



SMART GROWTH AND REGIONAL COLLABORATION

December 23, 2022

Beth Card
Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs
MA Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
Attention: Alexander Strysky, MEPA Office
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

RE: Encore Boston Harbor, Notice of Project Change, EEA No.15060

Dear Secretary Card:

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) regularly reviews proposals deemed to have regional impacts. The Council reviews proposed projects for consistency with *MetroCommon 2050*, MAPC's regional land use and policy plan, consistency with Complete Streets policies and design approaches, as well as impacts on the environment.

A Notice of Project Change (NPC) has been filed by Wynn MA, LLC (the Proponent), which proposes to construct an additional multi-use commercial development of approximately 1.8 million square feet (sf) including a theater, entertainment venues, two hotels, food & beverage facilities, retail facilities, a warehouse support facility, three parking garages, and a pedestrian bridge across Broadway (the Revised Project). The Revised Project spans approximately 12.9 acres in Everett's Lower Broadway area, and is generally bounded by Dexter Street to the south, Robin Street to the east, Beacham Street to the north, and Broadway to the west. The Revised Project is an expansion of the existing Encore Boston Harbor casino.

The Revised Project is proposed to be constructed in multiple phases, with the first phase (Phase 1) consisting of a 979-seat theater, 200-seat comedy club, gaming area, approximately 38,300 sf of food & beverage space with sports betting, and a pedestrian bridge across Broadway (Route 99) connecting directly to Encore Boston Harbor. The remaining development (the Future Phases) will include approximately 600,000 sf of hotel space with approximately 800 keys, 20,000 sf of event space, 30,000 sf of food & beverage facilities, 20,000 sf of retail space, and a 60,000 sf warehouse. Not including parking or the pedestrian bridge, Phase 1 is proposed to include approximately 90,700 sf of development and the Future Phases will include approximately 730,000 sf of development.

The MBTA serves the Broadway corridor by multiple bus routes and also provides transit service via the Orange Line at the nearby Wellington, Malden, Sullivan Square, and Assembly Stations. The NPC proposes 2,381 parking spaces and is forecast to generate 7,454 adjusted daily vehicle trips, increasing the number of trips generated by the Encore Boston Harbor casino by 42 percent. Collectively, the Encore Boston Harbor casino will include 25,004 daily vehicle trips and 6,095 parking spaces¹. As currently proposed, the Proponent will frontload parking on-site by adding 1,687 parking spaces in

¹ The 2017 NPC's hotel, retail, gaming, and shuttle/bus uses resulted in 17,550 vehicle trips. The Revised Project's use is expected to result in approximately 7,454 employee/patron daily adjusted vehicle trips. The Revised Project will include 25,004 vehicle trips per day, which is a difference of 42% from the 2017 NPC. (Notice of Project Change submitted 11/15/22, page 1-12)

**Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) comments on
Encore Boston Harbor, Notice of Project Change, EEA No. 15060**

Phase 1 and 694 spaces in Future Phases. Phase 1 of the Revised Project only proposes an estimated 122,000 sq feet of development (entertainment, food & beverage, gaming, and front-of-house).² MAPC has a long-term interest in alleviating regional traffic and environmental impacts, consistent with the recommendations of *MetroCommon 2050*, including “reducing vehicle miles traveled and the need for single-occupant vehicle travel through increased development in transit-oriented areas and walkable centers,”³ and “improving accessibility and regional connectivity.”⁴ Furthermore, the Commonwealth has a statutory obligation to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 50% by 2030, 75% by 2040, and 85% from 1990 levels by 2050 to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

MAPC has reviewed the NPC and has strong concerns pertaining to the amount of parking, mitigation, mode share goals, project monitoring, and public transportation analysis. These issues, proposed recommendations, and questions are detailed as an attachment to this letter.

In order to minimize adverse impacts and to keep the Commonwealth on track in meeting its regulatory and statutory goals, MAPC respectfully requests that the Secretary incorporate our comments as part of the Certificate issuance.

With this NPC filing, the Proponent has requested that the Secretary grant a Single Environmental Impact Report (Single EIR). Following review of the NPC, MAPC maintains that this is a substantial project, which is likely in its current form to have very damaging impacts on the environment and negatively impact our emission goals. This necessitates a robust review process to allow for a full analysis of the Revised Project’s impacts and appropriate mitigation measures. Therefore, MAPC respectfully requests that Secretary reject the Proponent’s request for an expedited process and require the filing of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) to be followed by a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR).

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.

Sincerely,



Marc Draisen
Executive Director

cc: Jay Monty, Everett
Jim Fitzgerald, Boston
Brad Rawson, Somerville
David Mohler, MassDOT
Douglas Rice, DCR
Joe Delaney, Massachusetts Gaming Commission

² Total on-site GFA without garage and pedestrian bridge. Refer to Table 1-2 of NPC.

³ <https://metrocommon.mapc.org/announcements/recommendations/2>

⁴ <https://metrocommon.mapc.org/announcements/recommendations/1>

**Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) comments on
Encore Boston Harbor, Notice of Project Change, EEA No. 15060**

Parking

There are currently 2,914 on-site parking spaces at the existing Encore Boston Harbor site. The Revised Project proposes almost to double the amount of parking by adding 2,381 on-site spaces⁵. As currently proposed, the total number of on-site parking spaces for the entire Encore Boston Harbor site would be 5,295⁶. MAPC has significant concerns whether the amount of proposed parking is truly necessary and asks the Proponent to reduce considerably the number of proposed parking spaces. A parking program that does not overbuild parking would encourage and reinforce the use of alternative modes of transportation to access the Project, including Orange Line, bus, shuttle service, as well as walking and bicycling and would minimize dependence on auto travel.

MAPC respectfully requests that the Proponent quite clearly address the following:

Current Parking Usage, Additional Demand, and Phasing

In order to justify the amount of additional parking, the Proponent needs to provide clear empirical evidence that Encore Boston Harbor's existing parking spaces are insufficient for patron demand. This evidence should come from the ongoing annual Transportation Monitoring and Reporting Program, which was codified in the Section 61 Findings for the project dated March 31, 2016 and directed by the former Secretary Matthew Beaton in his issuance of the Certificate for the Notice of Project Change dated April 7, 2017.

Phasing and Allocation of Parking

Phase 1 of the Revised Project only proposes an estimated 122,000 sq feet of development, (entertainment, food & beverage, gaming, and front-of-house)⁷, yet it proposes to add 1,687 parking spaces. The Proponent needs to substantiate and explain this frontloading of parking and clarify whether, and to what extent, the proposed parking will provide additional parking for the existing Encore Boston Harbor casino.

MAPC respectfully requests that the Proponent provide information with respect to allocation of the 2,381 proposed parking spaces to the land uses for the Revised Project (Phase 1 and Future Phases), preferably in a matrix format along with a clear explanation of the methodology used to determine the total parking proposed by land use type. Additionally, parking ratios and alignment with Everett's existing zoning both need to be conveyed in a clear and complete manner.

Monitoring of Parking

MAPC highly recommends that new parking from the Revised Project be included in the Proponent's ongoing annual Transportation Monitoring and Reporting Program for the existing Encore Boston Harbor development. The new parking needs to be treated as an extension of the casino's existing parking, so the aggregate vehicle trips from both can be monitored to get a complete picture of how the entire system is functioning. The ongoing annual Transportation Monitoring and Reporting Program should be required to continue for a minimum of 10 years as part of the Revised Project's mitigation measures for the existing and Revised Project components.

⁵ This number does not include the existing 800 off-site parking spaces for employees.

⁶ There are an additional 800 off-site parking spaces.

⁷ Total on-site GFA without garage and pedestrian bridge. Refer to Table 1-2 of NPC.

**Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) comments on
Encore Boston Harbor, Notice of Project Change, EEA No. 15060**

Shared Parking at Revised Project

The Proponent should identify opportunities that control parking demand through sharing of parking spaces for different users by time of day. MAPC looks forward to reviewing a quantitative shared parking plan that addresses how parking spaces can be assigned to and shared among different users for the Revised Project site and the existing Encore Boston Harbor casino.

Parking Pricing Strategies

The Proponent should evaluate and monitor pricing strategies for managing on-site parking in a manner that will appropriately serve visitors while also supporting the goal of reducing auto trips and encouraging use of public transportation. MAPC encourages the Proponent to consider incorporating a fee which will fund the TDM program and/or mitigation for environmental impacts. There should be disincentives for commuters who may view the parking garages as commuter locations. Additionally, a daily fee would serve as a disincentive for commuters to park at this site.

The existing Encore Boston casino did charge for parking for patrons up until October 2019. The Proponent should explain why they stopped charging for parking and how that affected mode share and traffic. In any event, we recommend that a significant fee for parking should be reinstated as a means of encouraging mode shift and reducing emissions generated by vehicle trips to/from the existing and proposed developments.

Project Mitigation and Transportation Monitoring Programs

Before MAPC can provide detailed comments on the proposed mitigation for the Revised Project, the Proponent needs to provide a summary of the effectiveness of the current Transportation Monitoring Program as identified in the Section 61 Findings, which include:

- Roadway Data Collection - including data collection at Sullivan Square
- Parking Data Collection – including distinction between patrons and employees
- Public Transportation Data Collection – including Orange Line and MBTA Bus Routes 90, 99, 100, and 134, Premium Parking and Ride service, water transportation, tour buses, employee shuttle, and neighborhood shuttle
- Travel Mode Analysis of Patrons and Employees

The Section 61 Findings states “the goals of the traffic monitoring program will be to evaluate the assumptions made in the transportation studies included in the environmental documents, the adequacy of the transportation measures, as well as to determine the effectiveness of the transportation demand management program (page 37).” A summary of the effectiveness of existing mitigation, traffic monitoring, public transportation capacity, and existing mode share will all help strongly shape an appropriate mitigation program for the Revised Project. Therefore, we ask the Secretary to require that these items be provided in the next submission.

**Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) comments on
Encore Boston Harbor, Notice of Project Change, EEA No. 15060**

Mode Share Goals

We note that the NPC indicates that 52% of patrons will drive to the site, 32% will arrive by taxi/rideshare, 10% will take transit/Orange Line, and 6% will use water transportation. According to the NPC, 47% of employees will arrive at the site by auto, 40% by shuttle, 10% by MBTA bus, and 3% by auto/bike. As this Project is located in a transit-rich site, the Proponent should strive for an auto mode share goal under 50% for patrons.

MAPC respectfully requests that the Proponent identify mode share goals that will meaningfully increase Orange Line usage for patrons and employees, increase MBTA bus for employees, and include MBTA bus for patrons. The project site is located in such a way that patrons and employees can take advantage of public transportation resources in the area, including MBTA Orange Line service at Sullivan Square, Assembly Square, Malden Center and Wellington Stations, and MBTA bus service along Broadway. The Proponent should be taking all reasonable steps to increase the percentage of patrons and employees using public transportation as opposed to driving and increasing both congestion and emissions.

Project Monitoring

As mentioned previously for parking, the Proponent needs to outline and commit to a clearly defined post-development transportation monitoring and reporting program that aligns with current post-development traffic and parking monitoring efforts for the existing Encore Boston Harbor casino. Monitoring data, which should include annual data collection of traffic counts, parking occupancy, transit ridership, and other travel modes, will be reviewed to evaluate the adequacy of transportation mitigation measures, including the TDM program. Project monitoring should be required to continue for a minimum of 10 years after completion of the Revised Project as part of its mitigation measures and should include both the Revised Project and the existing Encore Boston Harbor casino.

The intent of the transportation monitoring program is to confirm that actual changes are consistent with forecasted changes and mode share goals. With a monitoring program, the actual impacts of a project can be determined, mitigation measures adjusted, and additional mitigation measures identified, if necessary.

Public Transportation Analysis and Impacts

The next MEPA submittal needs to include projected ridership and capacity analysis for the Orange Line and MBTA bus routes. The analysis should identify whether the Revised Project would result in increased demand to the Orange Line or MBTA bus routes and whether the additional trips are expected to cause the Orange Line or MBTA bus routes to exceed capacity.

Bus Priority on Broadway

MAPC is pleased that the Proponent will provide a 13-foot right-of-way along the stretch of Broadway adjacent to the Project Site to help the city achieve its goal of creating a dedicated bus lane along Lower Broadway. Providing a dedicated bus lane will prioritize transit by allowing for more frequent headways, reduce delays due to traffic congestion, and help raise the visibility of this mode of transportation.

Transportation Demand Management

While MAPC intends to provide detailed comments on the proposed mitigation measures based in part on the additional data requested in the Project Monitoring section above, preliminarily, the types of TDM mitigation measures MAPC would like the Proponent to explore include:

MBTA Passes

MAPC is pleased that the Proponent will provide a subsidy for monthly MBTA passes and a pre-tax payroll deduction for the remaining cost.

Bicycle Parking

While the Proponent has indicated bicycle parking will be provided, the number and location of covered and secured bicycle spaces throughout the project should be specified. On-site showers, lockers, and changing facilities, as well as financial incentives to encourage patrons and employees to bicycle to the site should also be included.

Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

MAPC recommends that 25 percent of the parking spaces be provided with electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the remaining 75 percent of spaces as EV-Ready. EV-Ready spaces include construction of appropriate infrastructure to facilitate the future installation of charging stations.

Chapter 91 Landlocked Tidelands

The NPC notes that “although the project does not require review under Chapter 91, it may be subject to a Public Benefit Determination based on the presence of landlocked tidelands. The landlocked tideland consists of a small finger from a former creek. The distance of the landlocked tidelands from flowed tidelands makes the traditional public interests of fishing, fowling and navigation limited.”

The NPC states that “the project will provide substantial public benefit by using these landlocked tidelands to create a project designed to serve the public through facilities of public accommodation and public access. The landlocked tidelands will be greatly enhanced from their current condition of paved parking lots and the redevelopment will benefit abutters and the community through the upgrade of the neighborhood.”

However, the NPC does not demonstrate specifically how the project will “provide substantial public benefit by using these landlocked tidelands to create a project designed to serve the public through facilities of public accommodation and public access.” The site plan shows that the landlocked tidelands will be completely covered by impervious surfaces of buildings and parking garages in the “Block A” portion of the project, which will include a 1,687-space, 7-story parking garage as well as a food and beverage venue with sports betting, a poker room, a day club, a 999-person occupancy night club, a 200-seat comedy club, and a 979-seat theater. There is no “public accommodation” or “public access” other than access to the Proponent’s own development.

On other parts of the site the NPC proposes an 8-foot-wide sidewalk with an approximately 8-foot-wide parkway planter and a landscaped plaza with bench seating and planter pots connected to the sidewalk outside of the entertainment building. Along Dexter Street, a 6-foot-wide sidewalk is separated from the

**Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) comments on
Encore Boston Harbor, Notice of Project Change, EEA No. 15060**

curb by a parkway planter. These very modest streetscape improvements are not proportionate to the scale of the project, with 1.8 million square feet of development, as is apparent in the site plan shown in the NPC for the Preferred Alternative (Figure 2-1 in the NPC).



This concern is further underscored considering that the 12.9-acre site will be covered by 12.0 acres of impervious surface, or 93 percent of the site area, and those areas not paved would primarily be sidewalks and planters adjacent to the roadway corridor. Other than a plaza outside of the entertainment building, there is no open space or public realm accommodation incorporated into the landscape of the proposed develop site. The EIR should present an alternative that would:

- 1) Provide meaningful public accommodation and public access proportionate to the scale of the development;
- 2) Utilize open space to enable green infrastructure to accommodate at least some of the stormwater generated on the extensive impervious areas;
- 3) Utilize open space to provide mitigation of the urban heat island effect of the surrounding impervious areas; and
- 4) In accordance with the comments above on parking, present an alternative site plan with reduced parking and additional open space that can enhance these public benefits.