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August 7, 2009

CERTIFICATE OF THE SECRETARY OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS  
ON THE  
NOTICE OF PROJECT CHANGE

PROJECT NAME : Silver Line to South Station Bus Service Enhancement Project  
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Boston  
PROJECT WATERSHED : Boston Harbor  
EOEA NUMBER : 6826/11707  
PROJECT PROPONENT : Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA)  
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : July 8, 2009

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L. c. 30, ss. 61-62I) and Section 11.10 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I have reviewed the Notice of Project Change (NPC) and have determined that it **does not require** further MEPA review.

Original Project Description and MEPA History

The project originally consisted of the merger of two separate MEPA filings (one for the South Boston Transitway, EOEA #6826 and the other for the Washington Street Replacement Service, EOEA #11707) that were once independent projects. In a NPC filed in 1998, the MBTA joined these two projects to create the Silver Line project. Phase I of the Silver Line project includes Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) service along the Washington Street Corridor from Dudley Square in Roxbury to downtown Boston, along shared and bus-only travel lanes with limited stops. Phase II<sup>1</sup> of the Silver Line utilizes overhead electric power in a tunnel from South Station

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<sup>1</sup> The original proposal for Phase II of the Transitway (from South Station to Boylston Station) was filed prior to the 1998. The NPC proposed an alignment going from South Station along Essex and Avery Streets, and terminating in a loop underneath the Boston Common's Central Burial Ground. The impacts of that alignment were fully reviewed under MEPA. The FEIR/FEIS for the Transitway was found adequate in 1994, and the MBTA issued its Section 61

to Boston's World Trade Center and on a surface reserved right of way 1/2 mile further east to Silver Line Way. Dual-mode buses continue beyond Silver Line Way on diesel power over two routes, including service to Logan International Airport in mixed traffic.

In the 1998 NPC, the MBTA first introduced the extension of Phase II of the Silver Line via a tunnel beyond the Boylston Station, with an alignment along Tremont Street, and with a portal at Washington Street and Oak Street for vehicles to connect to the Washington Street component (Phase I) of the Silver Line. This became known as Phase III of the project.

On June 15, 2004, the proponent submitted an NPC for MEPA review that proposed modifications to the tunnel alignment for Phase III of the Silver Line project. The project change involved the construction of a tunnel between South Station and Charles Street, again connecting Phase II of the Silver Line with Phase I. The MBTA identified a core tunnel segment for the Silver Line and considered alternative alignments for the tunnel connection to the portal providing access to Washington Street.

On August 23, 2004, the Secretary issued a Certificate that required the proponent to submit a Supplemental EIR to identify the project impacts and identify a Preferred Alternative alignment for the tunnel connection to the portal to provide access to Washington Street. On August 15, 2005, the Secretary determined that the Supplemental EIR submitted was adequate. The Secretary required the proponent to prepare a Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Report (SFEIR) to refine the alternatives analysis and identify the Preferred Alternative for Phase III.

In 2006, the proponent filed a further NPC that consisted of the development of a new alternative location for the portal for the Silver Line. The proposed portal location is along Tremont Street between Charles Street South and Marginal Road. It is referred to as the "Charles Street Modified" (CSM) Alignment. The MBTA had requested that the scope of August 15, 2005 be amended to add the CSM alignment and the new entrance/egress alternatives for Boylston Station on the Silver Line. On November 16, 2006, the Secretary determined that the NPC submitted by the MBTA required the preparation of a Supplemental Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR). These two scopes for a Supplemental FEIR remain outstanding.

#### NPC for the Silver Line to South Station Bus Service Enhancement Project

In response to the funding opportunity provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), the MBTA is now proposing a series of bus service improvements by providing supplemental bus service along the Silver Line/Washington Street corridor from

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Finding in 1995.

Washington Street to South Station. The new bus service will operate along the existing Silver Line Washington Street corridor and terminate at South Station. This service will be in addition to and a supplement to the existing Silver Line service to Temple Place. It will operate from Washington Street (existing route) along Essex Street in a bus only and shared lane to a bus shelter on the corner of Atlantic Avenue. From Atlantic Avenue, the service will proceed to Summer Street, to Surface Road, to Kneeland Street, and back to Washington Street. The proposed South Station service is slated to arrive every 15 minutes until 8:00 pm and every 20 minutes afterwards, seven days per week. The new service will require four additional compressed natural gas 60-foot Silver Line buses and limited bus stops and roadway improvements. The MBTA will investigate whether to utilize its new articulated hybrid buses, on this new South Station route. These new hybrid buses are expected to be available for service beginning in April of 2010.

### Jurisdiction

The remaining Silver Line project continues to require a mandatory EIR. There is an outstanding scope for a Supplemental FEIR as outlined in the Certificate of August 15, 2005 and as revised by the Certificate dated November 16, 2006. However, no new or modified permits or land transfers are required for the new Silver Line service to South Station.

The MBTA has indicated that 100 percent of the funds will come from ARRA Funding. However, the project change is being undertaken by the MBTA, a state agency. MEPA jurisdiction is therefore broad and extends to all aspects of the project that may cause Damage to the Environment, as defined in the MEPA regulations.

### Review of the NPC

The MBTA has estimated ridership on the Silver Line/Washington Street at over 14,500 passengers per day. It estimated that the new service to South Station would add approximately 1,400 new transit riders to the Silver Line. In addition, the MBTA anticipates another 1,200 new transit riders may also be added as a result of the increased service to the New England Medical Center and Chinatown.

All work will occur within existing paved roadways or along sidewalks. The project includes making a number of roadway modifications, primarily street striping and special pavement and pavement markers to indicate bus only lanes and bus stops. The roadway bus lanes will be created through the elimination of some on-street parking, and will not alter roadway capacity along the corridor. The bus lanes will be created by scarifying the roadway and removing the top layer of bituminous concrete. This layer will then be replaced with a visibly different color of concrete to distinguish the bus only lanes. Traffic signals would be modified to provide transit priority to the buses.

The MBTA has also proposed to construct a new bus shelter at South Station, along Essex Street near its intersection with Atlantic Avenue. The bus shelter will include signage, benches, trash receptacles, Charlie Card validators (to allow for off board fare collection) and security cameras. The bus shelter would be heated in the winter. It will be equipped with a roof top photovoltaic system which will serve to generate electricity to be used for lighting and heating of the shelter.

The bus shelter will be located on Essex Street approximately 100 feet west of the intersection with Atlantic Avenue. South Station, which is listed on the National and State Registers, is located across Atlantic Avenue. The bus shelter will not directly impact or alter the South Station Headhouse or other historic resources in the area. The bus shelter is proposed to be constructed of transparent materials and will be of minimalist design so as to not conflict with any surrounding structures. After reviewing the project, the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) concurred that the project would have no adverse effect on historic properties on May 7, 2009. No temporary or permanent impacts will occur to wetland resource areas.

I acknowledge the detailed and thoughtful comments I have received from the Washington Gateway Main Street (WGMS), Livable Streets, and WalkBoston concerning the proposed project. The comment letters from WGMS and Livable Streets each asked that the MBTA reassess its proposed routing to South Station and recommended that the MBTA consider alternative routing options. WalkBoston recommended moving the new bus shelter closer to South Street.

During the 2010 public process on the MBTA Service Plan, the MBTA should evaluate the ridership of the Silver Line Bus Service, with an examination of this particular route, and the potential for a staggered number of buses to travel the NPC proposed route and some to travel on an alternative route similar to that recommended by WGMS and Livable Streets. In addition, the MBTA should examine the possibility of buses that travel to South Station via the route proposed in the NPC and then return to Dudley Station via an alternative route.

The WGMS also expressed a desire to see the return of Washington Street to two-way travel between Herald Street and East Berkley Street. In addition, the commenters have noted the lack of maintenance of the roadway surfaces along the Silver Line route and the need for equipment upgrades. The noted deficiencies include; non-operating traffic signal overrides for buses; bus kiosks should dispense tickets (allowing buses to speed boarding); noisy buses; speeding buses; and the general disrepair of bus stops, dedicated busways, and crosswalks.

In response to the above concerns, the MBTA should address the following issues on an ongoing basis:

- The use of the new bus route by bicyclists;
- Pedestrian safety concerns at the Essex Street/Surface Road/Lincoln Street intersection and sidewalk capacity along Essex Street, if the project utilizes Essex Street;
- Improved bus stop maintenance; and
- Kiosks with ticket dispensing machines at each Silver Line bus stop.

In addition, the MBTA should work with the City of Boston to address the following issues on an ongoing basis:

- Improved roadway maintenance; and
- Providing traffic signal overrides for buses.

I strongly encourage the MBTA to review all of the issues raised in comments submitted on the NPC to improve Silver Line service and ongoing operations. I also commend the MBTA for its inclusion of sustainable design elements into the project, including the potential use of hybrid buses and solar panels to power the new bus shelter. These features will help improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and I encourage the MBTA to continue to explore the feasibility of more widespread use of these technologies.

### Conclusion

I have reviewed the NPC and comments received, and I find that the environmental impacts of the proposed project change do not warrant the preparation of an EIR. However, as noted above, I ask that the MBTA continue to evaluate means of improving the routing and service of the Silver Line.

I also acknowledge the comments received from Congressman Michael Capuano and the Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce stressing the importance of the completion of Phase III of the Silver Line project. The MBTA continues to be required to submit its Supplemental FEIR for Phase III of the Silver Line, in accordance with the outstanding scopes issued on August 15, 2005 and November 16, 2006.

No further MEPA review is required for the supplemental bus service described in the NPC.

August 7, 2009  
Date

  
Ian A. Bowles

Comments received:

U.S. Representative Michael E. Capuano, 7/20/09  
Glen A. Berkowitz, 7/27/09  
Washington Gateway Main Street, 7/28/09  
Livable Streets/Glen A. Berkowitz, 7/28/09  
Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce, 7/29/09  
Glen Berkowitz, 7/29/09  
WalkBoston, 7/30/09

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