



SMART GROWTH AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

December 9, 2016

Matthew A. Beaton, Secretary
Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
Attention: MEPA Office – Paige Czepiga, MEPA #15558
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Arsenal on the Charles, MEPA #15558

Dear Secretary Beaton:

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) regularly reviews proposals deemed to have regional impacts. The Council reviews proposed projects for consistency with *MetroFuture*, the regional policy plan for the Boston metropolitan area, the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Principles, consistency with Complete Streets policies and design approaches, as well as impacts on the environment.

Athena Arsenal, LLC (the Proponent) proposes to redevelop and revitalize the 29-acre Arsenal on the Charles campus (the Project) on Arsenal Street in Watertown through the phased construction of six new buildings, which include mixed-use, civic, and office uses. These new buildings would total approximately 250,000 gross square feet and would be supported by 976 net new parking spaces, resulting in a total parking supply of 2,934 spaces.¹ The Project is expected to generate 4,410 additional vehicle trips on an average weekday.

MAPC has a long-term interest in alleviating regional traffic and environmental impacts, consistent with the goals of *MetroFuture*. The Commonwealth also has established a mode shift goal of tripling the share of travel in Massachusetts by bicycling, transit and walking by 2030. Additionally, the Commonwealth has a statutory obligation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) by 25% from 1990 levels by 2020 and by 80% from 1990 levels by 2050. In May 2016, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court released a unanimous decision in *Kain vs. Massachusetts Department of Protection (DEP)* ordering the state's DEP to take additional measures to implement the 2008 Global Warming Solutions Act. This ruling reasserts the state's obligation to meet these goals. Due to the Project's robust Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program, in our opinion, the Project will help the Commonwealth to achieve all of these goals.

¹ The number of parking spaces is potentially expandable to 3,066 spaces with parking stackers if required, which would be located within the newly constructed parking garage.

MAPC applauds the Proponent for developing an exemplary TDM program to reduce single occupancy vehicles (SOVs). Components of the TDM program include participating in the establishment of a new Transportation Management Association (TMA) for Watertown, allocating a monthly transportation benefit of \$75 for employees that commute by non-SOV modes, expanding its shuttle bus program, and installing a minimum of one Hubway bike sharing station.

The Proponent has also proposed transparent and accountable trip reduction goals and monitoring program to assist in determining the effectiveness of TDM initiatives, traffic mitigation improvements, and parking program. Elements of this program include the use of permanent vehicle count equipment which will record vehicles entering and exiting the Project site and smart parking technology in the parking garages to gather parking-related data.

MAPC has long advocated for other project proponents to develop strong TDM and monitoring programs in order to mitigate negative impacts on the roadway network. The Proponent's robust commitments are therefore a welcome breakthrough and set an excellent precedent. The successful execution of the TDM program as well as the monitoring program will serve as leading examples for future development projects in other communities to follow.

MAPC would also like to acknowledge the Proponent for their comprehensive plans to design and implement key missing bicycle and pedestrian access links in the Watertown Greenway/Community Path along the Arsenal Street Corridor and connections from Arsenal Street to North Beacon Street and the Charles River Reservation. As proposed, the Proponent will ensure that on-site and off-site improvements will connect to the existing and proposed local circulation network. Moreover, the Proponent has proposed an extensive off-site transportation infrastructure improvements program that will be completed in conjunction with the Project.

Moving forward, it will be important to include the TDM program, the trip reduction goals and monitoring program together with the commitments identified to improve bicycle and pedestrian access and transportation infrastructure in both the Secretary's Certificate and Section 61 Findings.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this exemplary project.

Sincerely,



Marc D. Draisen
Executive Director

cc: Steve Magoon, Town of Watertown
David Mohler, MassDOT