

Laurie Burt, Commissioner  
Department of Environmental Protection  
One Winter Street  
Boston, MA 02108

September 15, 2009

Dear Commissioner Burt:

I am writing to DEP to comment on the progress made in the last year implementing the State Implementation Plan (SIP), specifically in the execution of the Green line Extension. While I am grateful for the progress achieved so far on this vital project, I am concerned that ballooning cost estimates, slippage from internal project deadlines, and other looming complications could preclude the project's timely completion. With the resignation of Transportation Secretary Aloisi having been announced since DEP's September 9, 2009 hearing on the SIP, it becomes increasingly important that DEP keep close tabs on the actual progress of the Green Line Extension.

I would respectfully ask that DEP help ensure that the Green Line Extension stays on track through the impending changes in leadership and organization of our transportation agencies. Specifically, I request that DEP take these steps:

1) Require EOT to provide DEP with more detailed cost estimates for the Green Line Extension, to update cost estimates more frequently than yearly, and to report to DEP at such intervals the progress it is making in getting FTA "endorsement" of its cost estimates;

I was a member of the legislature's Joint Committee on Bonding during consideration and passage of the 2008 Transportation Bond bill. At the time, EOT testified to the committee that the \$600 million allocated in that bill for the Green Line Extension would cover the entire estimated cost of that project. In July, 2009, EOT filed with the Boston MPO an amendment to its Regional Transportation Plan that divides the project into two phases.

Phase I of the project, Lechmere Station to College Avenue, is now estimated to cost \$934 million, and phase II, College Avenue to Route 16, to cost \$130 million, for a total of \$1.064 billion. Although there was testimony at the DEP hearing that \$125 million of this increase is attributable to the cost of relocating Lechmere Station, neither that cost allocation or any other is itemized. How much will each station cost, and how much for the still-unsited maintenance facility?

DEP – and all of us – would benefit from an “early warning system” that would flag financial problems that would derail the Green Line Extension. Estimated project costs have already outstripped available state resources. It is not even clear through what revenues the principal and interest would be repaid on the \$600 million authorized by the 2008 transportation bond bill – but it should be.

2) Require EOT to provide DEP with a financing plan that covers the whole estimated cost of the whole Green Line Extension Project

EOT’S current financial plan for the Green line Extension calls for half the project to be funded by discretionary federal New Starts grant monies. I am confident that EOT feels that the Green Line Extension is a good candidate for such funds. At the same time, I’m sure that none of us want to hear in 2010 of a funding shortfall that will make projects completion 2014 an impossibility.

As this project keeps increasing in scope and cost, it is in increasing danger of failing to meet its legal commitments. While I doubt no one’s good faith, I do wonder how realistic the 2009 progress report is. I agree completely with Peter Shelley of the Conversation Law Foundation that EOT should be required to produce a full funding plan.

3) Require EOT to report, more frequently than yearly, the progress it is making on realizing the Green Line Extension project itself

It became clear at the September 9 DEP hearing that EOT will already need to file amendments to its July 2009 RTP amendment reporting the status of the Green Line Extension. The EIR/EA filing date and

the status of “support facility program and siting” as “completed” have been admitted to be inaccurate. While it is good news that Yard 8 is not presently the preferred alternative for siting the new Green Line maintenance facility, many of us feel that Yard 8 should have been ruled out over a year ago, and it is troubling to us that there should yet be no firm site for the maintenance facility.

I would also ask for clarification whether the Lechmere Station relocation is now within the scope of the Green Line Extension or not. The RTP amendment text refers to the Green Line as extending from “the relocated Lechmere Station,” and “from Lechmere Station to College Avenue (approximately three miles).” It is not clear to me the extent to which the “SIP status” checklist in the July 2009 RTP amendment applies to this new project component.

I realize that these requests may ask DEP to take an oversight role beyond its usual scope. I appreciate EOT’s effort and attention in planning the Green Line Extension project. Yet EOT will soon cease to exist in its present form, and EOT’s plans have yet to be realized.

My thanks to DEP for monitoring progress on the SIP, for holding the September 9 hearing, and for considering these remarks.

Very Truly Yours,

Denise Provost

cc: Secretary James Aloisi, EOT  
Peter Shelley, Conservation Law Foundation  
Mayor Joseph Curtatone