

BSRA Entertainment Report for October 4, 2014

LONG FORM (for historical record) Entertainment Report for October 4, 2014

October 4, 2014. A MassDOT Special. A MassDOT Special. Just two months after the 50th year anniversary of the MBTA, we saw a two-part special featuring upcoming expansion to the system. In Part 1, South Station Expansion Project Manager Matthew Ciborowski (MASSDOT Office of Transportation Planning) updated us on expansion plans for South Station. Matt started the show with 2 maps, of Boston overall and the South Station area. The South Station Expansion project administratively started in 2010 (except for the South Station Air Rights Project for development over the tracks, which was permitted in 2006), although no construction has yet started, for reasons detailed at various points in the show. The expansion of South Station requires the addition of 7 tracks, 4 platforms, a new concourse, the reopening of Dorchester Avenue, and the addition of a parallel 20 foot wide Harborwalk. All of this requires relocation of the US Postal Service facility that occupies much of the land needed for these additions. As noted in the Question and Answer following this part of the show, the US Postal Service is Federal, so the State of Massachusetts cannot force relocation by Eminent Domain; the State has offered two alternative locations for the US Postal Service, and has essentially offered to build a new facility for the US Postal Service at one of these; formerly, the current location of the US Postal Service made sense due to use of rail for mail, but this is no longer the case.

To give us a historical overview of South Station, Matt showed us some historical photos. South Station was opened in 1899 under the Boston Terminal Company (established in 1897 to unify the south Boston passenger rail terminals), and featured 28 tracks which came into an enormous train shed, and even an underground double track turnaround loop (with platforms) that was only used once (since replaced by a bowling alley and employee parking garage). The train shed suffered from corrosion induced by the salty air, and was torn down in 1931. Interior view photos included of various parts of the station included the theatre, which continuously showed news reels and featurettes; the theatre was replaced by a chapel in 1955, which provided the fastest Mass in Boston (confirmed by a BSRA member who attended Mass there) until its closure in 1972. Exterior views showed the train shed and the more extensive station building, as well as the Atlantic Avenue Elevated which served South Station from 1901 to 1938. By 1961, ownership of South Station had passed to the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, which was the only railroad still providing passenger service there, and which went bankrupt at this time, and sold South Station to the Boston Redevelopment Authority in 1965. Rail passenger ridership had declined from 125,000 passengers per day during World War II to 5500 passengers per day in 1969. South Station was severely dilapidated in the 1970s, and the Boston Redevelopment Authority tore down the Atlantic Avenue wing of the station and planned to down the rest of the station and redevelop the land for other purposes, but South Station was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and sold to the MBTA in 1978, and then extensively renovated in a project that completed in 1989 and made South Station multimodal (including direct access to the Red Line station and provision for an intercity bus station, which opened in October 1995); Silver Line Waterfront service to South Station opened in December 2004 (integrated with the Red Line subway station), and Silver Line Washington Street service (SL4 branch) to South Station opened in October 2009 (as a street level stop). We saw photos of the renovated Main Hall of the station

Although only 13 tracks are now available at South Station, ridership has since risen to 42,000 passengers per day for rail transportation (Commuter Rail and Amtrak) and 112,000 for all modes combined, making South Station the second busiest transportation hub in New England after Logan Airport. Amtrak and Commuter Rail service are projected to grow by about 1/3 per decade for the next 2 decades, so more tracks are desperately needed to handle the service, as well as more remote layover facilities (at various points near ends of Commuter Rail lines), of which 6 are available today, and 3 more are planned together with the South Station Expansion Project; still more will be needed after conclusion of the currently planned project to reduce deadheading of an increasing number of Commuter Rail trains). The Environmental Process for the South Station Expansion Project received secretarial certification in April 2013, and the Draft Environmental Impact Report is expected to be filed in late October 2014. Although no electrification is planned for Commuter Rail service, all South Station tracks (old and new) will be

electrified to support current Amtrak service and possible future electrified Commuter Rail service. Likewise, no connection is planned between South Station and North Station, but construction is planned to allow for this in the future. The largest remaining stumbling block for the South Station Expansion Project is relocation of the US Postal Service facility that physically blocks expansion, and for which the ongoing negotiations are currently at an impasse; South Station expansion without relocation of this facility would require bi-level tracks, which are infeasible due to the approach grades and vertical clearance to the intercity bus terminal located over the tracks.

Public involvement is being encouraged through various media, including a November 2014 Public hearing about the Draft Environmental Impact Report, a web site (mass.gov/massdot/southstationexpansion), online social media, and a Question and Answer session at the end of this part of the show (from which the answers have been integrated into the information above). Katherine Fichter and Regan Checchio of MassDOT (the latter of whom attended the show to provide Question and Answer support) are in charge of public outreach, and thanks are also due for Kerri Chace of MassDOT (who could not attend this show) for coordination to make this and the next part of the show possible.

In Part 2, Gregory Yates, P.E. (Project Manager for AECOM/HNTB) updated us on the extension of the Green Line into Somerville and Medford, which are communities of high density currently lacking sufficient public transportation service. The Green Line Expansion Project was originally designed (around 30% of design work) by HDR/Gilbane, and has passed to AECOM/HNTB under contract to the MBTA. Greg started the show with a map and aerial photos of the Green Line extension from a new Lechmere station (close to the existing Lechmere station) along the New Hampshire railroad line to Collage Avenue in Medford and along the Fitchburg railroad line to Union Square in Somerville. This extension requires overcoming several challenges. Although the right of way along these rail lines is wide enough to accommodate both Green Line tracks and Commuter Rail/freight tracks (each being double) with minimal taking of private property along the routes, these lines are in trenches with "green buffer" slopes on both sides that must be replaced by vertical retaining walls and noise walls to enable widening of the trench floors to accommodate all 4 tracks. In addition, some adjacent property owners have encroached on this part of the right of way. The Commuter Rail/freight double tracks, currently in the center of the trenches, must be shifted to one side while maintaining ongoing Commuter Rail and freight service, although temporary single-tracking of short segments is permissible. Access to the right of way from the surface level for construction, maintenance, and utility provision is difficult along many parts, to the point that NSTAR could not provide a direct connection for supplying traction power to one of the stations, thus requiring an AC power feeder to be installed along a pedestrian walkway to be built along with the Medford branch of the Green Line Extension, which will be fed AC power from both ends. Greg showed us Google Earth photos and computer renderings to illustrate these challenges and the planned stations.

Most of the new stations will be below surface level (although still open to the outside); the exceptions are the new Lechmere Station, which will be elevated, and the Washington Street station in Somerville, which will be above surface level, but on high ground rather than an elevated structure, and which will include an entrance from the street under the railroad and Green Line bridges adjacent to this station. Most of the new Green Line stations will require associated pumping stations to alleviate flooding, including the Washington Street Station (where the the road underpass that will include the station entrance is already subject to flooding). Bridges need rebuilding in some places, including the one next to Washington Street Station, where the Commuter Rail/freight track bridge will need to be replaced by prefabricated bridges (the existing bridge not being usable due to relocation of the tracks), and then a Green Line tracks bridge added. Greg showed us renderings of various stages in the construction of this station, planned to maintain Commuter Rail and freight service throughout construction, except for temporary interruption of service to the Washington Street end of a Pan Am Railways branch line. Next, Greg showed us renderings of the planned Union Square station in Somerville, which features provision for adjacent redevelopment rights; extension of the Union Square branch further west will be provided for, but is not currently planned. This station and some of the other stations will have fairly large headhouses. Green Line Extension will require some utility relocation, but Ball Square Station had to be redesigned due to the impracticality of relocating a major high voltage NSTAR feeder line. The end of the line to Medford will be Collage Avenue Station, but provision will be made for future extension to Route 16 and the Lowell Commuter Rail line, with the possibility of establishing a transfer station there. A complex flying junction is planned for the intersection

of the Union Square and Medford branches of the Green Line Extension; we saw both a photo of the existing rail layout there and a computer rendering of this planned flying junction, including the new Green Line rail yard in the background (a new Green Line maintenance shop will also be built there, although not visible in the rendering). Storage/layover tracks at the end of each of these branches will provide for smoothing of service on the E/Heath Street line which will be extended to Union Square in Somerville (this branch currently uses the storage/layover tracks at Lechmere Station), and on the D/Riverside line which will be extended to College Avenue in Medford (this branch currently has no storage/layover provision on its north end, which is normally at Government Center, but has been cut back to Park Street Station during the reconstruction of Government Center). The old Lechmere viaduct will be cut back to the bridge over the Charles River, and the new Lechmere viaduct will be connected there.

The Green Line Extension Project has started construction, of which we saw early photos, showing some demolition work and construction of temporary retaining walls (no permanent retaining walls have been built yet). Full Federal funding commitment is expected by the end of 2014. Phase 1 work including the Washington Street Station bridges is expected to be complete in late 2015. Service to Washington Street station and Union Square in Somerville is expected to begin in early 2018. The full service currently planned is expected to start in mid 2020.

At the end of this part of the show, we had another Question and Answer session (from which the answers have been integrated into the information above).

SHORT FORM (for Annual Report) Entertainment Report for October 4, 2014

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