

section 3

Previous Studies and Reports



3.0 Previous Reports and Studies

The following is a summation of related reports and studies that have been reviewed as part of this study.

3.1 Somerville Community Path Feasibility Study

In May 2001 Rizzo Associates in association with ICON Architecture prepared a report exploring the feasibility of constructing a bicycle/pedestrian facility linking the existing linear park at Davis Square to Lechmere. This report included project background, conceptual alternatives analysis, and a recommended alternative (see figure 3.1). This recommended alternative included eight segments detailed in figure 3.2.

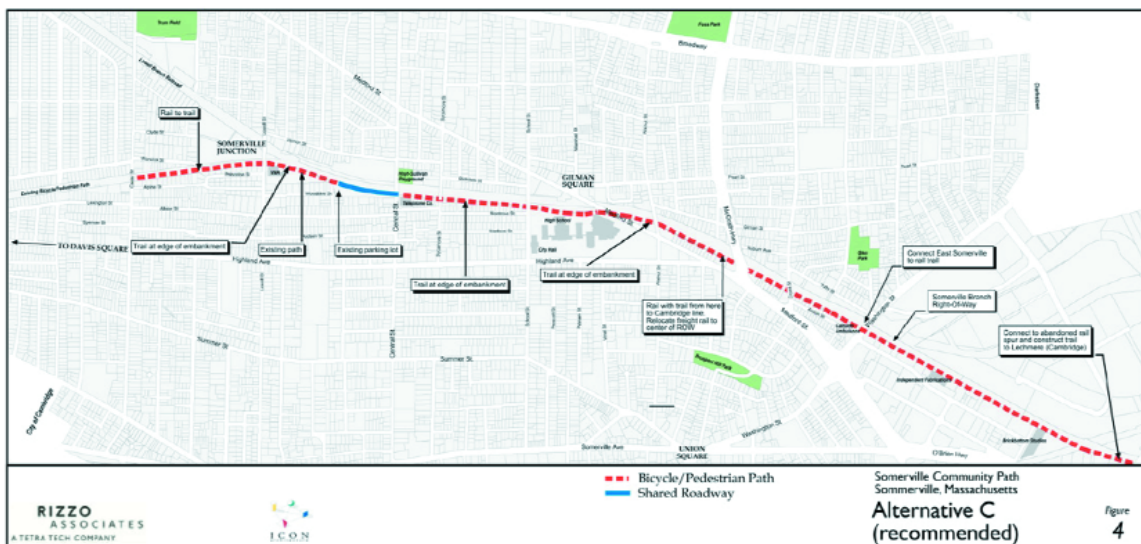


Figure 3.1 Recommended Alternative

#	Segment	Project Type
1	Cedar Street to Lowell Street Via Lexington Branch Freight Cut-off	Bike path (rail-to-trail)
2	Lowell Street to Visiting Nurses Association (VNA)	Ramp up with high retaining wall
3	VNA to Central Street	Path along Cambridge Health Alliance land
4	Central Street to Walnut Street	Path at top of west ROW embankment
5	Approach to McGrath Highway	Ramp down with high retaining wall
6	McGrath Highway to Washington Street	Path at west edge of ROW at/near railroad grade
7	Washington Street to Lechmere via spur track	Path at west edge of ROW at/near railroad grade
8	Lechmere Spur (Cambridge)	Bike path (rail-to-trail)

Figure 3.2 Recommended Segments



3.2 North Point Somerville Planning Study

In February 2003 ICON Architecture in association with FXM Associates and Bruce Campbell and Associates/Beta Group, Inc. prepared a planning study that examined the potential opportunities and impacts of Cambridge rezoning and the North Point Development on the adjacent areas of Somerville. Namely, these included the Inner Belt District and the McGrath Highway Corridor. This study also explored a future vision for the area beyond North Point that included incorporation of the Green Line and the Community Path in the Innerbelt District.

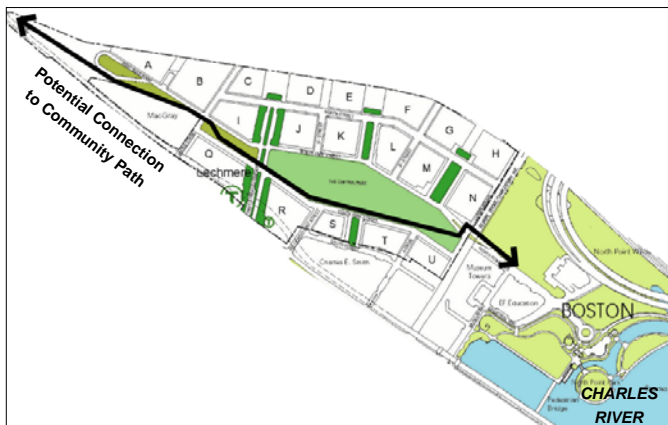


Figure 3.3 North Point Development

The project will result in a mixed-use, transit-oriented neighborhood with over 10 acres of new green space and a variety of new utilities and roadway infrastructure improvements. North Point is located at the convergence of the Somerville Community Path, the Dr. Paul Dudley White Bicycle Path, the MBTA Green Line, and the future DCR Charles River Basin Park. Walking and bicycling will be encouraged through enhanced pedestrian connections along key corridors and through the implementation of bicycle lanes and supporting amenities. A north-south link between the Somerville Community Path and the Charles River Basin Park is included in the development.

The North Point development also anticipates the MBTA's extension of the Green Line beyond Lechmere to Somerville and Medford. The Green Line alignment through the North Point area follows the railroad easement along the southern border of the site. The proposed Green Line will connect to the New Hampshire Main Line at a point just south of the former Red Bridge. Within the site, the new MBTA Lechmere and tail track storage area will be elevated.

3.4 Somerville Community Path: Cedar to Central

Vollmer Associates LLP is working on the final design plans for the Community Path from Cedar Street to Central Street. This section of the path is comprised of 2,800 linear feet of path that 1) utilizes a section of the Lexington Branch Freight Cut-off, 2) a portion of the New Hampshire Mainline ROW, and 3) private property. When complete, this extension will bring the path to grade with Central Street.

3.3 North Point Development Proposal

Located in Cambridge, Somerville, and Boston, the North Point project involves the redevelopment of 48-acres of industrial sites and former rail yards. The proponent, the North Point Land Company, filed an Environmental Notification Form on November 15, 2001; and the Secretary of Environmental Affairs issued a Certificate on June 21, 2002. The project



3.5 Inner Belt Park Access Alternatives Study

In March of 2003 the City of Somerville retained Vollmer Associates LLP to prepare an access study investigating the potential for new or improved points of access to the Inner Belt Park area. This document was completed in April of 2005.

The purpose of this study was to develop conceptual alternatives that provide improved access to the southern half of the Inner Belt District. Although located in close proximity to Interstate 93 and several major urban arterials, this district suffers from poor vehicular and pedestrian access. These concepts were geared towards access improvements that are not dependent on major development or zoning changes, and that minimize impacts to existing railroad operations.

Several concepts from this study cross the Community Path corridor from McGrath Highway into the Inner Belt District. One alternate is shown in figure 3.4.

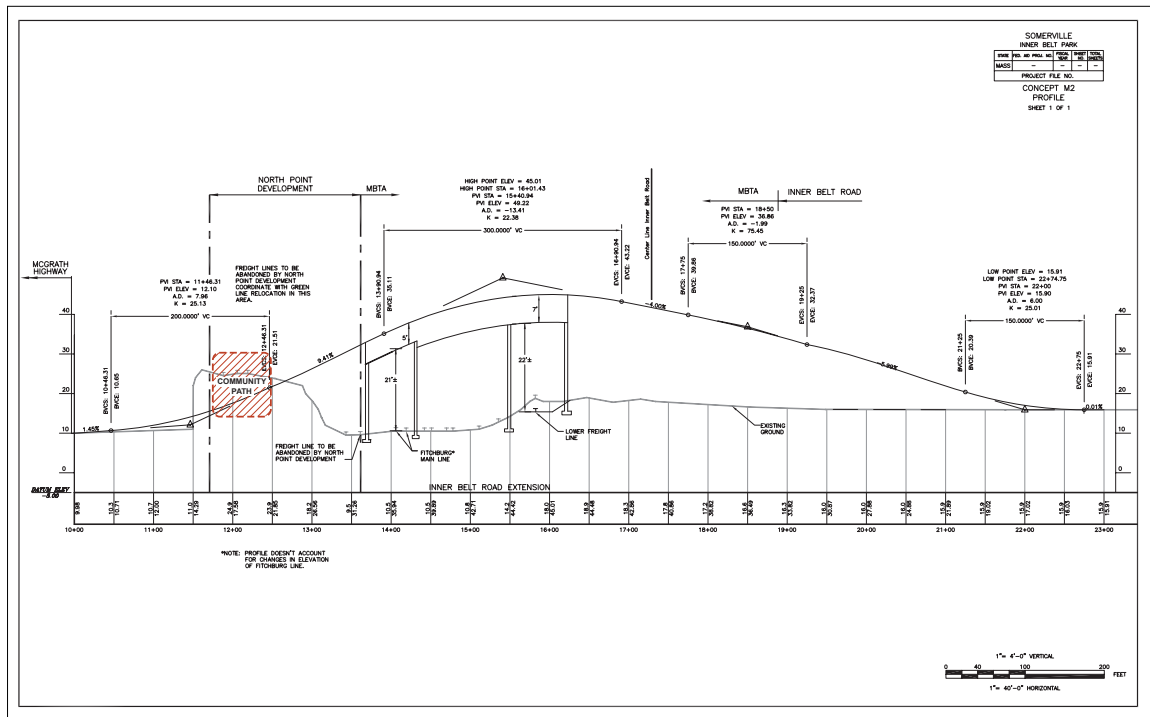
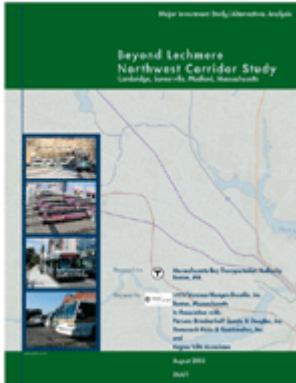


Figure 3.4 Conceptual Alternative M2 Alignment



3.6 Green Line Extension: Beyond Lechmere - Northwest Corridor Study

In 2004, the MBTA hired the team of Parsons Brinckerhoff and VHB to study the feasibility of extending the MBTA Green Line from Lechmere station to Medford. This study is focused on using the New Hampshire Main Line corridor for light rail (Green Line), BRT's (Bus Rapid Transit), or additional Commuter rail stations on the Lowell Line. On May 18, 2005, State transportation officials announced they plan to move forward with the Green Line extension.

Figure 3.5 Green Line Ext.

3.7 Cross Street Bridge

MassHighway is currently working on the design of a bridge to replace the existing Cross Street bridge. Proposed connections to the Somerville Community Path should be coordinated with this effort.