



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
City Hall Annex - Inman & Broadway - Cambridge, Mass. 02139

498-9034

May 8, 1984

Secretary James S. Hoyte
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street - 20th Floor
Boston, Massachusetts 02202

Attention: MEPA Unit

Re: MBTA Alewife Station Interim Access
EOEA #4931

Dear Secretary Hoyte:

The Cambridge Community Development Department has reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Report for the above referenced project and offers the following comments:

- Of the five alternatives presented in the report, we feel that Alternative 4 offers the best solution to providing access to the Alewife Garage/Station. However, we are concerned that this temporary solution not be viewed as the final solution to the access problem. We urge the MBTA/DPW to proceed as rapidly as possible with the completion of the permanent Route 2 improvements.
- The non-structural alternatives presented in the report, i.e. traffic management techniques etc., should be implemented in addition to, not in place of a build solution. Although the implementation of Alternative 4 will alleviate much of the traffic impacts in the area, it will not be enough. It seems prudent, in light of the projected future development at Alewife, that these programs be started now.
- Little mention was made of pedestrian and bicycle access in the implementation of the interim solution. Such access accommodations should not wait for the permanent improvements, but should be provided during this interim construction.
- In the report's discussion of wetlands and flooding (p.97) the second paragraph states that "the location of the compensatory storage area will utilize the abandoned Freight Cut-Off railroad right-of-way lying west of its junctions with the Lexington Branch right-of-way as much as possible. The goal is to utilize all areas for

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compensatory storage that are currently in MBTA ownership".

- . Is there enough storage capacity in these areas?
- . If not, what other areas are under consideration?
- . Would the Freight Cut-Off right-of-way still be available for bicycle/pedestrian connections to Blanchard Road in Belmont?
- . The Freight Cut-Off right-of-way is a raised berm which acts as protection for the Alewife Triangle from flooding of the Little River as can be seen from Figure V-D (1955 Storm of Record) found on page 55. If this berm were removed, what would be the impact on flooding in the Alewife Triangle?
- . The Final EIR should explore more creative methods of providing compensatory storage. Alternative methods might include the creation of public amenities such as the Alewife Canal proposed in the Alewife Revitalization Plan. Such an alternative would obviously be more desirable and attractive than those proposed in the Draft EIR.
- In the report's discussion of carpool parking fees (p.99) the third paragraph states that "It would appear then that the price sensitivity to carpooling is somewhat low for the range of parking fees apt to be charged at Alewife and that special or discounted carpool fees are not a relevant pricing strategy at this time."
- . This fact may be true given the current low parking fees charged by the MBTA at its existing parking facilities. Would it still be true if the fee for single occupancy vehicles were raised to \$5.00 per day or higher?
- On page 22, Table II-1, the 1987 Traffic Impact in Predominant Direction should reference Figures VI-J and VI-K, not Figures VI-F and VI-G.
- On page 78, Table VI-D, the 1987 Build V/C for Alewife at Rindge under Alternative 4 should be 1.66, not 1.25.
- On page 79, Table VI-E the 1987 Build V/C for Alewife at Route 2 Rotary under Alternative 4 should be 1.11, not 1.0.

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In closing, I would once again urge that all possible speed be taken in implementing a build solution both for the temporary and permanent solutions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Kathy A. Spiegelman".

Kathy A. Spiegelman
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

KAS:rr

cc: George Teso
Carolyn Mieth

II SUMMARY

The Northeast Red Line Extension and Alewife Terminal Station and 2,000 car parking garage is nearing completion and will be ready for revenue service in January 1985.

Plans for the reconstruction of Route 2, and the improvement of Alewife Brook Parkway and direct ramps from Route 2 into the garage have been delayed.

Several land developments are in design or construction in the Alewife area which will add to the traffic generated by the MBTA garage.

Until the road improvements are completed, all garage traffic must pass through the Alewife Brook Parkway-Rindge Avenue intersection which is already at capacity.

It is essential to devise some interim access between the garage and Route 2 to serve until permanent road improvements are completed.

With the advice of an Alewife Transportation Advisory Committee made up of representatives of community, business and environmental interests, a set of alternative interim access plans were devised and considered. A set of five were selected for detailed analysis:

No Build

- 1 MBTA Right-of-Way, A. D. Little Parking Lot and Acorn Park Road
- 2 Structure on MBTA Right-of-Way
- 3a Existing Haul Road to Dewey-Almy Circle
- 4 Combination of Alternatives 1 and 3a

Table II-A shows a comparison of the alternatives. Two of the alternatives (No Build and 2) take no MDC Reservation land and impact no wetlands. Takings for the others range from 0.4 acres (3a) to 1.4 Acres (4). Impacts on wetlands for the others range from 1,400 square feet (1) to 3,200 square feet (3a and 4). Only the No Build would require no compensatory storage areas for 100-year flood waters. The range for the others is from 27,000 cubic feet (2) to 223,000 cubic feet (4).

The No Build Volume to Capacity ratio for the Alewife Brook Parkway-Rindge Avenue intersection on the critical PM peak hour is estimated to be 1.46 in 1987. Alternatives 1 and 2 would reduce this to 1.12. Alternatives 3a and 4 would bring the v/c ratio to 0.98; that is, the volume of traffic passing through the intersection would be less than its capacity.

This reduction in congestion at that intersection would serve to reduce the diversion of through traffic to surrounding local streets. For example, in the PM peak hour in 1987, the number of vehicles using Blanchard Road and Brighton street in Belmont would be as much as 150 vehicles less if the interim access road were built than if the No Build option was selected. On Concord Avenue the reduction would be as much as 300 vehicles in the PM peak hour with the interim access road functioning.

Where traffic would increase over the No Build with the interim access road in use would be, of course, Route 2 (plus 270) and Alewife Brook Parkway north of Route 2 (plus 130). Traffic on Alewife Brook Parkway south of Route 2 would also increase (plus 400) over the No Build with the interim access in use. This is so because, with the interim access road relieving the congestion at the Alewife Brook Parkway-Rindge Avenue intersection, through traffic previously diverted to local streets would elect to use the Parkway.

Ambient air quality was assessed by performing a microscale analysis of carbon monoxide (CO) concentrations at four intersections in the project area. The analysis examined existing (1984) conditions as well as the No Build and Build cases for the interim access road in the year of completion (1987). Modeling results show an existing violation of the one-hour National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) at the Alewife Brook Parkway-Rindge Avenue intersection will persist into 1987 under the No Build assumption. Construction of the interim access road will bring this intersection into compliance with the NAAQS in 1987. Results for all other intersections and cases show concentrations below the NAAQS in 1984 and 1987. The proposed interim access road is a necessary mitigation measure to ensure that the NAAQS for CO will be attained and maintained in the Alewife area by 1987.

ALTERNATIVE					
ALT. ITEM	No Build	1 Mod	2	3a	4
EST. CONSTR. COST	0	\$1,300,000	\$2,000,000	\$1,700,000	\$2,700,000
EST. OPEN TO TRAFFIC	Jan. 1985	July 1985	July 1985	Oct. 1985	Oct. 1985
WETLANDS IMPACT	0 SF	1,400 SF	0 SF	3,200 SF	3,200 SF
COMPENSATORY STORAGE REQ.	0 CF	204,000 CF	11,000 CF	66,000 CF	223,000 CF
LAND TAKINGS MDC W.R.GRACE A.D.LITTLE	0 0 0	1.3 Ac - 0.2 Ac	0 Ac 0 Ac 0 Ac	0.4 Ac 0.6 Ac 0 Ac	1.4 Ac 0.6 Ac 0.5 Ac
AIR QUALITY - PREDICTED CO CONCENTRATIONS 1-HOUR					
Alewife Br. Pky/ Rindge Ave. Int.	43.3 PPM Violates Std	33.1 PPM	33.1 PPM	34.0 PPM	34.0 PPM
TRAFFIC 1987 VOLUME TO CAPACITY RATIO AM/PM					
Alewife @ Rindge Alewife @ Rte. 2 Rte 2 @ Access Rd	1.46/1.46 4.38/3.31 NA/NA	1.25/1.12 3.53/2.95 NA/1.00	1.25/1.12 3.53/2.95 NA/1.00	1.46/0.98 0.96/0.99 NA/1.00	1.25/0.98 0.96/0.99 NA/NA
ESTIMATED LENGTH OF BACK-UP 1987 PM PEAK HOUR INTERSECTION OF ALEWIFE BROOK PARKWAY AND RINDGE AVE.					
	64 veh/lane	23 veh/lane	23 veh/lane	23 veh/lane	23 veh/lane
1987 TRAFFIC IMPACT IN PREDOMINANT DIRECTION					
See Figures VI-F and VI-G	1987 Peak Hr AM/PM Vol.	Effect of Interim Access Volume Change AM/PM			
Blanchard (3)	900/1090	-150/-150	-150/-150	0/-150	-150/-150
Concord Ave. (7)	1570/1300	-300/-300	-300/-300	0/-300	-300/-300
Mass. Ave. (13)	1200/1195	-100/-100	-100/-100	0/-100	-100/-100
Route 2 (15)	3285/3555	+270/+270	+270/+270	0/+270	+270/+270
Alewife B.P. (17)	3013/4510	+400/+400	+400/+400	0/+400	+400/+400
Alewife B.P. (18)	2135/1815	0/0	0/0	0/0	0/0

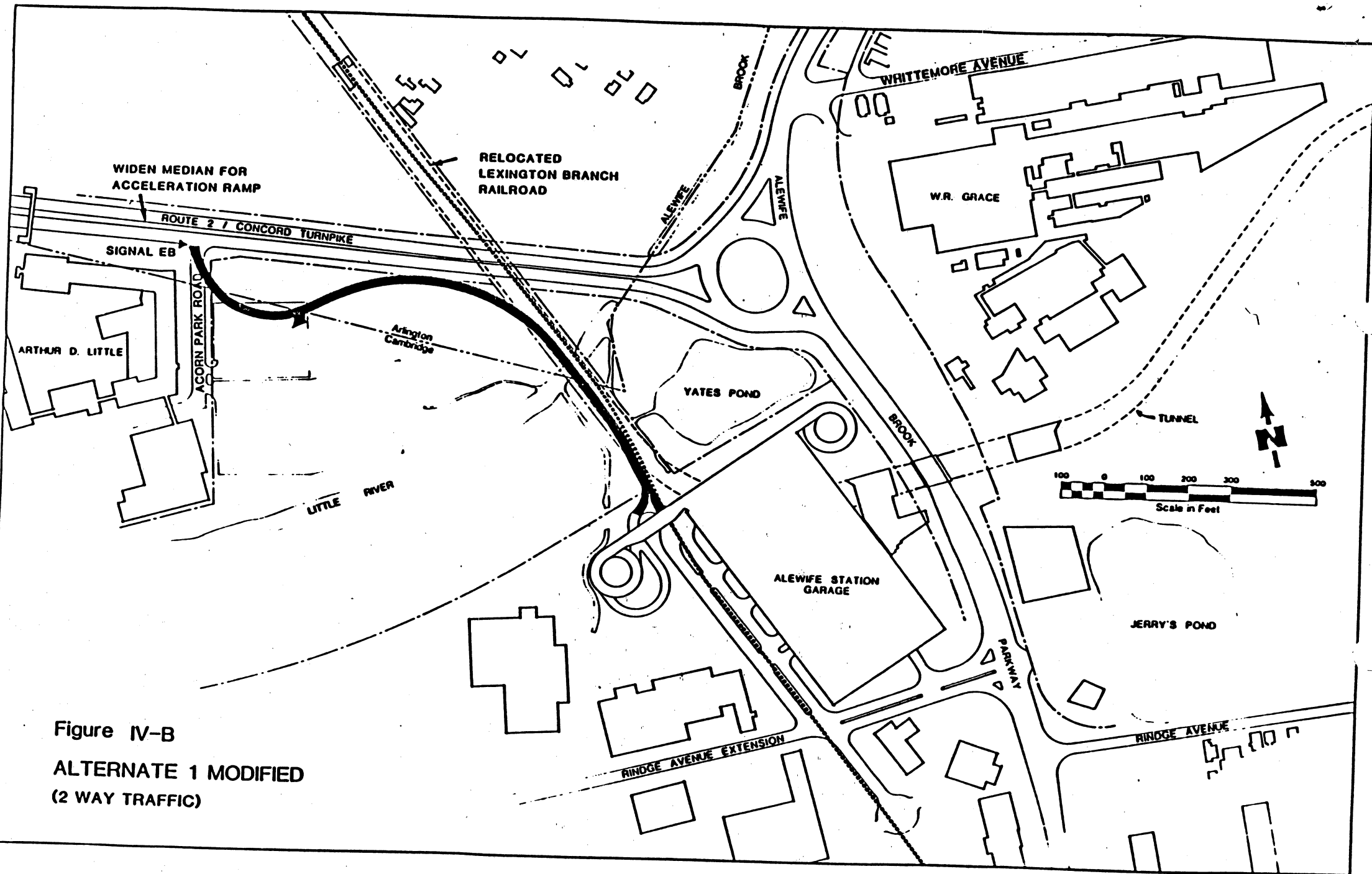
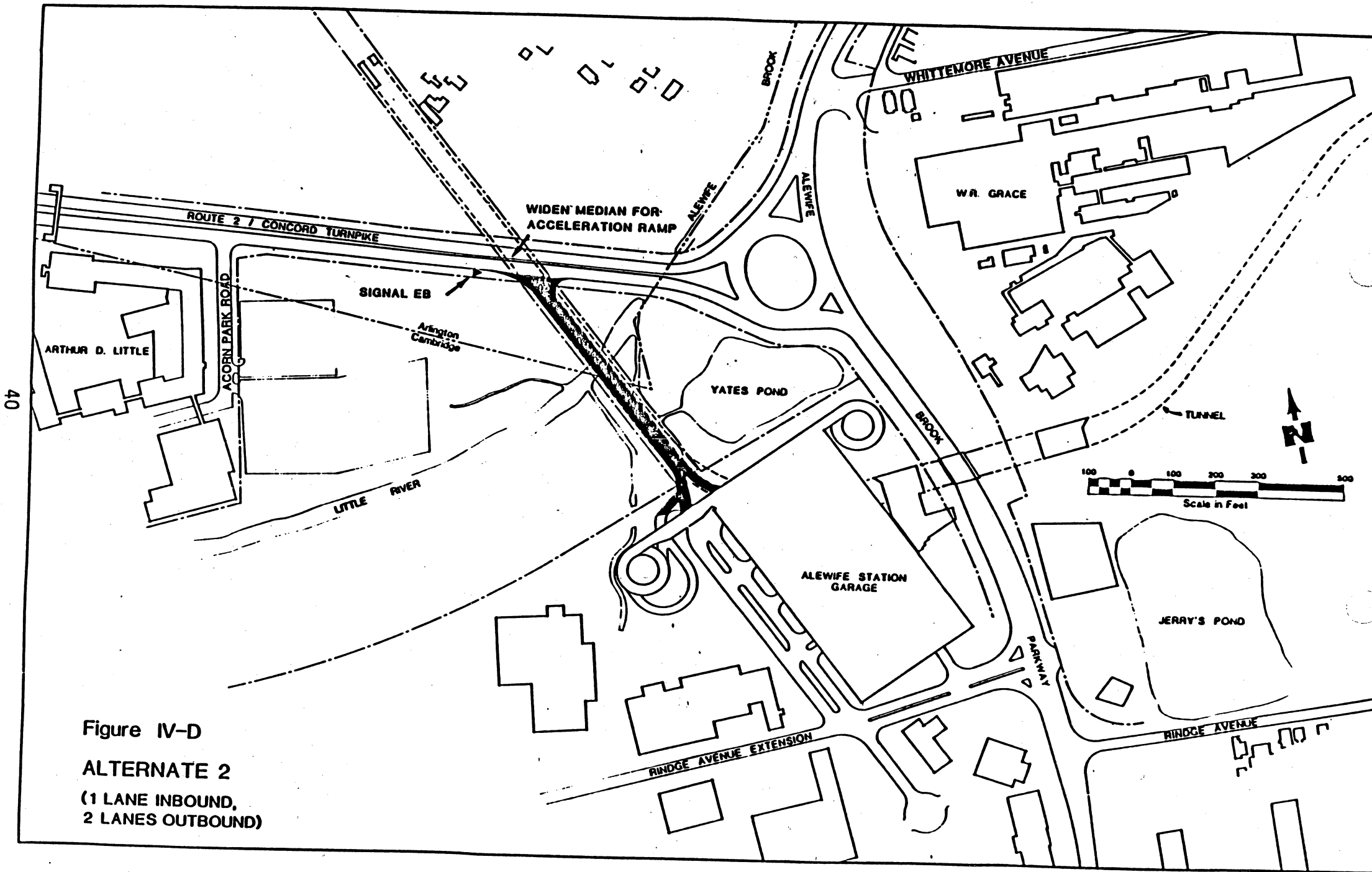


Figure IV-B
ALTERNATE 1 MODIFIED
(2 WAY TRAFFIC)



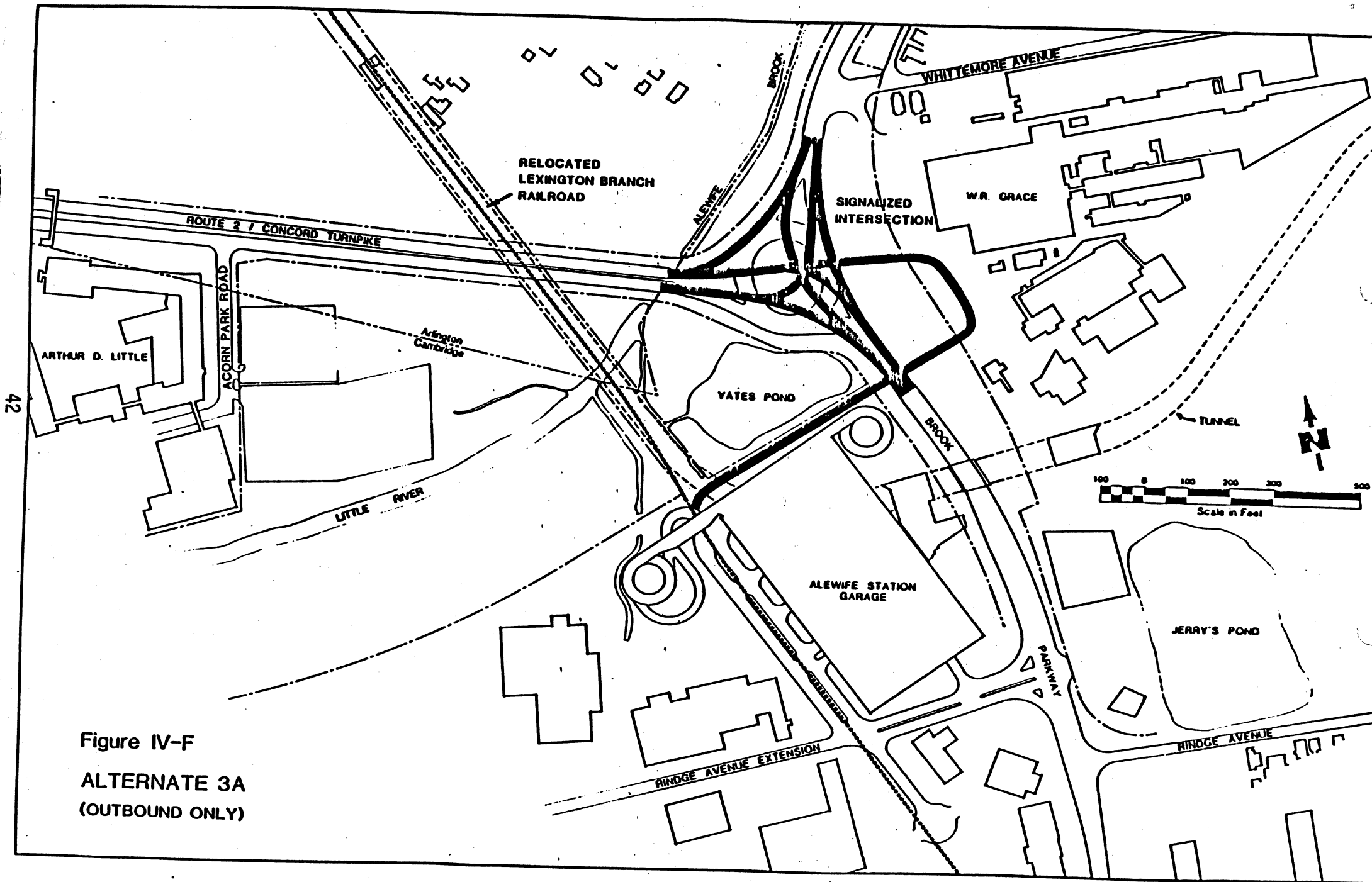


Figure IV-F
ALTERNATE 3A
(OUTBOUND ONLY)

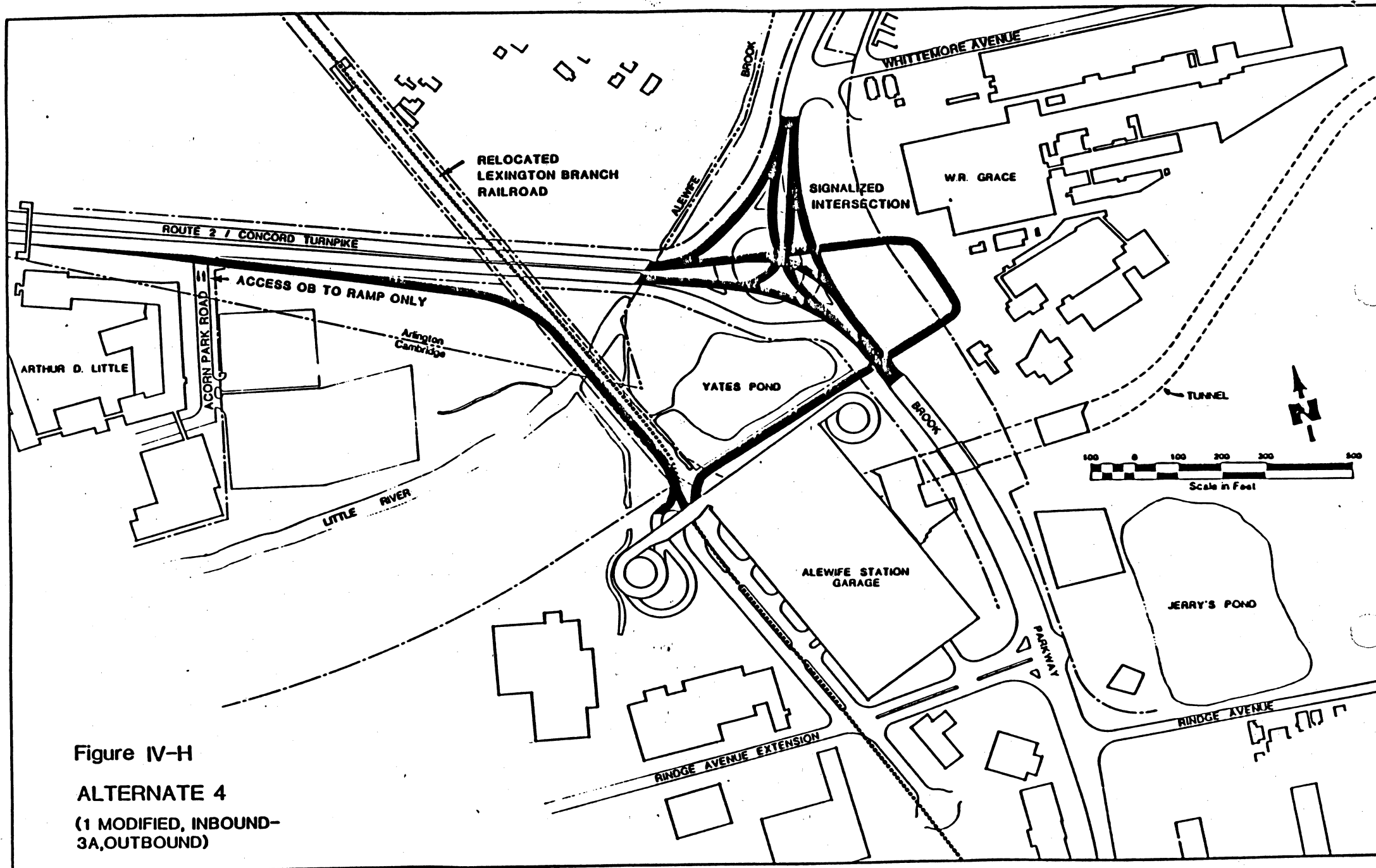


Figure IV-H

ALTERNATE 4

(1 MODIFIED, INBOUND-
3A, OUTBOUND)



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139 • TEL. 498-9048

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

May 8, 1984

Secretary
Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
20th Floor
100 Cambridge Street
Boston, MA 02202

RE: EOE A #4931

Dear Secretary Hoyte:

The Cambridge Conservation Commission has reviewed the DEIR for the MBTA Alewife Station Interim Access Improvements.

As you know all of the alternatives discussed in the DEIR, except for no-build, come under the jurisdiction of the Wetlands Protection Act, which will require the MBTA to come before this Commission for an Order of Conditions. Our hope is that by conveying our concerns at this time, the interests of the Wetlands Protection Act will be better served by being weighed in the alternative evaluation rather than after a decision is made to chose one alternative. We were pleased to see the statement in the DEIR that the project's impact on the MDC reservation, on wetlands and on the floodplain's ability to retain floodwaters are essential elements in the evaluation of alternatives (p. 29).

It is our understanding that on May 15, Secretary Salvucci will select a "preferred" alternative which will be given more detailed treatment than the others in the FEIR. While we recognize EOTC's desire for this decision at this time, we do not believe that the DEIR contains sufficient information on wetlands and on floodplain impacts to permit a balanced decision.

Our reasons are as follows:

- The wetlands to be affected by the various alternatives are incompletely described. No information is provided on the value of these wetlands, and the stress that they are now undergoing due to the cumulative impacts of other projects in the area.
- Although the DEIR states the maximum wetlands loss would be 3200 square feet, there is no information to support that conclusion.
- The effects of each alternative on wetlands and floodplains are described only in very general terms by indicating the numbers of square feet of wetland or cubic feet of flood storage to be lost.

- Throughout the DEIR, there is an unsupported assumption that the losses of wetlands and flood storage capacity can be mitigated for all alternatives, however, there is no specific information as to how this will be accomplished, and where. For instance, on p. 97, the DEIR states that wetlands impacts of alternatives 1, 3A and 4 could be mitigated by "replacing the wetlands within the Alewife Reservation". What wetlands are referred to here, and what is meant by replacement is not clear.

Compensatory storage volume of up to 223,000 cubic feet may be required depending on the alternative, yet no explanation is given as to how it will be accomplished other than to state that the abandoned freight cut-off right of way or other MBTA owned areas will be used.

- The DEIR does not describe in any detail how construction impacts, such as erosion and sedimentation, will be mitigated, nor does it explain how or whether affected areas will be restored after the short-term access road is removed. We believe it is important for these issues to be addressed in the FEIR rather than deferred given the MBTA's poor record in protecting wetland resources during the construction of the garage.

- The DEIR describes the wetlands on the W.R. Grace property as being not sensitive or valuable but does not provide any information to support this conclusion.

The Conservation Commission believes that these deficiencies should be corrected in the FEIR and that until this information is available the true costs and benefits of each alternative have not been adequately assessed.

Sincerely,

Dorothy Altman, Chair
Cambridge Conservation Commission

At this time Traffic Director George Teso stated that the T has indicated that they would open the garage without the access roadway, if necessary, without a major impact on the neighborhood, but he felt for all concerned, Alternative 4 should be implemented.

At this time Economic Development Director Joseph Kellogg stated that various traffic circulation studies have indicated that 40% of all the traffic anticipated, will be there with or without the garage.

Councillor Wolf stated that increased public transportation from the suburban communities would be a tremendous inducement for people not bringing their cars into Cambridge. A representative from the T stated they are currently working on just such a plan.

At this time Transportation Planner Richard Esler stated that the residents and officials of Arlington have indicated they do not want buses which currently go from Harvard Square to Arlington, moved to Alewife Station, nor do they want additional bus service. He feels this is a serious problem which needs to be addressed.

At this time Assistant City Manager for Community Development Kathy Spiegelman stated her department has already completed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on Alternative 4 and the recommendation is to go with the implementation of same if the Council and state officials agree.

At this time Carolyn Mieth, a member of the advisory group, stated that two of Arlington's biggest concerns were the grade separation at Alewife Brook Parkway and Rindge Avenue and the actual widening of Alewife Parkway.

Mr. Teso responded by stating he was aware of these concerns but that widening Alewife Brook Parkway would only create a "highway" situation which is not what the city wants or needs. He stated he would oppose such action on behalf of the city.

Councillor Clinton stated he would have a report prepared of the meeting and discuss it with fellow members of the committee and Council prior to asking for a vote of support for Alternative 4.

The hearing was adjourned at 7:00 PM.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Daniel J. Clinton".

Councillor Daniel J. Clinton
Chairman

DJC/smc

Enclosures: Summary of Alternatives

City of Cambridge

In City Council May 21, 1984

The Committee on Transportation and Parking conducted a public hearing on Thursday, May 10, 1984 beginning at 6:00 PM in the Ackermann Room at City Hall. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and review the proposed "interim roadway access" at the Alewife T Station.

Councillor Clinton, Chairman of the Committee, opened the meeting by thanking the members of the advisory group for their diligence over the past several months while working with various staff people of the MBTA and the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC). He further stated that he had called this meeting in order that the council could get a status report on the developments of the interim access project.

At this time Ms. Linda Jonash of the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction outlined to the committee the four alternative plans which have been reviewed by all members of the Alewife Transportation Advisory Group during their deliberations. In addition to not building any interim roadway the alternatives were:

1. To establish an MBTA Right of Way at the A.D.L. Parking lot and Acorn Park Road;
2. Build a structure on the MBTA Right of Way;
- 3A. Use the existing Haul Road to Dewey-Almy Circle; and
4. Combination of Alternatives 1 and 3A.

Ms. Jonash further stated that with one member dissenting, the advisory group had recommended that Alternative 4 be implemented. The cost of this interim access project would cost approximately \$2.7 million and it would be born by the Commonwealth. She further stated that this alternative would have the least negative environmental impact on the area and is the best plan available to address the traffic flow problem.

Furthermore she stated that although Alternative 4 was the preferred plan, it would still require the approval of both the Arlington and Cambridge Conservation Commission as well as the adoption of special legislation in order to build over some "wetland" area. If, she stated, all of the approvals are in fact received, the projected roadway openings would be October of 1985.

Councillor Wolf stated she was deeply concerned that a flaw in the process of seeking the required approvals would delay the entire interim roadway project. She further questioned what would happen if, for example, the required legislation doesn't pass. Ms. Jonash responded by stating that without the legislation, nothing could happen. Councillor Wolf further questioned whether or not the Cambridge Conservation Commission had approved Alternative 4. Ms. Jonash responded by stating that although the EOTC and the Commission have discussed this, no approval has been given at this time.

11.
REPORT

S-352

Committee on Transportation & Parking
Re: proposed "Interim roadway access" relative to the Alewife T. Station.

*Copy sent to the City Mgr.
5/24/84 mh*

In City Council,

May 21, 1984

*5/21/84
Placed on File
Copy to the
City Manager*