



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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September 14, 2006

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

PROJECT NAME : Proposed Retail Center
PROJECT MUNICIPALITY : Wilbraham
PROJECT WATERSHED : **Chicopee** and Connecticut
EOEA NUMBER : 13860
PROJECT PROPONENT : Merchants Wilbraham II LLC
DATE NOTICED IN MONITOR : August 8, 2006

Pursuant to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (G. L., c. 30, ss. 61-62H) and Section 11.06 of the MEPA regulations (301 CMR 11.00), I hereby determine that this project **requires** the preparation of a Single Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Project Description

According to the Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF), the project consists of redevelopment of an existing commercial plaza to allow for the construction of a 68,635 square foot (sf) Big Y Supermarket and a 5,800 sf restaurant. A portion of the existing self-storage warehouse facility (approximately 22,880 sf) will be maintained and continue to operate at the rear of the site. The project also includes the replacement or upgrading of the site's utility and drainage system to accommodate the redevelopment. The existing surface parking areas will be reconfigured and expanded to provide an on-site supply of 387 parking spaces. The project will alter approximately 2,380 sf of Bordering Vegetated Wetlands (BVWs) and, as mitigation, will create approximately 5,700 sf of new BVWs in the southern portion of the project site.

The project will relocate access driveways to reduce curb cuts along Route 20. The project will include a new traffic signal at the western site driveway opposite the Wilbraham Crossing retail plaza, and the creation of a right-in, right-out secondary access driveway along the eastern property line. Internal access driveway connections are proposed to adjacent uses

(Interskate 91 and Home Depot) to facilitate improved traffic flows on Route 20. The project is anticipated to generate 5,970 new vehicle trips per day (6,060 total) in association with the supermarket and restaurant uses.

This project is subject to a mandatory EIR pursuant to Section 11.03(6)(a)(6) of the MEPA regulations, because it generates 3,000 or more new vehicle trips per day. The project will require a State Highway Access Permit for Route 20 from the Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway). It must comply with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) General Permit for stormwater discharges. The project has already obtained an Order of Conditions from the Wilbraham Conservation Commission and a Special Permit from the Wilbraham Zoning Board of Appeals.

Because the proponent is not seeking financial assistance from the Commonwealth for the project, MEPA jurisdiction extends to those aspects of the project that may have significant environmental impacts and that are within the subject matter of required or potentially required state permits. In this case, MEPA jurisdiction exists over transportation/traffic related issues.

Single EIR/Waiver Request

In accordance with Section 11.05(7) of the MEPA regulations, the proponent has submitted an Expanded ENF with a request that I allow the proponent to fulfill its EIR obligations under MEPA with a Single EIR, rather than require the usual two-step Draft and Final EIR process. The Expanded ENF received an extended public comment period pursuant to Section 11.06(1) of the MEPA regulations. I have reviewed the proponent's request for a Single EIR in accordance with Section 11.06(8) of the MEPA regulations, and I find that the Expanded ENF describes and analyzes all aspects of the project; provides a detailed baseline in relation to which potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures can be assessed; and demonstrates that the planning and design of the project use all feasible means to avoid potential environmental impacts. The Expanded ENF contained a detailed traffic impact and access study. Therefore, I will allow the proponent to prepare a Single EIR in fulfillment of the requirements of Section 11.03 of the MEPA regulations.

SCOPE

Project Description

The EIR should provide a thorough description of the project. The EIR should provide a brief description and analysis of applicable statutory and regulatory standards and requirements, and a description of how the project will meet those standards. The EIR should include an update on which of these required permits the proponent has been issued, and which have been applied for to date. The proponent should confirm that a pump station will not be required for the conveyance of wastewater, thereby not requiring a MassDEP Sewer Connection with Pump Station permit (BRP WP 14).

Traffic

The EENF presented a Traffic Impact and Access Study (TIAS) that appeared to conform to EOEA/EOT Guidelines for EIR/EIS Traffic Impact Assessments. This TIAS included existing and proposed traffic generation estimates, signal warrant analyses, queue length and Level of Service (LOS) analyses. Supplemental traffic information to be included in the EIR is outlined below.

The study area within the EIR should be expanded to include the Stony Hill Road/Old Boston Road unsignalized intersection and the Route 20/Kent Road intersection, per the recommendation of MassHighway. The EIR should include a revised signal analysis of the 2011 build with mitigation scenario at the Home Depot/Ski Haus intersection. The revised analysis should discuss the change in the signal phasing of the eastbound left turn lane from permissive to a protected/permissive movement as shown in the EENF analysis. The proponent should continue to work closely with the MassHighway District 2 office to ensure that the proposed improvements are designed in accordance with MassHighway standards, particularly with regards to drainage improvements within the Route 20 right of way.

The proponent should develop an internal signage program to guide vehicles within the site and to/from adjacent properties in order to effectively utilize the advantages associated with the creation of internal driveway property connections. The EIR should identify the location of signs and proposed internal circulation routes of vehicles traveling to or from the Home Depot or Interskate 91 properties.

During the EENF review, the proponent committed to signalize the intersection of the site's west driveway and realign access directly across from the Wilbraham Crossing east driveway. These intersection improvements will include dedicated turning lanes and widening of Route 20, along with signal coordination with the Stony Hill Road and Home Depot/Ski Haus intersections. The proponent has also committed to establishing a "right turn in, right turn out" intersection at the site's east driveway. Finally, cross connecting driveways to Interskate 91 and Home Depot are proposed to provide safer means of access to Route 20. The TIAS also included recommendations for Travel Demand Management (TDM) measures to promote ride-sharing, carpooling, and other strategies to reduce traffic by reducing single occupancy vehicles. The EIR should include a firm commitment to implement the mitigation measures outlined in the EENF and should describe the timing and cost of their implementation based on project phasing. This commitment should also specifically address the provision of an on-site bus stop, pedestrian improvements, and the feasibility of park-and-ride spaces.

The proponent should provide an update in the EIR on efforts and design plans to provide driveway connections to adjacent properties and a dedicated bus stop by the regional transportation authority. Alternative mitigation should be proposed in the absence of an agreement between the parties with regards to the driveway connections.

Wetlands

The proposed project has obtained an Order of Conditions from the Wilbraham Conservation Commission for the work to be conducted within BVWs, Riverfront Area, and wetland buffer zones. Stormwater management Best Management Practices (BMPs) have been designed in accordance with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) Stormwater Management Policy to treat water quality and quantity associated with drainage flows. The proponent has proposed wetland mitigation at a ratio of 2:1 to offset direct impact to BVWs adjacent to Route 20. The ENF indicated that a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be prepared as part of the NPDES permitting process. The EIR should outline and update the proposed operation and maintenance procedures for the stormwater management system.

Construction Impacts

The EIR should present a discussion on potential construction period impacts (including but not limited to noise, vibration, dust, and traffic flow disruptions) and analyze and outline feasible measures, which can avoid or eliminate these impacts. This is particularly salient given the design requirement to import substantial amounts of fill in order to achieve adequate elevations to accommodate the proposed stormwater management system. The proponent should outline how the project will comply with applicable air pollution and solid waste management regulations as required by MassDEP.

Sustainable Design

This project presents an opportunity to successfully incorporate cost-effective sustainable design elements and construction practices into the project. These elements can minimize environmental impacts and reduce operating costs. I strongly encourage the proponent to consider incorporating elements, such as those noted below, into its project design, construction and management:

- water conservation and reuse of wastewater and stormwater
- renewable energy technologies to meet energy needs
- optimization of natural day lighting, passive solar gain, and natural cooling
- energy efficient HVAC and lighting systems, appliances and other equipment, and solar preheating of air
- building supplies and materials that are non-toxic, made from recycled materials, and made with low embodied energy
- easily accessible and user-friendly recycling system infrastructure into building design
- development of a solid waste reduction plan
- development of an annual audit program for energy consumption, waste streams, and use of renewable resources.

The EIR should summarize the proponent's efforts to incorporate sustainable design elements into the proposed project.

Mitigation

The EIR should contain a separate chapter on mitigation measures. It should include Draft Section 61 Findings and a Letter of Commitment for use by MassHighway that includes a clear commitment to mitigation, an estimate of the individual costs of the proposed mitigation, and the identification of the parties responsible for implementing the mitigation. The EIR should provide a schedule for the implementation of the mitigation, based on the construction phases of the project.

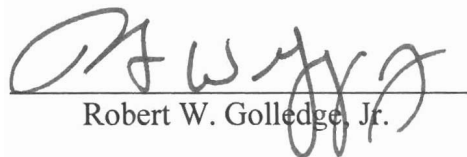
Comments

The EIR should contain a copy of this Certificate and of each comment received. The EIR should follow the general guidance for outline and content contained in Section 11.07 of the MEPA regulations, as modified by this Certificate. The EIR should respond fully to each substantive comment received, to the extent that it is within MEPA jurisdiction. The EIR should present additional technical analysis and/or narrative as necessary to respond to the concerns raised.

The proponent should circulate a copy of the EIR to any party submitting written comments on the ENF and in accordance with Section 11.16 of the MEPA Regulations. A copy of the EIR should be made available for public review at the Wilbraham Public Library.

September 14, 2006

DATE


Robert W. Gollidge, Jr.

Comments received:

- 09/05/2006 Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- 09/07/2006 Department of Environmental Protection – WERO
- 09/07/2006 Executive Office of Transportation

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