



Charlestown Preservation Society
 P. O. Box 290201
 Charlestown, MA 02129

23 March 2017

James Gillooly, Deputy Commissioner,
 Boston Transportation Department
 One City Hall Square, Room 721
 Boston MA 02201

Re: Rutherford Avenue / Sullivan Square Design Project

Dear Mr. Gillooly,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the current status of the Sullivan Square Design project as presented at the Transportation Department’s public meeting on 28 February 2017. I have used the slides from the meeting that are available on the <https://www.boston.gov/departments/transportation/rutherford-avenue-sullivan-square-design-project> website in preparing these comments.

The Charlestown Preservation Society Design Review Committee (DRC) wants to see an attractive new person-centered Sullivan Square with sidewalks and green space that make it a desirable place to live and work. At the February meeting I spoke of my strong preference for the proposed Surface Design and opposition to the Underpass Design. The Surface Design proposes a core that can become the center of an expanded TOD community in and adjacent to Sullivan Square. Its superiority is particularly evident when compared with the Underpass Design. Here are some comparisons between the two options in the following table.

At Grade (Surface Plan) Design:	North Gateway/Underpass Design:
<p>Urban Design: Allows for the creation of a <u>person-centered Sullivan Square</u> with green space, buildings and plaza as shown in 2013 Sullivan Square Disposition Study specifically addressing the dual issues of bicycle and pedestrian safety.</p>	<p>Urban Design: <u>No urban design</u> study has been presented. Green space and housing development in the area within the existing rotary and underpasses are difficult to build. Buildable parcels are smaller than those in Surface plan and roadway widths are greater. Two-way Maffa Way and Main Streets require more width than one-way streets in At Grade design and contribute to a <u>roadway dominated</u> Sullivan Square.</p>
<p>Consistency with City Planning Goals: <u>Safe multimodal surface streets are consistent with good planning practices and City of Boston goals</u> (Imagine Boston, Go Boston 2030,</p>	<p>City Planning Goals: <u>Emphasis on accommodating through traffic</u> with a complex space consuming roadway design and a missing connection at Arlington Avenue make achieving</p>

<p>Vision 0, Complete Streets). They provide mobility for all people, good access to transit, livable and safe streets and encourage transit-oriented development.</p>	<p>the City's Long Range 2030 goals difficult.</p>
<p>Cost: Parcel development costs will be significantly less where air rights development is not necessary. Building construction will also be less expensive. Could leave funds available for well developed green spaces.</p>	<p>Cost: Underpasses with or without decking are <u>much more expensive</u> to build and maintain. Buildings above them will be expensive and difficult to build and lease. Because of the complexity and expense, development above underpasses often does not happen.</p>
<p>Traffic Pattern: Predominant existing regional traffic pattern along Rutherford Ave is maintained. Traffic will flow more easily and effective traffic signage can be more easily established. The <u>entrance to Charlestown on Main Street can be more easily traffic-calmed.</u></p>	<p>Traffic Pattern: Emphasizes <u>direct roadway connection</u> between Everett and Downtown Boston through existing underpass alignment and between Somerville and Charlestown through new straight line route to and from historic Charlestown proper. This route will encourage <u>unwanted through-traffic</u> on Main, Bunker Hill, Medford, and Chelsea Streets.</p>
<p>Road Geometry: Clarity of the simple grid layout creates better traffic flow.</p>	<p>Complicated Road Geometry: Creates <u>complicated route</u> to Everett from I-93 N off-ramp at Cambridge Street. Route takes vehicles along Alford Street West to an "S" connector (like a level off- ramp with tight curves) <u>over underpass portal</u>. That connector leads to Alford Street East and the Alford Street Bridge. This is a <u>poor entrance</u> to Everett and Wynn Boston Harbor from I-93 N.</p>
<p>Sullivan Square: New <u>Sullivan Square Park becomes symbolic gateway</u> into Charlestown from the north comparable to City Square Park gateway at the south. Instead of the North Gateway "X" roadway intersection in the Underpass Design, <u>two additional parcels</u> are created and contribute to the livability of the area.</p>	<p>North Gateway: Plan creates "X" intersection with <u>single lane</u> for "left turn" on route leading into Charlestown from Broadway/I-93 S off ramp. This is the main route from I-93 S to Everett and <u>uses the same "S" connector to the Alford Street Bridge</u> and Wynn Casino as the Cambridge Street I-93 N off- ramp. The "X" Intersection will be a <u>choke point</u> causing traffic to back up into Somerville and onto the I-93 off-ramp.</p>
<p>Bus Access to T Station: Nos. 92, 93, 104, 105, &109 bus-only lane provides access to the T station and operates in the <u>same direction</u> as existing traffic.</p>	<p>Bus Access to T Station: Nos. 92, 93, 104, 105, &109 bus-only lane operates in the <u>opposing direction</u> on short two way section of Main Street in "X" intersection. This creates a <u>confusing and hazardous condition</u>.</p>
<p>On Street Parking: Provides on street parking, a benefit for residents and business that also improves pedestrian safety because autos form a barrier between pedestrians and traffic.</p>	<p>On Street Parking: No on street parking appears in the design. Appropriate locations would need to be identified.</p>
<p>Crossings: Streets providing connectivity between Charlestown proper and its outskirts are <u>possible anywhere</u> along the length of Rutherford Avenue.</p>	<p>Crossings: Crossings are provided by bridges over underpasses at Sullivan Square and Mishawum Street. <u>No crossing is provided</u> at Arlington Avenue north of the Square. This makes <u>achieving the City's Long Range 2030 housing goals difficult</u>.</p>
<p>Arlington Avenue & Ryan Playground Access: Design provides important Arlington Avenue access to current MBTA bus yards and potential transit oriented development in the area. This facilitates Imagine Boston 2030 planning objectives. Ryan Playground parking located opposite Arlington Avenue intersection is easily accessible. Arlington Avenue and Beacham Street form an alternative route for Wynn traffic heading via Mystic Avenue in Somerville to I-93 N and I-93 S (via the planned U turn east of Route 28),</p>	<p>Arlington Avenue & Ryan Playground Access: Arlington Avenue <u>cannot be reached</u> from Rutherford Avenue northbound. Access to Ryan Playground is provided from Alford Street East. Egress from Ryan Playground is provided via an <u>opposite direction lane</u> on an unusual two way section of Alford Street East (east of underpass ramps). Vehicles must turn into oncoming traffic (with a stop sign?) to access the lane. <u>Seems unsafe</u>.</p>
<p>Linear Open Space: Linear park with 40'+ depth for cycle tracks, walkways and programming is created on the neighborhood-side of the street This creates an <u>esplanade-like amenity</u> with enough area to include green infrastructure</p>	<p>No Continuous Linear Open Space Created: Open space is restricted to a cycle track and walkway alongside the south ramps of the underpasses on the neighborhood side. <u>Space is wasted between ramps</u>.</p>

<p>and storm-water cleansing. Park with cycle path and walkway extends all the way to the Ryan Playground and connects across RA at Arlington Street to pathways connected to Somerville and Everett.</p>	<p>Cycle and walkway pathways are unable to cross Rutherford Avenue anywhere between Main Street at Sullivan Square the Mystic River unless there is a dedicated traffic light for them.</p>
<p>Climate Resilience – Flooding Potential: With the entire roadway system at grade, <u>flooding</u> on this important evacuation route corridor <u>can be minimized</u></p>	<p>Flood Prone: <u>Underpasses do not prepare area for flood prevention</u> in a corridor that is already prone to flooding. The "Climate Ready Boston" report (released in Dec 2016) calls out the area by Schraft's and Sullivan Square as an area likely to be highly impacted by sea level rise- up to and including water infiltrating from the Mystic and overtopping the Charles River Dam, into the Charles River Basin. The current underpass is already very susceptible to large tide and SLOSH events. This critical evacuation route would be inundated when most needed.</p>
<p>Traffic Projections for this project are based on current trends based on number of vehicles. Projections have not yet included improved rapid transit, multiple occupancy vehicles like shuttles, improved bus service or improved use of pathways by bikes and pedestrians. Also, they do not include the disappearing traffic factor used in Somerville's McGrath Boulevard Project and the new USDOT Rule for measuring congestion that considers people not just vehicles. These improvements will result in reduced vehicular traffic demand and should be incorporated in the Rutherford Avenue/ Sullivan Square Design Project to determine adequacy of planned streets.</p>	

I hope these comments will be useful in your design and review of this project. The Charlestown Preservation Society looks forward to seeing updated street plans of the At Grade Design when they are available. It is clear to us that the North Gateway/Underpass Design is an awkward roadway design with poor urban design potential and unwanted traffic consequences. It is also clear that the At Grade (Surface) Design will create the greatest benefits for Charlestown.

Sincerely,



William P. Lamb, Chair
Design Review Committee

Ellen Kitzis, Ph.D. President
Charlestown Preservation Society

cc.:

- Christopher Osgood, Director of Streets
- Gian Fiandaca, Commissioner, Transportation Department
- Tad Reed, Deputy Director, Boston Planning and Development Agency
- Sal LaMattina, District City Councilor
- Chris Breen, Office of Neighborhood Services