



MICHAEL S. DUKAKIS
GOVERNOR

JOHN DEVILLARS
SECRETARY

THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

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1989 JUN 19 AM 9:26

CAMBRIDGE MA.

June 9, 1989

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
ON THE
ENVIRONMENTAL NOTIFICATION FORM

PROJECT NAME : Alewife Immediate Action Project
PROJECT LOCATION : Cambridge
EOEA NUMBER : 7700
PROJECT PROPONENT : MDPW
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : April 27, 1989

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G.L., c.30, s.61-62H) and Sections 11.04 and 11.06 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I hereby determine that the above project requires the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report.

The proposed Immediate Action Project (IAP) as described in the ENF is "a by pass road with other traffic system modifications designed to ease existing congestion on Alewife Brook Parkway in the immediate area of the Alewife MBTA Station..."

This ENF filing by the MDPW comes nearly two years after the filing of the Draft EIR for "Route 2 Alewife Brook Parkway," EOEA #4539, and between the filing of the Draft EIR and the Final EIR for that proposed project. Based on my discussion with Secretary of Transportation and Construction Fred Salvucci, I understand the IAP is apparently an initial phase of a new preferred alternative as I understand it at this time. It appears to be related to and derived from the alternatives studied in the DEIR for EOEA #4539. Phase I of the new preferred alternative represents a substantial change from the access road proposed to serve the Alewife Center project alone. Although MEPA review has occurred at the Draft stage for five alternatives for long range improvements, no MEPA review has occurred on this new preferred alternative.

Consequently, it is appropriate to call for an EIR on the IAP. The IAP review will be incorporated into the ongoing EIR process for EOE #4539. The EOE file number of 4539 shall be used for the remainder of the review on the project. The EIR will examine Phase I, the IAP, within the context of the overall project proposal.

I hereby incorporate by reference into this Certificate the two year old Certificate on the Draft EIR for EOE #4539. After my examination of that Certificate and the comments that accompanied that filing, I find that the majority of issues are still relevant today and must be part of the EIR. I direct the MDPW to deal with the issues of substance from the previous set of comments and the comments received on this ENF. Further, I require that the MDPW file a description the entire preferred alternative, as now understood. This is, I believe, Phases I and II of what was to be a four phase project. I applaud Secretary Salvucci for this scaling back of the previously planned project. I expect to issue a complete revised scope for the EIR following review of the description of the preferred alternative. Even so, several items appear essential and are worthy of comment at this time.

Traffic Volumes and Area Development

A "reality check" on traffic volumes in the area is in order. Much of the data in the DEIR are stale. The Certificate on the DEIS/EIR for EOE #4539 notes that: "Much of the analysis performed in the DEIS/EIR was based on traffic counts taken at least seven years ago." Now that the DEIR/DEIS is an additional two years older, some of the data may be close to a decade old. Where significant changes in traffic volumes occur, they should be incorporated into the analysis.

Growth in the area also needs to be updated to the extent possible. At the consultation session, the question of through trips was raised. The EIR should attempt to quantify how much of the traffic in the area is destined for the Alewife area itself and how much is through traffic.

The following needs to be examined:

- o Mass Ave./Alewife Brook Parkway
- o Route 2/Lake Street
- o Lake Street/Mass Ave.
- o All intersections to Memorial Drive
- o Diversions from Route 93 to Route 16 and Alewife Brook Parkway, especially as it relates to Central Artery work

Finally, the amount of development in the Alewife area over the next decade must be considered. If that development cannot be accommodated by the proposed traffic improvements, then limits and controls on the timings of development must be investigated. The parking freeze is one of the important elements, as are revisions to the SIP. In my judgement the traffic condition in this area at present is of very serious concern. Traffic improvements, if environmentally sound, are in order. Whether these traffic improvements will be sufficient to allow for even greater development in this area is very much an open question and one which I will be very attentive to in my continued environmental review of this project.

Transportation Systems Management (TSM)

The consultation session revealed a local frustration with a purely bricks and mortar approach to solving capacity shortfalls. Many participants of the consultation sessions suggested that a regional approach to reducing trips be advocated. TSM measures such as improved bus routes and park and ride lots in outlying suburban areas should be promoted by the state's transportation agencies. While I recognize that these measures may not eliminate the need for construction improvements in the area, I concur that they can provide real benefits to the environment. These benefits include reduced traffic, improved air quality and fuel conservation. I urge the transportation agencies to promote as actively as possible TSM measures to help alleviate traffic congestion.

Water Quality, Wetlands, Floodplain

The water quality, wetlands and floodplain issues outlined in the DEIR Certificate should be included for analysis. These issues include storm water management, water quality and protection at Fresh Pond, proper wetland resource delineation at an appropriate scale. The wetland resources should be identified and quantified in terms of Bank, Land Subject to Flooding (bordering or isolated), Land Under Water, Bordering Vegetated Wetland, and Buffer Zone areas.

Jerry's Pond

This site (Jerry's Pond/Babo site) has been publicly announced by the MDC as one of its twenty three high priority open space parcels. The IAP would make the entire west bank unusable. The EIR should consider the impacts at Jerry's Pond and consider alternatives to avoid impacts, as well as other acquisition efforts in the area which could enhance public open space and recreation opportunities. Consultation with the MDC is required.

Parkways/Aesthetics/Quality of Life Issues

The MDC Parkway System provides important urban open space links. The EIR must examine the impacts of the proposed project on the Parkway and Alewife Reservation. Again, consultation with MDC planners is required.

In short, I find the majority of issues related to the IAP to be consistent with the issues related to the review conducted under EOEA #4539. The EIR processes must be combined and the alternatives analysis can move forward.

This area of Cambridge, Arlington and Belmont has been the subject of much controversy and study regarding transportation, development and environmental protection. In many respects, this area represents an extreme example of the various pressures, in terms of costs and benefits, that the communities and the regions must attempt to balance. In essence, the EIR needs to show what kind of capacity can be achieved and relate that to environmental cost. One question that must be raised is what is an "acceptable" environmental cost in exchange for capacity? Increased capacity will certainly reduce air pollution, for example, however it is likely to entail greater destruction of wetland resources. What elements, if any, will suffer to advance which goals? The EIR process, with its public comment element, can help to identify those issues which deserve the highest priority. The questions are difficult and the answers will surely not be easy. But this full process is the appropriate one through which to reach an environmentally acceptable solution.

As has been evidenced not only by the numerous meetings with interested parties which I have held over the past week, but, importantly, by 15 years of public debate around environmental and transportation issues in this area, there is enormous public interest in these issues. Therefore, I hope and expect that during the course of the preparation of the FEIR there will be numerous opportunities for a full public airing of all opinions on these matters.

June 9, 1989

DATE


JOHN P. DeVILLARS, SECRETARY

JPD/JMD/jd

Comments received:**Cambridge Citizens for Livable Neighborhoods****City of Cambridge (various departments)****NWRA****MAPC****S. Kaiser (two comments on May 30, 1989)****J. Yeo****D. Vickery/Alewife Center****M Bhatti, MDC Commissioner****H. Meyer****C. Bahne, Jr.****Bellis Circle Neighborhood Association****B:Alewife.jnd**



OFFICE OF THE VICE MAYOR
1989 JUN 13 9:26
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

OFFICE OF THE VICE MAYOR

CITY HALL, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

(617) 498-9094

Alice K. Wolf
Vice Mayor

June 13, 1989

TO: Members of the City Council

FROM: Alice K. Wolf, Vice Mayor *AKW*

RE: Certificate

Attached is the Certificate of the Secretary of Environmental Affairs for the Alewife project.

Good News! He is requiring a full Environmental Impact Report ~~on~~ this Council voted.

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S-474

Comm. from Vice-Mayor Alice K. Wolf, transmitting a copy of the Certificate of the Secretary of Environmental Affairs for the Alewife Project; requiring a full EIR, as voted by the City Council.

In City Council,

June 19, 1989

6-11-89

Placed on file -