

Mystic Valley Parkway Community Visioning Process Frequently Asked Questions (updated 3/11)

This list was developed to help provide answers to reoccurring questions and concerns heard through stakeholder interviews, outreach efforts by both the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) and the Massachusetts Office of Public Collaboration (MOPC), and questions and comments received during public meetings. We hope this document can be a helpful resource.

General Questions

1. Why is this visioning process being undertaken? Didn't MassDOT already complete a public process related to a potential Green Line station at Mystic Valley Parkway and get input on the issues then?

This new visioning process is an effort to consider possible land use changes that could come to the Mystic Valley Parkway area with the addition of a Green Line station, including the potential for economic growth and enhancement in the area. Previous MassDOT studies focused on specific transportation considerations and engineering recommendations for a potential future Green Line station and track alignment. Issues about land use and development were frequently raised during the earlier MassDOT planning process, and we feel that a more in-depth review of them now will be helpful to both MassDOT and the surrounding communities.

2. Wasn't a decision already made to terminate the Green Line Extension at College Avenue in Medford? Why is this process starting up again now?

Based on the limited availability of funding and some local and abutter concerns, MassDOT decided to terminate the current phase of the Green Line Extension at College Avenue in Medford. Given the continued public interest in the possibility of a future Green Line station at Mystic Valley Parkway, however, MassDOT remains committed to exploring the opportunities and challenges of a station at that location.

3. Is this process meant only to assess what will happen when a new Green Line station is built at Mystic Valley Parkway, or actually to decide if a station will be built there? Is there a "no-build" option being considered?

The purpose of this process is to analyze the potential benefits and impacts – for land use, economic development, and transportation access – of possibly extending the Green Line to Mystic Valley Parkway. This process is intended to be open and inclusive and to consider many options and viewpoints. It is not a narrowly-scoped planning process of the type that would require analysis of a particular no-build option. No definitive decision about the construction of a station at Mystic Valley Parkway will be made as part of this process.

4. What will MassDOT do with MAPC's report? Will there be additional public process after this one?

The final product(s) of this process will help to inform MassDOT's eventual decision about extending the Green Line to Mystic Valley Parkway. Issues, ideas, and concerns raised and documented as part of this process will be carefully considered and factored into any follow-on planning and design work that would need to be done to advance a potential station at Mystic Valley Parkway. There will definitely be additional public process in the future if and when MassDOT moves forward with a Green Line station at Mystic Valley Parkway.

5. Will this process include the people who are actually affected by the possible extension of the Green Line to Mystic Valley Parkway? If so, how will you get their input when they cannot or are not comfortable participating in public meetings?

Many people in Medford, Somerville, and surrounding municipalities would be affected by an extension of the Green Line to Mystic Valley Parkway, and MAPC will conduct a thorough outreach initiative leading up to each of the five proposed public meetings. MAPC has also engaged community groups in Somerville, Medford, and Arlington to help spread the word about this process. People who are unable to attend the public meetings should feel free to contact MAPC or MOPC with comments and questions about the process or public meetings. Project staff can be contacted through email (glx@mapc.org) or by phone at 617-451-2770. Meeting agendas, presentations, hand-outs, and public input will all be posted to www.mass.gov/greenlineextension.

6. Will these meetings be held at times and places that are convenient and accessible to all potential participants, including those who work and have child care needs?

MAPC plans to hold all public meetings at times and locations that are convenient and accessible to the majority of potential participants, with the realization that we cannot accommodate the schedules of every individual. Every attempt will be made to provide options for the disabled, hearing and visually impaired, and non-English speaking participants. Please contact MAPC staff to arrange for any special accommodations prior to any of the public meetings.

Station Design, Construction and Cost

1. Is funding already in place to extend the Green Line to Mystic Valley Parkway?

Funding for an extension of the Green Line to Mystic Valley Parkway is identified in the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's Long-Range Transportation Plan; however, that funding is not available until 2016 (at the earliest) and is subject to change depending on the changing transportation needs and priorities of the region within the next ten years.

2. If this station is built, when is it likely to happen?

If a decision is reached by MassDOT to extend the Green Line beyond College Avenue to Mystic Valley Parkway, it would occur some time after the year 2016.

3. What is the projected cost of completing the Green Line extension between College Avenue and Mystic Valley Parkway?

As part of the environmental review process completed for the Green Line Extension project as a whole, the costs of constructing a Green Line segment between College Avenue and Mystic Valley Parkway were estimated at approximately \$130 million. Those cost projections would need to be revisited, however, with updated planning assumptions and more advanced designs.

4. If a station is built, will it also be used as a storage area for Green Line cars?

As part of the Green Line Extension project, MassDOT and the MBTA will be constructing a facility for the maintenance and storage of Green Line vehicles. That facility will be in the Inner Belt area of Somerville. Given that, there would be no need for large-scale or long-term storage of vehicles at a terminal station at Mystic Valley Parkway.

5. If a station is built, will it include a parking garage?

MassDOT has committed not to build parking structures as part of the Green Line Extension project.

6. If a station is built, will it be a fully accessible transit station?

Yes, as will all of the stations on the Green Line Extension.

7. Will there be a Green Line station or connection at the West Medford Commuter Rail station?

The possibility of creating a connection between a Green Line station at Mystic Valley Parkway and the existing MBTA Commuter Rail station at West Medford would be a good subject for exploration as part of a future planning and engineering process.

8. Who is responsible for general station area upkeep and the removal of snow and ice in the winter?

The MBTA is responsible for station maintenance and upkeep at its stations. Sidewalks and pathways not on MBTA property leading to the station are the responsibility of individual property owners.

Traffic and Parking

1. Have the traffic impacts of a station at Mystic Valley Parkway been studied? If so, what information is available?

MassDOT and its design team have studied the potential traffic impacts surrounding the proposed extension of the Green Line to Mystic Valley Parkway. The detailed traffic impact analysis is presented in the Draft Environmental Impact Report completed in October 2009 and available at http://greenlineextension.eot.state.ma.us/docs_draftEIR.html. A portion of the second public meeting will be dedicated to a discussion of traffic and parking impacts.

2. If a station were constructed at Mystic Valley Parkway, what would the projected travel time be between Mystic Valley Parkway and Lechmere?

The projected travel time between Mystic Valley Parkway and Lechmere would be about 18 minutes.

3. Which Green Line(s) would access a potential future station at Mystic Valley Parkway?

The existing Green Line 'D' branch will serve the Medford branch of the Green Line Extension, including a future station at Mystic Valley Parkway.

Land Acquisition

1. Have any decisions been made about what private property – homes or businesses – would need to be acquired by MassDOT (if any) to make possible an extension of the Green Line to Mystic Valley Parkway?

It is still too early to know with certainty what property acquisition would be needed to bring the Green Line to Mystic Valley Parkway. The engineering of this portion of the Green Line Extension is not at a level where exact details on land acquisitions are available. However, an updated track alignment based on a 'worst case scenario' will be presented at a future meeting and includes preliminary information on land acquisitions, which appear to be minimal at this time.

Terminology and Best Practices

1. What is Transit-Oriented Development (TOD)?

The term 'transit-oriented development' (TOD) commonly refers to an area of compact, mixed-use development within walking distance of public transportation. In many ways, transit-oriented development is a return to the neighborhood patterns of the early twentieth century before automobile congestion, when residents walked and used mass transit for many of their daily activities. A major focus of TOD is creating access to public transportation for people of all ages, abilities, and incomes. TOD fosters an affordable and convenient lifestyle where housing, jobs, and daily needs are all in close proximity to each other. TOD also helps to increase transit ridership and reduce automobile congestion.

2. Can you provide other examples of successful and sensitive TOD in Massachusetts and New England?

MAPC will be dedicating a portion of the third public meeting to a discussion of TOD. Close to hand, West Medford Center is an example of successful TOD, with the commuter rail anchoring a walkable area with housing, shops, restaurants, churches, and schools. A more recent example of TOD in Medford is Station Landing close to the Wellington Orange Line Station. TOD can take a number of physical forms, but the underlying principles of what makes them successful remain the same.