

CCP

COMMUNITY

CORRIDOR

PLANNING

GREEN LINE EXT

Summary of Results

Community Workshop
Green Line Extension
through Somerville and Medford



June 2010



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Community Corridor Planning (CCP)

is a coalition of:

- Groundwork Somerville
- Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership (STEP)
- Somerville Community Corporation (SCC)
- Somerville Community Health Agenda

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- Facilitators: Rte. 16, Meira Soloff; College Ave, Karsten Hatch; Ball Square, Adam Rich; Lowell Street, Saladin Islam; Gilman Square, Josh Wairi; Washington/Brick Bottom, Mekdes Hagos; Union Square, Janine Lotti, Claudia Rabino, Catalina Acosta
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- All workshop participants (complete list in Appendix A)

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Document prepared by Technical Assistance Specialists from the U.S. EPA TASC program.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community Corridor Planning (CCP)—a coalition of Groundwork Somerville, the Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership (STEP), the Somerville Community Corporation (SCC) and the Somerville Community Health Agenda—organized a three-session workshop in order to raise awareness and interest in the station designs for the anticipated Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority’s (MBTA) Green Line Extension. The purpose of the workshops was to familiarize community participants with the project and encourage them to actively participate in a civic engagement processes, in anticipation of a series of workshops and public hearings to be held by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) addressing the same project. An introductory session was held on Friday evening, May 21, 2010, a half-day design charrette on Saturday afternoon, May 22, and a report back session on Wednesday evening, June 2.

In addition to this document, a PowerPoint document and a DVD archive the groups’ final presentations.

Over 120 members of the Somerville, Medford and Cambridge communities participated along with interested citizens from the metropolitan region. Teams were organized around the seven stations to evaluate the current MassDOT concept design, articulate the relationship between the station and the surrounding community, and make recommendations to improve both the stations and the surrounding neighborhoods.

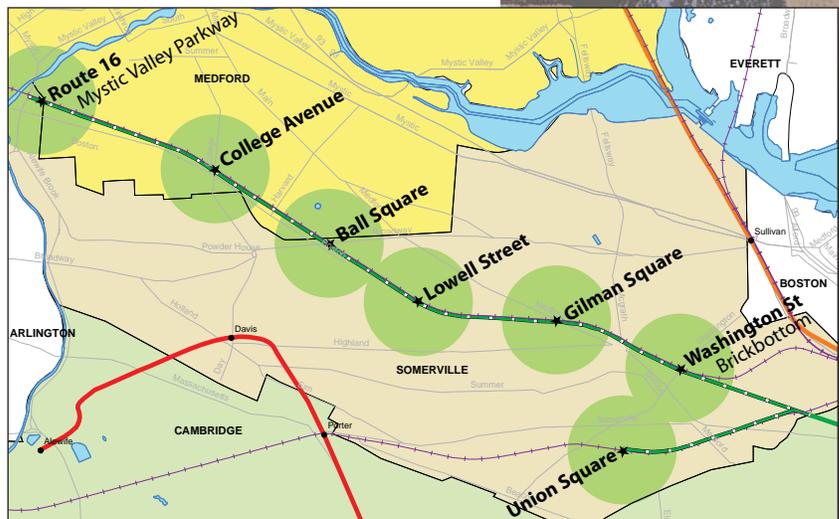
The results of the analysis, designs and recommendations are described in the following pages on a station-by-station basis. However, seven common themes and issues were raised that apply to all of the station areas.

- 1. Community** – The construction of new stations creates an unprecedented opportunity for community building. The stations cannot exist in isolation and must become part of the surrounding community: physically, economically and socially. This integration of station and community can only be achieved with the support and coordination of MassDOT and its design team, the cities of Somerville, Medford and Cambridge, and representatives of each area working together in a spirit of cooperation.
- 2. Connections** – Strong walking, biking, transit and spatial connections must be provided between the stations and the surrounding neighborhoods in all directions. Walking to each station must be encouraged by providing well-lit, accessible, visible and safe routes between the neighborhoods and the station. Bicycling to each station must be encouraged by providing paths, on-street facilities and bicycle storage. Strong connections between the planned Community Path and the station are of critical importance. The principles of Universal Design must be applied to provide the best

possible access for users of all abilities. In many cases where MassDOT's early concept showed a station entrance located on one side of a busy street, a recommendation was made for a second entrance provided on the opposite side of the street so that patrons do not have to cross the street.

3. **Larger investment in infrastructure** – A station is more than an entrance and a platform. Stations should become highly visible identifiers for the neighborhood providing opportunities for transit-oriented development, public art and open space amenities.
4. **Station as icon** – These stations will become symbols of the neighborhoods they serve and a high-quality design is important. While the platforms are often below grade or otherwise hidden, the station design should incorporate highly visible elements to mark the station's entrance and its importance in the community.
5. **Places where people come together** - Seize the opportunity to create meeting spaces, green spaces and plaza spaces that serve as community crossroads and common grounds for the entire neighborhood.
6. **Neighborhood activity and business** – Stations will change the travel patterns in neighborhoods and this increased level of activity and access must be leveraged to support existing local businesses and create opportunities for new businesses and jobs.
7. **Sustainability** – Sustainability should not only be considered in terms of building design, energy conservation and the generation of materials, but also in the larger sense of economic development and community stability.

As MassDOT's concept station plans included in the draft Environmental Impact Statement represent a first step toward a station design, the summaries included in this report represent a first step toward neighborhood planning. Stakeholders for each station look forward to working with MassDOT and the cities of Somerville, Medford and Cambridge in order to make these stations an integral part of each neighborhood and a catalyst for community vitality.



Green Line Extension stations addressed in the workshops. Circles around station locations show quarter-mile radii, equivalent to approximately a five-minute walk.





The Washington Street/Brickbottom station location is in a largely forgotten area and the proposed MassDOT location on Joy Street lacks visibility. This station will serve [five] distinct neighborhoods and create a new crossroads for Somerville.

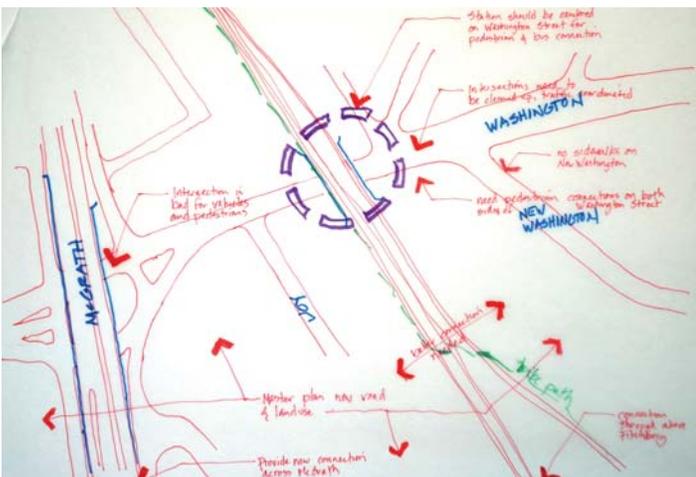
The station would be better located on the railroad bridge above Washington Street where it would be more visible and centrally located while providing access from both sides of the street. This arrangement would also allow for more direct bus connections to the station from both sides of Washington Street.

The MBTA-owned land behind Cafe Belo should be used to create a retail anchor that would, along with the station, create a sense of place. The confluence of the Community Path and people cycling to the station on other routes suggest a bicycle shop as part of the development around the station.

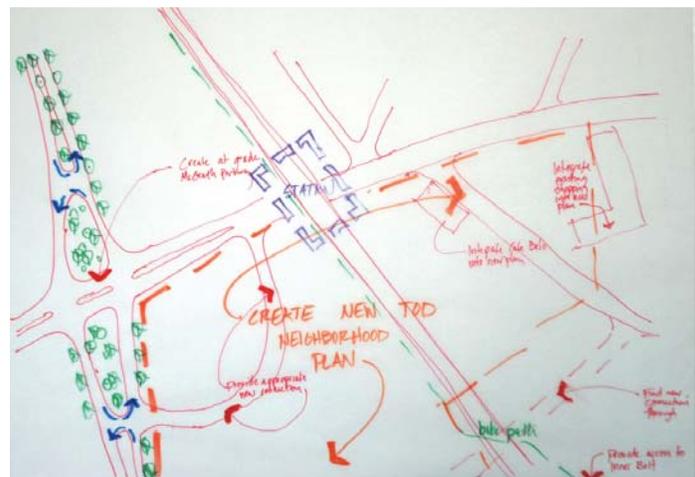
Future plans for the area call for the removal of the McGrath Highway viaduct which will create a stronger connection to the station from the west.

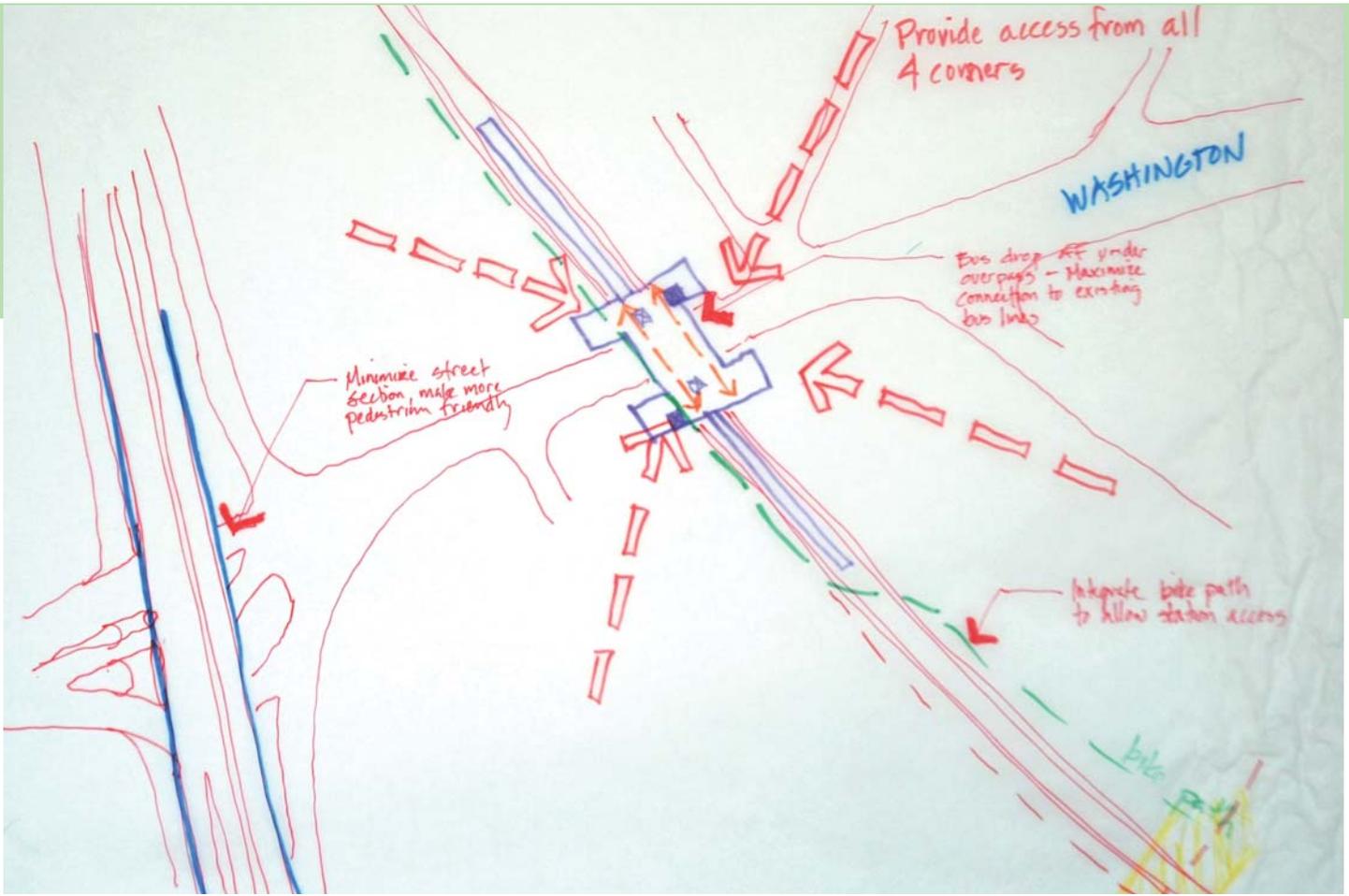
A new bridge that will support the station should be designed to be a thinner structure to allow for the raising of Washington Street to reduce flooding problems.

Issues



Neighborhood





Plan B was the team's preferred option.

View of existing sidewalk along Washington Street, looking east from Joy Street.



The proposed station serves five neighborhoods.





Gilman Square is not an easily recognized place for those from outside the neighborhood. The adjacent Somerville City Hall, High School and Library buildings dominate the landscape and are the images in most peoples' minds when they think of this area. The proposed station is located at the bottom of a steep slope behind these civic buildings. The hill creates a formidable barrier between the station and important destinations for transit users. Making connections between these destinations and the station is the key challenge for this location.

Medford Street is a high-volume street, with several gas stations. Safe and attractive pedestrian connections to the station from all directions is critical to the station success.

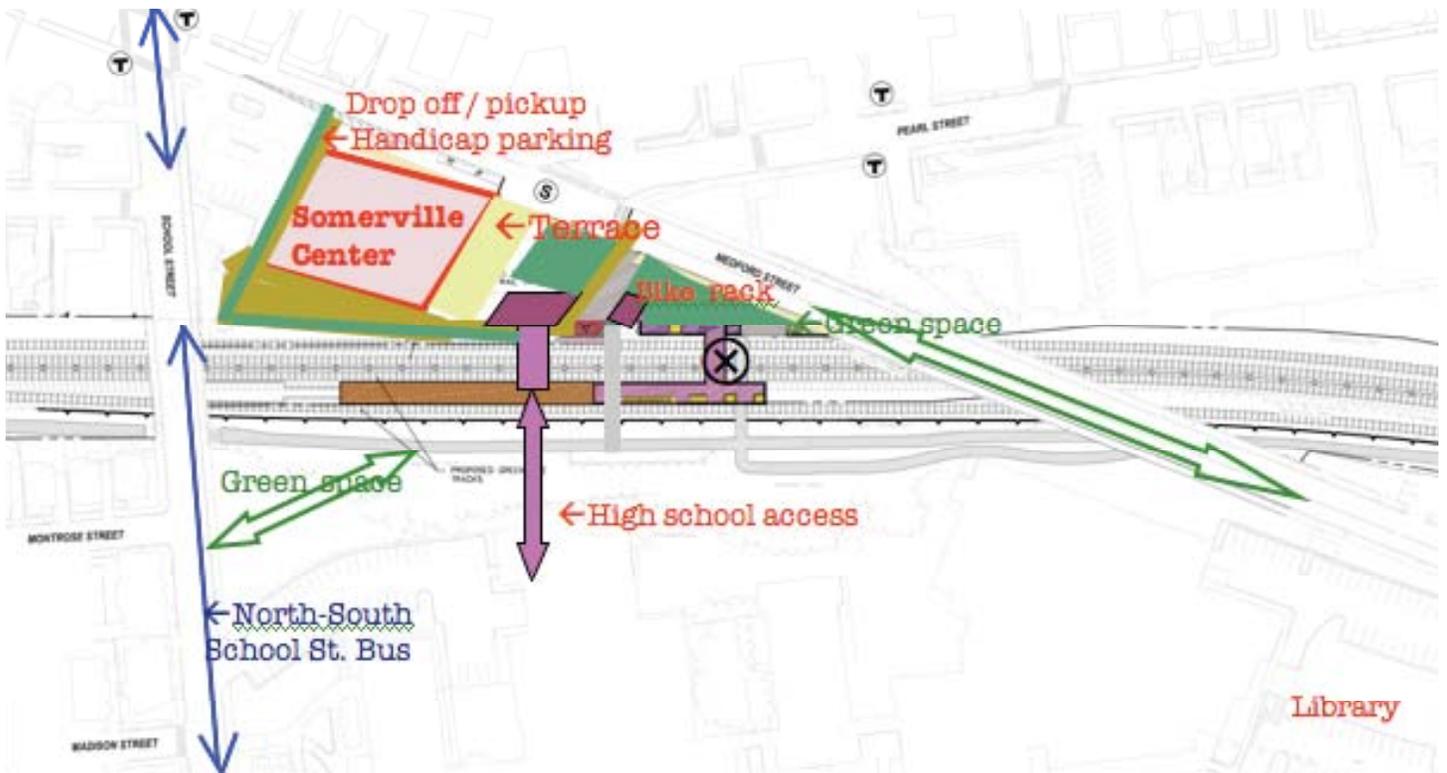
A city-owned building next to the station site, a former peanut butter factory, should be redeveloped as part of the station area plan. This is a logical site for transit-oriented development and an opportunity to create a *Somerville Center* which might include a mini-mall with retail, restaurants and—most importantly—jobs for teenagers. A job center for teenagers is also recommended. The removal of the small additions to the main building will provide needed circulation space for the building and the station.

The Community Path should be on the Medford Street side of the tracks at this location. The diagram on the next page shows a relocated Community Path crossing closer to School Street that connects with a larger bicycle storage facility and also links access to the high school.

The creation of this station should help justify a north-south bus route connecting Ten Hills and Union Square.

Photo showing the approximate site of the station in the foreground and the city-owned building beyond.





East

The creation of a Somerville Center next to the station will increase the vitality of the area.

The steep slope between the railroad tracks and the high school presents the greatest challenge to designing connections on this site.



The Lowell Street station is located in a primarily residential area. Recently two large industrial buildings, immediately adjacent to the proposed station site, have been demolished to clear land for a new residential development.

The crest of Lowell Street as it passes over the tracks makes it a particularly difficult location for a street crossing because it limits sight distances for both pedestrians and vehicles. A second station entrance on the opposite side of the street is recommended—along with a kiss & ride drop-off. A shift of or extension to the platform may be required for a second entrance.

Because the Community Path meets Lowell Street at this location and because the station will attract additional bicycle riders, Lowell Street must be designed to accommodate bicycles. The Community Path's connection to the station should be simple and direct, without a street crossing if possible, convenient and safe. Plentiful bicycle parking is essential. Also, because of the Community Path and station, pedestrian traffic will significantly increase. Lowell Street should be designed as a promenade with wider sidewalks, station entry plazas and street trees.

Ideally, street-level retail would be part of the Max-Pak development adjacent to the station, but the difference in elevation between the street and the parcel make this infeasible. Therefore, a small neighborhood retail development should be created south of the station between Alpine and Albion streets.



Lowell Street is a corridor through a predominantly residential neighborhood. The industrial buildings shown in the bird's-eye view have been demolished for a multi-family housing development.





The Ball Square team showed many examples of station designs from other places and some of these can be seen on pages 22 and 23.

The Ball Square station straddles the city limit between Somerville and Medford, with the station entrance in Somerville and the platform in Medford. This station represents a huge opportunity for place-making and innovation.

Broadway should become the front door to the station with the bridge and station designed as an integrated whole. A redesigned Broadway would include bus drop-off lanes on both sides and a second entrance on the south side of Broadway to allow platform access without the need for crossing the street. Bicycle lanes in both directions and a median are also included in the concept.

Several access options to the station were explored. One requires a southward shift in the platform in order to accommodate a second entrance on the south side of Broadway. A second option does not move the platform but would require a pedestrian tunnel under Broadway for connections to the south side of the street. A third option would utilize a mid-block street crossing instead of going under Broadway.

The current pedestrian islands should be enlarged to the full extent of the striped pavement area and become small but usable open spaces.

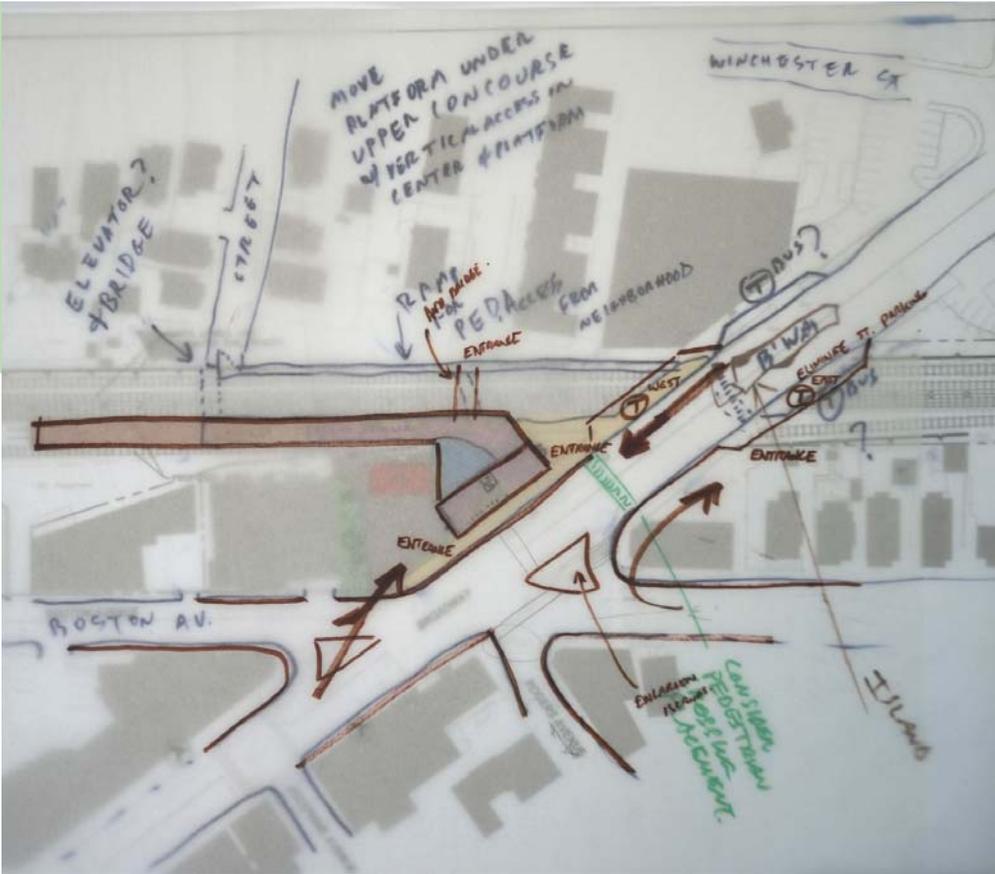
A secondary connection from the Winchester Street neighborhood over the tracks to the station should be included as part of the design.

Elements that should be included in any design include:

- A pedestrian bridge over the tracks for increased connectivity
- Pedestrian wayfinding
- Bike lanes
- Bike cages at the station
- Art/sculpture
- Grassy medians on Broadway
- Larger pedestrian refuge islands
- Streetscape improvements: wider sidewalks, new lighting, street trees, high-quality materials, bulb-outs and shorter pedestrian crossings
- Bold lighting design
- Ball-Square logo



Ball Square expressed graphically as a logo which could also be used as a form for bollards and other elements.



Diagrams and sketches generated at the workshop were used as a basis for a more refined design presented at the final session.



Ground-level and bird's-eye views of Broadway with bus drop-off, bicycle lanes, median and landscaped traffic island.



Existing traffic islands provide minimal refuge; striped areas represent zones for expansion and place making.



The College Avenue station is surrounded by Tufts University and, beyond the campus, dense residential neighborhoods. The station location is a natural crossroads for the area and a plaza at the intersection of Boston Avenue and College Avenue should be an essential part of both the station design and the public realm infrastructure. Connections to Medford’s residential neighborhoods to the north must not be neglected in the planning and design of the station and its surroundings.

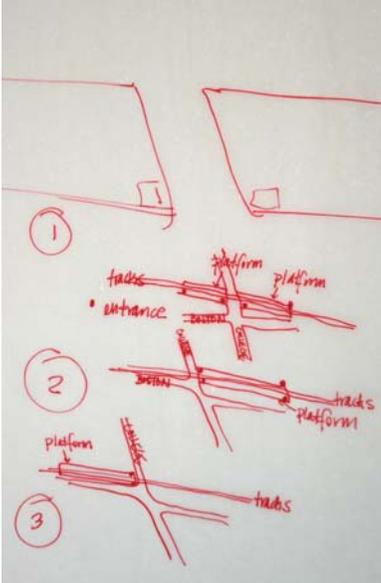
College is an important intermediate step both in life and on the Green Line. This station should not be a terminus, but a plaza where college and citizenship meet.

With many people arriving on campus from this location, the station will be a gateway to Tufts and the surrounding community. Skilled urban design is needed to integrate the station with the rest of the campus and with any new development along the north side of Boston Avenue east of the station. Access to the platform from both sides of College Avenue is desirable.

Off-street bus loading is desirable adjacent to the station.

Topography is a huge challenge. Not only is it challenging at the station itself, where the platform is roughly twenty-five feet below the street, but it is also challenging across Boston Avenue where the main campus rises thirty or more feet from the street. Dowling Hall and garage may provide one path for vertical circulation. Images from a 2005 Tufts University Campus Master Plan show a proposed pedestrian bridge over Boston Avenue connecting to a plaza west of where the station is now planned. Although the currency of the master plan is unknown, the recognition of the crossroads nature of the plaza at the intersection of Boston and College avenues is undeniable.

The visibility of this station is constrained by topography and street orientation. Tall elements, such as T signs or wind turbines that can be seen from a distance, are recommended to mark this location as a gateway.



Diagrams of platform positioned 1) on both sides of College Avenue 2) to the southwest and 3) to the northeast.

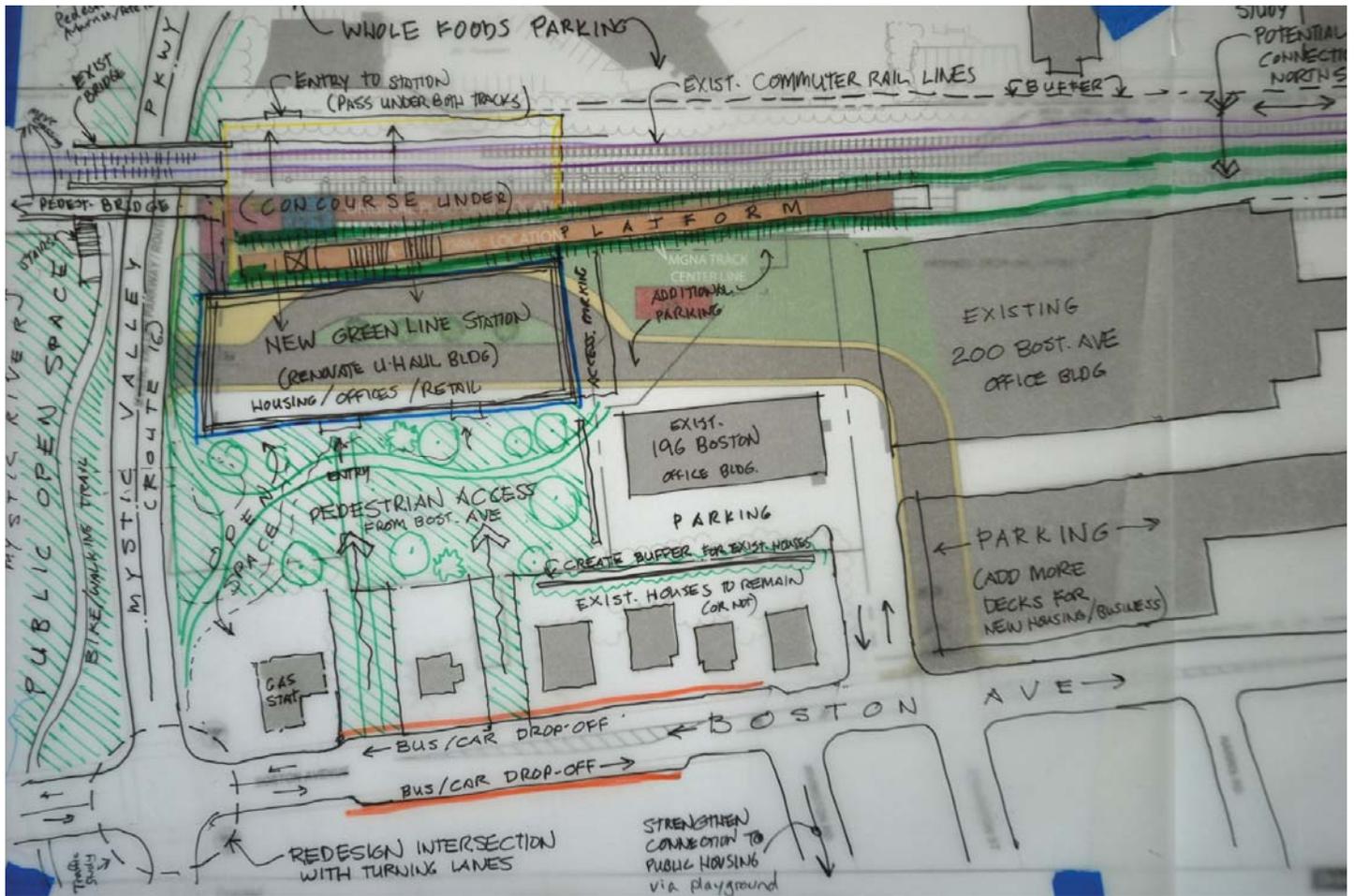


The Route 16/Mystic Valley Parkway station is in the City of Somerville but is surrounded on three sides by Medford. In addition to bringing service to Medford Hillside, this station will serve West Somerville, West Medford and East Arlington. Strong connections to each community, for all modes, are critical.

This station is a perfect opportunity for transit-oriented development. Previous work by the Medford Green Line Neighborhood Alliance recommended a number of modifications to the MassDOT concept plan and the CPP Workshop team built on this work.

Recommendations include:

1. Realign the Green Line tracks so that they are parallel to the U-Haul building and locate the platform in the area currently occupied by the addition to the U-Haul building. This reduces the impacts to adjacent commercial buildings.
2. Reuse the U-Haul building for station functions and redevelop the remainder of the building for mixed use with an emphasis on convenience retail, office and housing. Not only does the building present an opportunity for redevelopment, but keeping it takes advantage of the industrial architecture that defines the area visually and historically. Reuse of the existing U-Haul structure makes the Green Line Extension even greener – the greenest building is generally the one that already exists.
3. Create an open space in the area in front of the building, replacing the impervious pavement required by the current land use with green space.
4. Place bus stops and a pick-up/drop-off area along Boston Avenue with connections through the open space. Add a path either 1) between the houses, 2) by removing one or more houses, or 3) by removing the gas station.
5. Create a safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle connection across Route 16 to West Medford on a bridge parallel to the railroad bridge. Create a pedestrian and bicycle concourse under the rail embankment connecting the Whole Foods site and the Walking Court elderly housing project to the platform. Consider the bicycle connections within a five-mile radius to ensure safe and convenient connections to this terminal station.



The integration of the station with the U-Haul building is a key element of this alternative.

View looking west of the existing railroad tracks. The end of the U-Haul building can be seen in the background.



“To make a more perfect Union”

The Union Square I team took the approach of thinking boldly and using “basically just good urban design.”

The basic premise is to make the station larger to create a sense of place.

A future extension to Porter Square must be preserved with any design.

The vitality of the Square can be extended to make a strong connection to the station through the use of wide sidewalks, an active street-level, sidewalk cafes and a plaza area at the station.

In addition to the primary access at Prospect Street, a second pedestrian link should be created from Somerville Avenue to Emerson Street, crossing Prospect Street and the station plaza, and continuing to Allen Street.

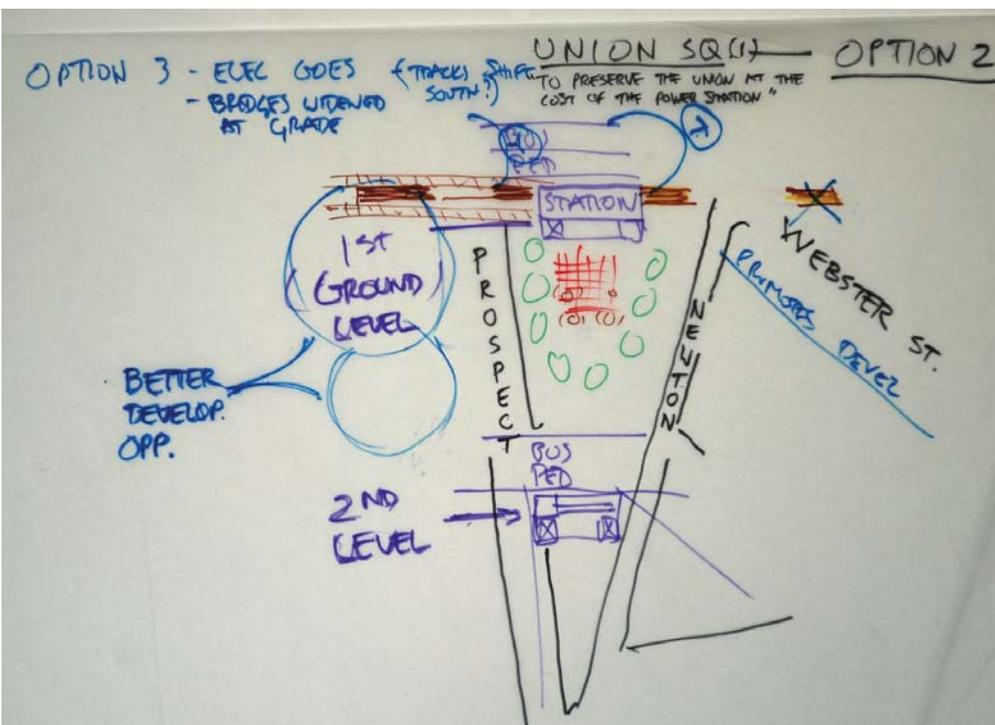
Bus connections to the Green Line station are critical and a bus station, rather than simply a bus stop, should be created. A bus station should be located above the track, between Prospect Street and Webster Avenue.

The station should not be a bare bones, functional station, but rather an elegant design that is an asset to the neighborhood.

The team looked at a second alternative that moved the Green Line station to the other side of Prospect Street, in the parcel currently occupied by the electrical substation. While this would require that the substation be relocated, the Green Line station would be more centrally located to Union Square and allow access from both Webster Avenue and Prospect Street. This option also leaves the entire area east of Prospect for redevelopment.



Option 1 integrates the station into the surrounding community through the use of additional off-street paths, a wide retail-lined sidewalk along Prospect Street and a plaza adjacent to the station.



Option 2 utilizes the area currently occupied by the electrical substation and leaves the east side of Prospect Street for redevelopment.



Green Union Gateway

The Union Square station can be the center of a critical node that will unite the areas around the station. But in order to be a civic center, the node must be larger than just the station.

A park adjacent to the station can create a refuge from the heart of the Square. The park must be designed for multi-generational use. This new civic node must be strongly linked into a network of open space around Union Square.

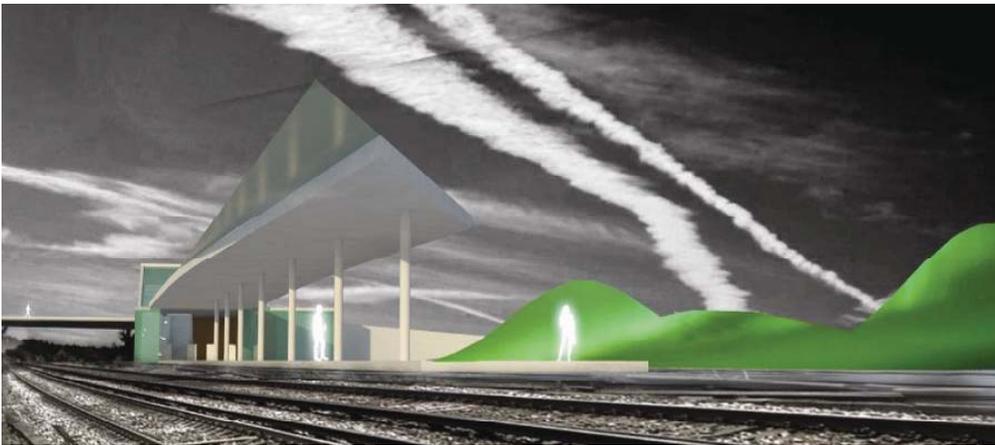
While Prospect Street is the main connection between the station and Union Square, a secondary, more scenic route, should be created with a plaza from Somerville Avenue. This plaza should have benches and interpretive elements that tell the story of the history of the area.

The platform must be covered for its entire length—as should platforms at all stations—and this presents an opportunity to design a highly-visible canopy that will be a symbol of Union Square.

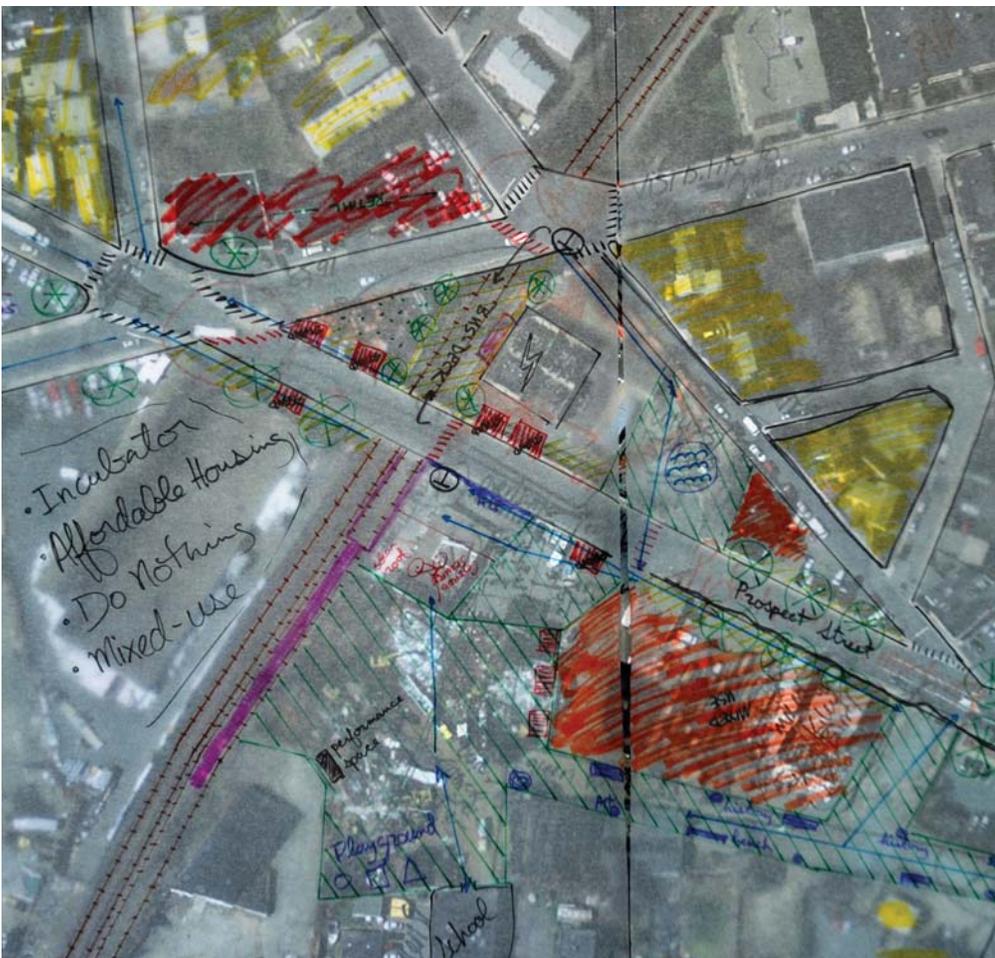
The station needs a full-fledged bus transfer that is seamless.

The new zoning for Union Square should promote mixed-use in the same building.

Extending the line to Porter Square is a logical and good idea for future generations and the design of this station should support that concept.



A distinctive canopy can act as a neighborhood identifier while protecting passengers from weather.

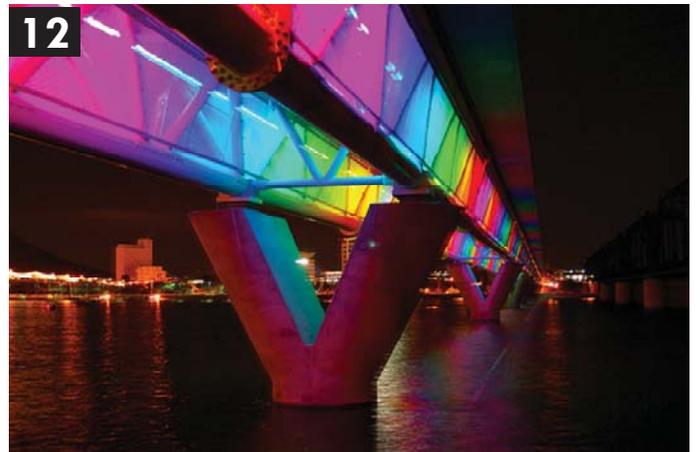


Prospect Street must be redeveloped to create a strong link between the station and the heart of Union Square.

Examples of Station Elements from Other Locations Presented by Community Members

1. Station canopy in Charlotte
2. Elevator and stair access at RTD station in Denver
3. Center loading station platform in Barcelona
4. Green Line station at Newton Highlands
5. Pedestrian tunnel in Detroit
6. Pedestrian connector at O'Hare Airport
7. Pedestrian bridge in Melbourne
8. Pedestrian bridge in Melbourne
9. Train station tunnels in New Haven
10. Pedestrian subway tunnel in Munich
11. I-25W bridge with color changing LEDs in Minneapolis
12. Phoenix Light Rail bridge in Tempe
13. Pedestrian bridge in Des Moines
14. Enclosed pedestrian and bicycle bridge in Glasgow





Appendix A: List of Participants

Jason Zogg	Ball Square	Adam Chamberlain	Union 2
Trey Joseph Wadsworth	Ball Square	Joe Beckmann	Union 2
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		Sue Silva	Washington St.
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Lawrence Paoella	College Avenue	Miriam Coutintro	Washington St.
Douglas Carlson	College Avenue	Kevin Nice	Washington St.
Kpafun	College Avenue	Steve Kaiser	Washington St.
Wig Zamore	College Avenue	Peter Marquez	Washington St.
		Heather Van Aelst	Washington St.
Roberta Bauer	Gilman Square		
Dick Bauer	Gilman Square	Mike Korginski	Andrea Yakovakis
Gabriel Maldonado	Gilman Square	Robby Lyons	Miriam Coutinho
Kathy Castagna	Gilman Square	Brian Coveny	Ivo Coutinho
Marian Bremer	Gilman Square	Chang Ling Guo	Peter Gong
Chris Becker	Gilman Square	Chris Furlong	Frank V. Cresta
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		Miles L-k	Elizabeth Murphy
Karen Molloy	Lowell Street	Sara Babsin	Consuelo Perez
Elizabeth Fong	Lowell Street	Xiaoyen Yue	Alison Felix
Liz Fong	Lowell Street	Charlotte Brett	Carl Dierker
Alan Moore	Lowell Street	Nick Derr	Chelsea Clarke
Donna Hill	Lowell Street	John Caruso	David Taber
Turgay Erturk	Lowell Street	Jose Rivera	Jim Gallagher
Kyann Anderson	Lowell Street	Nilson Melo	Joel Swets
Shauna Gillies-Smith	Lowell Street	Julia Prang	Rona Gregory
Lynn Weissman	Lowell Street	Kathryn Johnson	Marybeth Smuts
		Paul Cote	Maaza Mekuria
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John R. Elliott	Route 16	Elisabeth Bayel	Jason Ries
Ken Krause	Route 16	Douglas Carlson	Karen Krolak
Roberta Cameron	Route 16	Jessica Hicks	
Doug Carr	Route 16		
Anna Szybonski	Route 16		
Meira Soloff	Route 16		
Catalina Acosta	Union 1		
Jim McGinnis	Union 1		
Joseph Lyons	Union 1		
Alex Epstein	Union 1		
Steve Mulder	Union 1		
Kevin J Madden	Union 1		
Curtis Perrin	Union 1		
Kate Michael	Union 1		
Andrea Nesmachinov	Union 1		
Dave Nesmachinov	Union 1		
Kristie Chase	Union 1		

Appendix B: DVD of Team Presentations

To see a recording of the team presentations at the report-back session go to:

http://www.somervillestep.org/2010/07/video_of_ideas.html

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