sidewalks should reflect anticipated use by many customers and users (see earlier comment regarding projections of pedestrian volumes).
- Any paths on the site that are multi-use paths should provide appropriate widths to allow for safe shared use by walkers and bicyclists. MassDOT standards (Mass Highway Department Project Development and Design Guide, 2006), call for multi-use paths to be 10—14 feet wide to accommodate both pedestrians and bicycles with wider facilities if substantial volumes of foot and bike traffic are anticipated. A 10-foot path would not be adequate in Somerville.
- Signals and crosswalks throughout the site will need to be fully signalized for safety for all users. In all intersections, pedestrian count-down signals should be employed.

We appreciate your consideration of our comments and look forward to your response.

Please feel free to contact WalkBoston with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bob Sloane". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "S".

Bob Sloane  
Senior Project Manager