West Station Area Transit Study

Summary of First Public Meeting

Jackson-Mann Community Center
500 Cambridge Street, Allston
6:30 pm – 8:00 pm
November 14, 2019

Meeting Purpose and Format

The purpose of the meeting was to inform the public of the West Station Area Transit Study, as well as to get feedback on possible desired outcomes for West Station and to solicit ideas on how best to measure the desired outcomes.

The meeting was organized and facilitated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the agency undertaking the West Station Area Transit Study.

A flyer with a meeting notice was emailed to multiple email lists maintained by MAPC, as well as to specific contacts with neighborhood groups, nonprofits and other stakeholders in the Allston-Brighton area. The meeting notice was also shared with contacts at Harvard University, MassDOT (who shared the notice with members of the Allston I-90 Task Force), the Town of Brookline, and the cities of Boston and Cambridge.

Prior to the meeting start, members of the public were invited to view posters that provided a map of the project study area as well as information about the study. The meeting also included a slide show presentation. Copies of these boards and slide show can be found on the West Station Study website at www.mapc.org/weststation.

Small Group Activity and Feedback

MAPC staff facilitated six small group discussions to review draft desired outcomes and discuss possible study metrics. Each small group was asked to address three questions:

1. What outcomes (listed below) are most important for evaluating options for a future West Station? Would you add any? Would you change any?

Draft Desired Outcomes

A successful West Station and associated transportation improvements will…

A. Improve convenient and efficient transit access throughout the Inner Core and for points west of the city
B. Contribute to improved reliability, safety, and resilience of the MBTA system
C. Reduce per-capita car trips, and vehicle miles travelled (VMT) of residents and workers in West Station area
D. Shift more auto trips regionwide to transit, walking, and cycling
E. Encourage compact, walkable growth with a strong sense of place
F. Improve job access and transit equity for lower-income households
G. Expand housing opportunities including affordable housing in the Inner Core
H. Create financial and economic benefits for the City of Boston and the region

2. Looking at the desired outcomes, how should we document progress towards the most important ones (How would someone in 2040 or 2050 know that we've achieved success and met the desired outcomes?)

3. Using your three dots, vote on which desired outcomes are most important to you.

Common themes in the small group feedback for both desired outcomes and metrics included ensuring a station design that is at human scale, reducing automobile traffic, affordable housing for all, and ensuring reliable transit services with reliable travel times.

Desired Outcomes that received the most votes overall were

C. Reducing per-capita car trips, and vehicle miles travelled (17 votes);

D. Shift more auto trips regionwide to transit, walking, and cycling (15 votes);

G. Expand housing opportunities including affordable housing in the Inner Core (15 votes);

A. Improve convenient and efficient transit access throughout the Inner Core and for points west of the city (13 votes).

The feedback from each small group is summarized below.

Group 1

Question 1: Revisions to Desired Outcomes

- E: Station design is important
- C: Reducing car trips/vehicle miles travelled needs to be compared to something

Question 2: Measuring Success

- Conduct satisfaction surveys of those who use station
- Model mode share so traffic doesn't overwhelm local streets
- Connect Allston to the Charles River
- Look at transit oriented development in MetroWest; who is going from MetroWest to Harvard University?
- Reduced auto ownership near Stations and MetroWest; less parking
- Spectrum of housing – not just a certain demographic; station area should have mix of incomes
- Diversity of local businesses useful for those who live and work

Question 3: Most Important Desired Outcomes

A (4 votes), D (4 votes), E (3 votes), F (2 votes), G (1 vote)

Group 2

Question 1: Revisions to Desired Outcomes

- C: Reduce ride-hail use
- D: Make walking/bicycle infrastructure attractive that encourages mode shift (i.e., not just sharrows)
- G: Emphasize affordable housing, with as little parking as possible
- New: Prioritize sense of place and aesthetics; mitigate environmental harms (air, noise, and light pollution, build electrified rail and bus transit)

Question 2: Measuring Success

- Reduce travel time from Allston to downtown, Longwood, JP, Cambridge, Dorchester
- 50% reduction in VMT in cars originating in neighborhood by 2040
- Red-Blue connector by 2025, with Grand Junction
- 60% of housing units within one-mile radius of West Station priced at 80% or lower AMI
- 50% occupancy on reverse direction trips at peak times

Question 3: Most Important Desired Outcomes

A (3 votes), C (3 votes), G (3 votes), D, E, and "mitigate environmental harm" (2 votes each)

Group 3

Question 1: Revisions to Desired Outcomes

- F: Include racial equity
- New: Architecture of Station: celebrate history of neighborhood; Grand Junction railroad with bike/ped connection; buffer park between homes and railroad

Question 2: Measuring Success

- Conduct visual and verbal preference surveys
- More affordable housing units in area in 20 years
- Less parking

Question 3: Most Important Desired Outcomes

G (4 votes), "architecture of station" (3 votes), A, B, F (2 votes each), C, D, E (1 vote each)

Group 4

Question 1: Revisions to Desired Outcomes

- B: Create more North-South transit network capacity
- C: Add reducing greenhouse gases
- G: Include enabling commutes from more affordable western suburbs
- New: Retain businesses and retain workforce in the inner core; mitigate temporary (10 years) impacts of I-90 interchange construction

Question 2: Measuring Success

- Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and number of auto trips
- Changes in commute times for auto and transit
- Reduce number of crashes (auto, pedestrian, bicycle)
- Reliability of travel time, on-time arrivals
- Access to labor by businesses
- Number of rideshare trips
- Number of family-friendly units and number of families with children

Question 3: Most Important Desired Outcomes

G (5 votes), B (4 votes), C (4 votes), A (2 votes), F (1 vote), "retain businesses and workforce" and "mitigate temporary construction impacts" (1 vote each)

Group 5

Question 1: Revisions to Desired Outcomes

- C: Continuous reduction in VMT
- H: Better access may encourage spill over development
- New: West Station should be a hub/junction for bus and rail, for both local and regional trips; reduce car share of trips to Kendall from MetroWest
- A good West Station should do all of the desired outcomes

Question 2: Measuring Success

- Reduction of travel lanes/street width on new streets
- Air quality
- Decking for air rights must be done when station built
- Good mix of development
- Measure specific travel times and reduction in auto traffic to Harvard, Kendall, Longwood
- Include express bus and timed bus transfers for all users

Question 3: Most Important Desired Outcomes

D (7 votes), A (5 votes), C (5 votes), B, E, F, H (1 vote each)

Group 6

Question 1: Revisions to Desired Outcomes

- B: Should include reliability of commute times
- New: Public health; equity in travel time; economic and housing growth in MetroWest

Question 2: Measuring Success

- Transit ridership
- Model shift
- Travel speed and reliability of trip time
- Need West Station built earlier

Question 3: Most Important Desired Outcomes

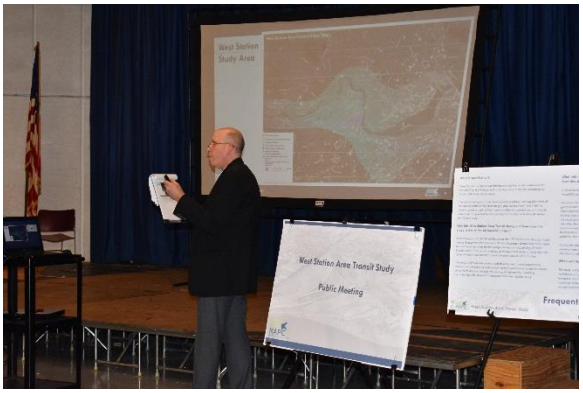
C (4 votes), F (3 votes), A, D, G (2 votes each), H (1 vote)

Additional Feedback

- Climate resilience and net zero energy in new construction is important
- I hope this doesn't become another Seaport; should have accessible, equitable, affordable transit and housing access
- A good station would have all these desired outcomes
- The MBTA is handicapped by the lack of bus layover space, so any desired outcomes will need more bus layovers, including electric bus charging stations
- Increased air and noise pollution is inevitable in Allston and is not accounted for during the interchange development
- Required outcome should be an all-electric transit system to prevent increased adverse environmental health incomes
- Even though we want to decrease per capita car trips, there is still a need for adequate parking to prevent cars from circling around and double parking in popular areas
- I can't stress enough the need for speedy and efficient transit between Allston and other sections of Boston, especially lower-income areas in Dorchester, JP, Mattapan, Roxbury
- Built West Station quickly, we can't wait until 2040
- Demand that MBTA add bus routes and increase level of service on commuter rail so that transit is more reliable
- Ride-hail is adding to street congestion; evaluate their impact and ways to mitigate
- We remain concerned about the coordination of planning in the process
- Include FHWA, FTA, DOT, MassDOT and MBTA in the process to hear from the public

Approximately 35 persons attended the meeting. MAPC staff present were Travis Pollack, Eric Bourassa, Tim Reardon, Conor Gately, Alison Felix, David Loutzenheiser, Iolando Spinola, and Elise Harmon.

Photos from the meeting are on the following page.


West Station
Study Area
West Station Area Transit Study
Public Meeting


MAPC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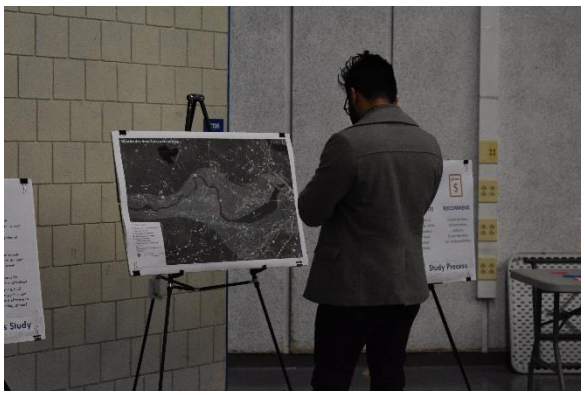
Study Process