



walkBoston

February 12, 2008

Secretary Ian Bowles
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

**RE: Environmental Notification Form (ENF)
Massachusetts Turnpike Parcel 7 Air Rights
MEPA # 14163**

Dear Mr. Bowles:

WalkBoston is the Commonwealth's leading advocate for pedestrians and safe walking. We work throughout the state – encouraging walking, advocating for pedestrian improvements and working for design improvements. We have extensive experience helping residents and local government with pedestrian issues, safe routes to school, and safer street crossings.

We have reviewed the ENF for Massachusetts Turnpike Parcel 7 Air Rights, a proposed mixed-use retail and office redevelopment near Kenmore Square in Boston. The 3.6 acre project site is substantially located on air rights above the Turnpike, and is proposed to be a transit-oriented development where walking assumes a major role as an organizing feature of the development.

Several design elements have been mentioned that will form the pedestrian realm and structure of the development. A central green space along Beacon Street is proposed adjacent to Yawkey Station above the commuter rail lines. Pedestrian corridors with tree-lined sidewalks are proposed between the two sides of the turnpike to better connect Boston University, Audubon Circle, Kenmore Square, the Lansdowne Entertainment District and Fenway Park.

We are commenting at this early stage of project design because we hope that a comprehensive approach to development of the area can be found and carried forward. Our concerns are as follows:

1. There is no comprehensive plan for the entire area. To the extent possible, it would be desirable to include an overall development scheme for the triangle between Beacon Street, Maitland/Overland Street and Brookline Avenue.
2. This proposal appears to be only one option for development, and we anticipate alternatives that will illustrate other possibilities. In particular, the park shown on air rights is likely to be an expensive piece of the development, and we are concerned that it may not be constructed as shown given the complexities of the grade and access requirements. We hope that the next filing will provide much more detail about circulation and design alternatives.
3. The total number of parking spaces necessary to meet the zoning requirements for the triangle area should be estimated, and then vehicular entrances and exits to

parking garages (both on-site and off) should be related to pedestrian corridors to ensure that the pedestrian realm is not adversely affected and that pedestrian safety is maximized.

4. A comprehensive plan for the area should include standards of development, including dimensions of sidewalks and other pedestrian facilities.
5. Estimates of projected pedestrian traffic should be included – not only for daily traffic and peak hours but also for the peak periods associated with major events at Fenway Park.
6. It appears that new (or extended) streets such as the extension of Yawkey Way are intended to provide pedestrian connections by sidewalks across the properties that sit between Brookline Ave. and the Turnpike Air Rights Parcel 7. To what extent will these streets be developed as part of this project, and what are the dimensions of the sidewalks to be included?
7. An unnamed street is shown midway between Overland Street and the extension of Yawkey Way as a potential connection for pedestrians. Is this a real possibility?
8. Will the connection between Overland Street and Maitland Street be constructed as part of this project? What are the proposed sidewalk specifications?
9. Burlington Avenue (west and parallel to Maitland/Overland Street) may also be a possibility for pedestrian connection between Beacon Street and Brookline Ave. Will this potential connection be included in analyses of the site?
10. How will the project handle the differential of elevations on walkways between Beacon Street and Brookline Avenue? Are long ramps or stairways contemplated?
11. Traffic signals may need to be provided at Beacon and the intersection of Maitland Streets and at the entrances to the proposed parking garage on Beacon Street and Brookline Avenue. These signals should include pedestrian protections including level sidewalks, warning signals and signs, crosswalk striping and count-down signals. The size of the garage suggests that these entrances will need to be carefully designed and managed to minimize their impacts on pedestrians.
12. If ventilation fans are required for the underground Turnpike and rail lines, they should be sited to avoid contaminating areas where there will be concentrations of pedestrian activity.
13. The project should take into account the ongoing studies of vehicular and pedestrian traffic, including potential demand for pedestrian connections to either the Kenmore Square subway station or the Fenway Green Line stop. We assume that much of this data will be gathered in the area-wide transportation study presently being undertaken by the BRA.

Thank you for the opportunity to pose questions for further study and comment on this document, which sets in motion a new area of development in the heart of the city. Please feel free to contact us for clarification or additional comments.

Sincerely

Wendy Landman
Executive Director

Robert Sloane
Senior Planner