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May 26, 2020

BY ELECTRONIC MAIL

Ms. Nadia Khan
Committee Clerk
Land Use Committee
Newton City Council
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459-1449

Re: Riverside Station/355 Grove Street and 399 Grove Street / #26-20 and #27-20

Dear Nadia,

I am forwarding herewith responses to comments and questions received from Councilors Downs and Gentile prepared by the development team dated May 22, 2020. This represents the fifth set of responses to comments and questions from Councilors or the Planning Department.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Stephen J. Buchbinder/mer

Stephen J. Buchbinder

SJB/mer
Attachment

cc: (By Email w/attachment)
Mr. Neil Cronin
Mr. Robert Korff
Mr. Damien Chaviano
Mr. David Roache

Riverside Station

Response to Comments

May 22, 2020



Response to Comments

Number	Commenter (Alphabetical Order)
A	Councilor Downs
B	Councilor Gentile

Councilor Downs

Comment A.1

What is the incremental additional cost of a protected golf-course side bike lane vs. a painted lane vs. no lane?

Response

It is expected that the incremental cost associated with each option would be as follows:

- \$30,000 to convert from no bike lane to a street level bike lane assuming that it is painted solid green and includes thermoplastic markings.
- \$150,000-\$200,000 to convert from a street-level bike lane to a raised bike lane. The variability in cost is associated with potential adjustments to the drainage system that have not yet been engineered pending the decided course for this scope of work.

Comment A.2

If there is savings to be had in providing no bike lane on the golf-course side, where could or would those funds be invested instead?

Response

The funds to convert to a raised bike lane are not presently in the overall project budget. As discussed at the last Land Use hearing, the petitioner is willing to reallocate the \$30,000 budgeted for a street level, painted bike lane to provide for further bike improvements to the Hamilton School Community Center.

Comment A.3

How safe is the proposed roundabout for cyclists coming from Lower Falls toward 128?

Response

The roundabout in the proposed configuration is a single lane roundabout and as proposed a bicyclist coming from Lower Falls will have two options, either stay in lane and traverse the roundabout, or dismount, cross to the west side of the street and utilize the multi-use path that is being provided. The multi-use path allows bicyclists to avoid the roundabout. The design with these components follows “current practice” by MassDOT for roundabouts where bike and pedestrian activity is expected. It should be noted that bicycle activity in roadways has inherent risk associated with it, and this is particularly true on roadways where speeds are significant. The proposed roundabout will require that all vehicles slow down to speeds consistent with bicycle activity. Movement through the intersection will be relatively safe. However, we would anticipate that confident riders would choose to travel through the roundabout, while others would utilize the more comfortable option of utilizing the multi-use path.

Comment A.4

Can the bike lane protection start at the Lower Falls side of the roundabout all the way to the rail trestle?

Response

The proponent has agreed to extend the protected bicycle accommodations all the way to the Hamilton School Community Center (up to the driveway) in the form of a two-way multiuse path from the roundabout. This will afford bicyclists a protected route from the Community Center to either Riverside Station or Riverside Park and beyond.

Comment A.5

Please verify whether there is a right-turn slip lane on either entrance/exit side of the roundabout that connects to 128.

Response

There are no slip lanes proposed at the Route 128 Southbound Ramp/Grove Street roundabout.

Comment A.6

Please verify that the grove street-to-grove street slip lane is signalized.

Response

There is technically no “slip” lane from Grove Street to Grove Street; rather it is a channelized right turn lane that will have signal control. The pedestrian crossing at this location will have signal protection

Comment A.7

Is the Grove to Recreation Road right turn signalized or is it a free right?

Response

The Grove Street to Recreation Road right turn lane is a channelized right turn lane that will have signal control. The pedestrian crossing at this location will have signal protection.

Comment A.8

Has Mark Development evaluated the likely usage of the Kiss-and-Ride location, and possibility of drivers using alternate locations?

Response

Careful consideration has been given to the Kiss-and-Ride location, quantity, and usage. Presently the station has two locations for Kiss-and-Ride to occur. There is a short hairpin loop right adjacent to the existing station that is shared with shuttle buses for live drop-off. Additionally, there are (7) 15-minute Kiss-and-Ride “waiting” spaces for the drivers picking up arriving passengers located further away in the existing bus loop area. Presently, 3 of the 7 are marked for use by Zipcar although it does not appear, they are presently used for car sharing.

The proposed design carries forward this general layout concept and makes some specific improvements. There will still be an area for the Kiss-and-Ride live drop-off in front of Building 8 adjacent to the station; however, it is no longer shared with the high volume of shuttle buses. The 15-minute Kiss-and-Ride “waiting” spaces have been increased in quantity to 10. They have been located in the garage for a few reasons. First, by locating the spaces in the garage, it provides weather protection. Second, it allows for the driver to pull right in and park and then pull out without mixing with vehicles in the transit loop. Finally, these spaces are not the most convenient for retail users and other guests so it reduces the likelihood that those users would be inclined to use the 15-minute waiting spaces. Kiss-and-Ride drivers would also be allowed to use the other short-term spaces on site. Although the spaces are not reserved for that purpose, it would not be prohibited. Given the high turnover of the Kiss-and-Ride activity, we do not see this as overly taxing on the short-term parking supply if it were to happen.

Comment A.9

How will Mark Development enforce the No Left Turn into and from the Grove St. entrance?

Response

It is anticipated that signage would likely be adequate to enforce the no left turn into the site. However, the final design will be configured to allow future accommodation of additional treatments if necessary. Such treatments may include a channelization island flexible delineator posts to prohibit left turns into the site driveway from Grove Street.

Comment A.10

How useful is the 2-bridges trail as a pedestrian/bike route without an at-grade connection to the development? Can one be added to the project?

Response

There will be an accessible path created connecting Recreation Road near Building 1 to the two bridges trail. This is included in the \$3M of proposed offsite trail mitigation.

Comment A.11

How long is the walk via Recreation Road, MWRA Trail, etc. to the Auburndale Commuter Rail station? Will this be traversable via bicycle?

Response

When the project is completed and the work in the \$3M offsite trail mitigation is built, there will be a multi-use path for bicycles and pedestrians connecting the project to the Lasell boathouse. From there, it is a residential low-traffic route down Charles Street to Auburn Street safe for bicycling. The Station is about 800 feet down Auburn Street from Charles Street where bicycles would travel in the street. The total distance from the project entrance at Main Street to the station by this pleasant, largely protected and safe route is one mile.

Comment A.12

Can the MBTA study and perhaps re-instate the 500 express bus from downtown to Riverside?

Response

The Proponent will work with the MBTA to encourage an assessment of the potential for revitalization of the 500 express bus to downtown.

Comment A.13

When can councilors have a look at the animation of projected bicycle and pedestrian traffic into and leaving Riverside and along Grove Street post-construction?

Response

Pedestrian and bicycles are included in the animations that have been prepared and presented for the AM and PM Peak hour periods. However, it should be understood that VISSIM, the platform used for the models, doesn't have the ability to separate bicyclists from pedestrians at intersections, so both are represented by pedestrian movement. The scale at which the models were presented was provided to focus on general traffic operations in and around the project site, and at the scale utilized it is hard to see the ped/bike maneuver, but they are built into the model. If necessary, new animations can be created that zoom into ped/bike maneuvers in key areas.

Comment A.14

Are we sure that no mature trees will be cut on the east side of Grove street? Adding buildings, stoops, 8' sidewalk and 10' cycle track would suggest otherwise.

Response

The project will not be cutting trees on the east (golf course) side of the site. The trees on the west (project) side of the site will be cleared for the items listed above. It would not be possible to accommodate the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and maintain the existing trees on the west side.

Comment A.15

Is the cycle track on Reservoir Road connected to the potential 2-bridges trail with a ramp? Or is it only going under the bridges?

Response

As a part of the proposed \$3M contribution to the trails network, the proponent would create a new accessible connection via a sloped path from Recreation Road to the two bridges.

Councilor Gentile

Comment A.1

What is the updated building permit fee for Riverside? Please include the cost of construction that the fee is based on.

Response

Based on current estimates, the petitioner anticipates a building permit fee of \$3.5 - \$4.0M. This calculation is based upon an assumption of \$175M - \$200M of construction costs. 2