

February 24, 2014

To: Richard Bourre, MEPA

Dear Mr. Bourre:

Please deny Legatt McCall's request for a waiver of the mandatory EIR for this project.

Its argument fails to include the effect of DOT-Somerville plans for the McGrath corridor (Route 28) on the network of streets around the courthouse. Using CTPS data from 2011, the McGrath plans — now at the point of environmental permitting and initiation and development — in turn fail to include the almost-vacant courthouse's proposed renovation and reuse.

Neither document seems aware of the other. (Please see “Grounding McGrath” (www.massdot.state.ma.us/groundingmcgrath/Documents.aspx, December, 2013).

Both plans assume that with the Green Line Extension and bicycle use, “a significant number of vehicles that currently travel along the McGrath corridor will not do so in the future.” That may be the case.

However, while McGrath assumes further development in Kendall Square, its base year is 2011 and does not include either Cambridge's recent upzoning there or the courthouse renovation before you. It notes that “further study of traffic diversion to other streets in the [studied] network, and the resulting capacity issues at other key intersections outside the study corridor [e.g., East Cambridge], will be required.” Leggat McCall's projected 4,646 adt for the courthouse and Cambridge's projections for future development in Kendall Square are important new data for such study.

This need for further study of McGrath does not obviate the need for an EIR of the courthouse project. To the contrary, it underlines the reason for the mandatory EIR at 40 Thorndike: to understand fully the environmental consequences of the courthouse proposal in today's context.

The requests for waiver should be denied.

Yours sincerely,

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