



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUSAN B. SCHLESINGER
*Assistant City Manager for
Community Development*

BETH RUBENSTEIN
*Deputy Director for
Community Development*

To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From: Susan B. Schlesinger *SKS*
Assistant City Manager for Community Development

Re: Response to City Council Order #47 of March 30, 1998: Progress Report on the
Development of the Urban Ring

Date: April 8, 1998

The Urban Ring is a proposed transportation corridor which will provide service inside the Boston region's inner core. The Urban Ring area stretches from Dorchester to Logan Airport and includes key employment centers and residential areas in Boston, Brookline, Cambridge, Somerville, Everett and Chelsea. While still in the early planning stages and not likely to be built for several years, the Urban Ring promises to be one of the most important regional transportation projects in the next 10-15 years. By linking key urban employment centers and residential neighborhoods, the Urban Ring has the potential to significantly reduce auto trips and encourage concentrated development while discouraging suburban sprawl.

The goals of the Urban Ring transit improvements include:

- Improve transit access to and around the Urban Ring Corridor,
- Reduce congestion on the existing radial transit system,
- Reduce the growth in overall single occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel,
- Reduce transportation related constraints to economic development, and
- Support the phased implementation of an integrated transportation and land use "vision" for the Urban Ring Corridor.

The project is important to Cambridge because it will increase the mobility of Cambridge residents for employment and personal needs and improve transit access to the City's major employment centers.

The MBTA is now in the early stages of a federally required Major Investment Study (MIS) for the project. While the project is being undertaken by the MBTA, the work is being done in close collaboration with the six Urban Ring cities and towns, as well as major institutions in the corridor, such as those in the Longwood Medical Area and the various colleges and universities. The public has been kept up to date through a series of public workshops, the last of which was held on March 30th. Community Development Department staff have been involved extensively throughout the planning process for the Urban Ring. This has involved participation in various committees that have been formed to oversee the study. In addition, CDD staff has been working directly with the MBTA and their consultants on issues that affect Cambridge.

The MIS, which is scheduled for completion this fall, will identify several possible alignments and types of service (bus, light and heavy rail) for permanent fixed right-of-way transit, as well as identify incremental transit enhancements that can be implemented in the short term. The study will also integrate the planning for potential urban ring transit improvements with existing and anticipated land uses, determine the financial feasibility of the project, and evaluate its social impacts.

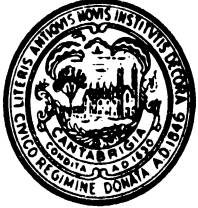
After the completion of the MIS work, the MBTA will prepare an Environmental Impact Statement/Report (EIS/R). This effort, which will take approximately two years to complete, will identify the preferred investment strategy for providing transit improvements in the Urban Ring Corridor. The EIS/R will be followed by design and construction of the project. The overall timing of the project will depend mainly on the availability of funding at each stage of the process. Construction will not begin until the CA/T Project has been completed, probably between 2005 and 2010. Currently, only the MIS has been funded. The City of Cambridge is working with other local and state officials to secure funding for the preparation of the EIS/R.

Presently there are seven build alternatives being evaluated. All of the alignments have a tunnel crossing of the Charles River from Boston into lower Cambridgeport and then follow the Grand Junction Railroad Corridor to Main Street. From that point to Somerville, two alignments are being evaluated. One continues along the Grand Junction Corridor, while the other turns east to connect with the Red Line at Kendall Square and the Green Line at Lechmere Square. The outcome of the evaluation process most likely result in the mixing and matching of alternatives, with respect to alignment and type of transit vehicle used. In evaluating the alternatives, city staff is utilizing the following criteria:

- Minimize impacts to residential neighborhoods,
- Maximize accessibility for both Cambridge residents and employees,
- Maximize service to existing and planned development areas, and
- Provide convenient transfers with other rapid transit and commuter rail lines.

Based upon the evaluation completed to date, the alternatives that serve Kendall and Lechmere best meet these criteria.

We will keep you informed as work on the project proceeds.



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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

April 13, 1998

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 23, regarding a report on the progress of the Urban Ring Development, received from Assistant City Manager for Community Development Susan Schlesinger.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #13

5-257

Relative to a report on the
progress of the Urban Ring
Development.

In City Council April 13, 1998

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