

Rutherford Avenue Public Meeting #6

October 8, 2009

6:30-8:30PM

Schraffts Center Café

Meeting notes during comments/question and answer:

Compiled by Rachel Mercier, BTB

Comment: One resident most concerned with the size of trucks on Rutherford Avenue and the noise and dirt they produce

Response: The goal of the design project is to get the truck traffic back onto I93 and off of the surface streets. BTB has already talked with Boston Sand and Gravel about alternative routes for their trucks.

Comment from Kate Kennan: The surface option does a better job of knitting the neighborhood back together – one of the fundamental goals of the project.

Question: What are the development opportunities with the surface option?

Question: What will happen with the commuter parking lot at Sullivan Square? And what will new, additional surface parking become? Will it be used and abused by commuters? Will it become resident permit parking? Will it be 2-hour parking?

Comment from Liz Levin: The goal of this project is to design a neighborhood street that compliments the scale of the neighborhood. This means creating a street that provides good connections for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Question: What will maintenance be like for the new green space created under either option? Concerned that it will become trashy, rundown, and abandoned and look worse than the current Rutherford Avenue.

Comment: There should be bicycle lanes on the western side of Rutherford Avenue in addition to the multi-use path.

Comment: It will be important for the neighborhood to be involved with defining the development parcels, helping with the RFP, and having a role in selecting the developers.

Comment from Dorey Clark: Proponent of narrowing roadway, widening sidewalk, and adding bike lanes – surface option.

Comment from Ken Stone: Biggest problem with park maintenance is soil. At City Park, bad soil was brought in which did not allow water to infiltrate and killed many of the trees.

Comment from MassBike: Concerns with underpass option as it creates a discontinuous bicycle path through Sullivan Square and encourages traffic to drive more quickly. Slowing traffic will create a safer and more pleasant environment.

Comment from Bill Bushy: In favor of the surface option. The underpass option will be difficult from a development perspective because the air rights parcel will most likely be unfeasible for development.

Comment: Talk with MassPort about Spice Street connection

Comment from Ivey St. John: The information on both options has been presented in a fair and unbiased manner.

Comment: Concerned with improving Rutherford Avenue at the expense of Main Street. Construction has already caused traffic increases down Main Street and there is concern this will worsen if Rutherford Avenue is further constrained.

Question: How much work has been done with the MBTA and State to coordinate cleanup of Rutherford?

Comment: Look into the area where Caldwell Street comes down to Maffa Way and Cambridge Street comes across.

Response: Would be happy to take a walk with community to look at this area and study it closer

Question: Everett resident interested in coordination with Urban Ring Phase II.

Comment: Vote to keep the underpass. Congestion has gotten worse with the underpass closed and the underpass is needed to alleviate traffic where potential bottlenecks can occur.

Comment: Supportive of surface option. Surface option will slow down traffic and hopefully discourage cars from cutting through Charlestown.

Comment from Tony McGuinness: In favor of the surface option. The traffic currently is very loud and Rutherford is a blighted strip down the middle of Charlestown.

Question: Can we bring back the I93N ramp at City Square?

MEETING NOTES***DRAFT***

Meeting Date: October 8, 2009

Meeting Topic: Public Meeting #6

Meeting Location: Shrafft Center

Project: Rutherford Avenue Corridor Study
CGI Project #28018

Prepared by: Margarita Iglesia

Copies: Michael H. Hall
Steven G. Cecil
File


The purpose of the meeting was to review alternative options for the reconfiguration of roadway alignments at Sullivan Square. Two options were reviewed and compared – Option 1 (At Grade) and Option 3 (Underpass). These options were selected at the previous Public Meeting, held on July 23, as the two preferred options out of a group of four. The options reviewed on July 23 included two layouts in which Main Street and Maffa Way were separated, and two layouts in which Main Street and Maffa Way were combined. The consensus at that meeting was to continue advancing the design of the two options in which Main and Maffa were separated (Options 1 and 3) and discard the options in which they were combined (Options 2 and 4).

Of the two options presented on October 8, Option 1 (At Grade) proposes that the existing underpass at Sullivan Square be filled in and Rutherford Avenue be reconstructed at grade. Option 3 (Underpass) proposes that the underpass be retained and decked over to create opportunities for a new community open space and air rights development.


The meeting was attended by approximately 35 people, including members of the community and representatives of the Boston Transportation Department (BTD), the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) and state transportation agencies.


Vineet Gupta from BTD started the meeting with a recount of the project goals and a progress update. Mike Hall from Tetra Tech Rizzo and Steve Cecil from The Cecil Group, the project planning consultants, presented a series of PowerPoint slides describing the two layout options and their key features. The presentation also compared the two options regarding their proposed alignment, traffic and transportation characteristics, traffic volume distribution, open space and development opportunities, and resulting urban design character.

The presentation was followed by an open group discussion, which served to express and clarify questions, opinions and concerns associated with each of the proposed



layout options. The following comments and questions were made as part of the discussion:

- Although the options have their relative merits, a key concern that needs to be addressed in more detail is the truck traffic. Trucks generate a lot of noise and dirt. A main goal needs to be set and achieved to get the trucks to go on I93.
 - This planning process offers an opportunity and a choice to re-knit both sides of the community together.
 - A [Charlestown] resident expressed her preference for the Underpass option, because in her opinion the traffic on the surface could be terrible in the At Grade option. However, the proposed use and configuration of Spice Street could represent a great benefit by channeling and redirecting bus traffic.
 - The proposed reduction in the number of through traffic lanes (from 8 lanes in the Underpass option to 4 lanes in the At Grade) seems to be conducive to more traffic congestion. Will people stay on Rutherford Avenue? It will get more congested. *Response from the project team:* A lot of the current traffic congestion is due to odd angles at intersections. The proposed layout options would ease traffic circulation by improving intersection layouts.
 - Why is it necessary to create on-street parking spaces? Will it be created for residents or for commuters? *Response from the project team:* The City will work with the community to set parking use limitations and restrictions based on community consensus.
 - A [Charlestown] resident and member of a walking group expressed support for the surface option (At Grade option), because it allows for more connections and it will help people to walk or ride their bicycles to Sullivan Station.
 - A [Charlestown] resident would like to know the cost of maintaining the proposed new open space. Who will maintain it and at what cost? *Response from the project team:* Providing for maintenance costs may be a challenge. However, there are precedents in similar projects in which maintenance has been secured as a state budget item. Funding options will be studied in more detail as part of the next planning steps.
 - Private residents are now going a great length to support maintenance of City Square. [Maintenance of the new community open space] should be assumed as a budget line item.
 - The proposed shared path will run along the eastern side of the corridor. There could also be a bicycle lane of the western side. Assuming that this could happen, retaining the Underpass at Sullivan Square would widely restrict this option.
 - Hopefully the new development parcels will be defined and released for development as quickly as it happened at City Square. *Response from the project team:* That is the goal and the BRA will help to facilitate that process.
 - A Somerville resident expressed support for the proposed At Grade option, recounting how the process of redesigning and narrowing down East Broadway Avenue in Somerville was lengthy and difficult. However, East Broadway is now more walkable, and people in Somerville are excited about the prospect of enhanced pedestrian and bike connections associated with the surface (At Grade) option.
 - Several years after the reconstruction of City Square, there have been problems with dying trees and plantings because the soil that was brought in
- 





was bad and did not accept water. Please do not make the same mistake again.

- A board member of Mass Bikeway expressed his concern with the Underpass option, since it would make it difficult to pass through Sullivan Square. Having the ability to connect helps maintain the use of the entire bicycle network. Slowing traffic down while allowing cars to move through would make it safer for bicycles.
- A [Charlestown] resident expressed support for the idea of a surface road (At Grade option). Air rights development is difficult and costly; there is a project on air rights at City Square that has not been fully occupied yet.
- A [Charlestown] resident expressed her thanks for the amount of factual information provided by the presentation.
- A [Charlestown] resident was concerned by the idea of dispersing traffic. Although the concept is good, it is critical to ensure that Main Street will not attract through-traffic to the neighborhood.
- A [Charlestown] resident commended the great work, and expressed support for the surface (At Grade) option.
- A Somerville resident from Mt. Vernon Street expressed her hopes that there will be collaboration between the cities of Boston and Somerville to improve pedestrian access to Sullivan Square and Sullivan Station for the Somerville blocks immediately to the north and west of the square. *Response from the project team:* BTD will contact the City of Somerville to follow up.
- A [Charlestown] resident expressed support for the Underpass option given the existing daily traffic congestion. In her opinion, congestion got worse since the old overpass was removed and she would like to see more convincing information about possible bottlenecks. *Response from the project team:* The City and the planning consultants will come back with more detailed configurations.
- A [Charlestown] resident expressed support for the Underpass option because it would help move the traffic through the square. Rutherford [traffic] is a nightmare; school buses congest traffic in the afternoon, idling traffic creates noise and pollution.
- A [Charlestown] resident expressed support for the surface (At Grade) option because, in his opinion, fast trucks and cars going through the underpass are noisier than idling or slow moving traffic.
- There used to be a ramp connecting from City Square directly onto I93 northbound. This ramp was closed as part of the I93 reconstruction and, as a result, there seems to be substantially more traffic on Rutherford Avenue. Why was this ramp closed? *Response from the project team:* BTD and the planning consultants will inquire to find out.
- A [Charlestown] resident would like to see the traffic model used by the consultants to count and extrapolate traffic volumes. *Response from the project team:* Key traffic data and assumptions will be made available via email or the project web page.

Summary and Conclusions

The following closing remarks were made at the end of the meeting:

- There is a significant concern in the community about the capacity of the proposed schemes to accommodate the traffic as perceived.
- 

- 
- Of the people attending the meeting, it was heard that more people are leaning towards the surface (At Grade) option.
 - The project team will come back to the community to continue the discussion. Please come back and bring your neighbors.
 - The project team will continue working on the layouts and will come back with more details about turning radii and lane configurations.

