



August 8, 2014

Secretary Maeve Vallely Bartlett
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)
Attn: Anne Canaday
100 Cambridge St., Suite 900
Boston MA 02114

RE: Comments on the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Wynn Everett Development
MEPA# 15060

Dear Secretary Vallely Bartlett:

WalkBoston has reviewed this document, in keeping with what we have done for other projects across the state, looking for potential implications for pedestrians as a result of the proposal. We offer the following comments.

Access to the site as a pedestrian

The Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR) for the Wynn Everett Development includes changes in the program between the DEIR and the FEIR. Changes that were introduced reduce the square footage devoted to the hotel, retail space, and convention services and enlarge the gaming areas, food/beverage service areas, entertainment/nightclub areas and support areas. Total square footage of the development has risen from 2,619,234 to 3,038,695 square feet. A total of 3,200 slot machines and 160 gaming tables are proposed, along with a 504-room hotel. The number of parking spaces under the complex has been increased and will house 3,700 cars on-site and 800 off-site.

- The use of public transportation is not encouraged by the present plan. Arrivals by vehicle are emphasized. The project is estimated to generate 9,424 vehicle trips on a Friday. Fewer people will arrive by public transportation – estimate at 3,265 public transportation person trips and 1,454 additional trips if water transportation is provided. (It is unclear where the water transportation riders go if water transportation is not provided, and this analysis should be provided if the proponent does not contractually commit to providing water transportation service.)
- Estimates of the use of public transportation conclude that capacity on public transportation is available, suggesting that more use of public transportation could be encouraged. Bus routes that serve the site generally have excess capacity (although estimates are that use will exceed capacity of Routes 104 and 109 outbound at certain times. Given the capacity available, there are no suggestions of making greater use of bus services on Alford Street at the site entrance or of enhancing capacity on Routes 104 and 109. Orange Line riders are also projected to be accommodated by available capacity. Shuttle service to the site from the Orange Line Sullivan Square Station is proposed, and, if adequately promoted, may at some point in the future result in more patrons arriving by public transportation.

MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE

- Walk-in traffic is not encouraged by the present plan. Walk-ins to the site include public transportation riders as well as nearby residents or employees. We are concerned that the pedestrian access may be unattractive to walkers. Sidewalks along both sides of the entrance drive are not afforded the lavish landscaping and improvements that surround paths along the water. Walk-in customers are not anticipated from the west side of the tracks, though a potential route is to be provided.
- A portion of the riverside might be used for additional pedestrian access. Immediately adjacent to this property, and also along the Mystic River, are lands owned and occupied in part by public agencies that front on Route 99. The proponent should explore with these agencies the potential for riverside access for pedestrians, in effect extending the Mystic River pathway network closer to Sullivan Square and making the walking routes much more attractive. The riverside route could be an attractive alternative for walkers to reach the proponent's property away from the heavy traffic on Route 99.

The on-site paths are major links in the East Coast Greenway/Northern Strand/Bike to the Sea rail trail.

Although the proposal does not encourage access by pedestrians, it does include a very good proposal to extend the on-site walkways into the adjacent Gateway Park. Plans are in place for a regional multi-purpose path between downtown Boston and the New Hampshire state line. Called the Borders to Boston Trail, this route is 28 miles long and traverses 8 communities. Everett has constructed a portion of the path that is currently the southern end of the trail. A link across the Mystic River is required to access Boston. One proposal was to construct a pedestrian bridge over the Mystic River between Everett and Somerville. The engineering study done for this connection resulted in a finding that there was no feasible crossing at this location at an acceptable cost.

The alternative to a new and costly bridge is a connection directly through the proponent's site. The route would connect Gateway Park's riverside paths through the proponent's site, where the route would link with bike paths and sidewalks along Alford Street to gain access into Boston. As it becomes a link in a major-north-south bicycle and pedestrian route, it will need careful attention to design details in the path proposed by the proponent. For a multi-purpose path of this importance, a clear width of 10' may be inadequate to accommodate likely numbers of walkers, joggers and cyclists. The route across the site should be investigated to assure that potential users of the site's waterfront will not be adversely affected by the multi-purpose path. Access at the Alford Street intersection should also be investigated to assure safety for pedestrians and cyclists who may be crossing to get to the site.

Off-site improvements

The proponent has committed to improve several roadways near the site. Alford Street will clearly be in need of improvements because of impacts from this proposal. Alford Street will also need appropriate pedestrian signal equipment (automatic WALK signals during times of day when pedestrians will be present, countdown signals, leading pedestrian indicators, and signal heads at each intersection). Refuge islands at the street centerline should be considered. Crosswalks will need fresh zebra striping, possible curb extensions and potential addition of in-street crosswalk "yield to pedestrian" signs.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important project.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Wendy Landman in cursive script.

Wendy Landman
Executive Director

Handwritten signature of Robert Sloane in cursive script.

Robert Sloane
Senior Planner