



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Transit  
Administration**

REGION I  
Connecticut, Maine,  
Massachusetts,  
New Hampshire,  
Rhode Island Vermont

Volpe Center  
55 Broadway Suite 920  
Cambridge, MA 02142-1093  
617-494-2055  
617-494-2865 (fax)

Mr. Michael H. Mulhern  
General Manager  
Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority  
Ten Park Plaza  
Boston, MA 02116

Re: Government Center Station Environmental Assessment  
Finding of No Significant Impact

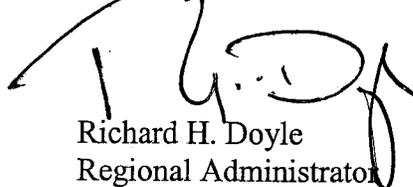
Dear Mr. Mulhern:

Based upon a review of the environmental documentation, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Government Center Green and Blue Line Station accessibility project. The purpose of this project is to make the station compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) through the construction of a safe, barrier-free pedestrian access to the station and platforms and to modernize the station.

Please be advised that in accordance with 23 CFR 771.121, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) is required to transmit a notice of availability of this FONSI to all affected Federal, state and local governmental entities. In addition, under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the FTA has determined that this project will have no effect on historic resources.

Please let me know if you have any questions regarding this matter. The FTA looks forward to continuing to work with the MBTA on this important transit improvement.

Sincerely



Richard H. Doyle  
Regional Administrator

Attachment

**FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION  
REGION I**

**Finding of No Significant Impact**

**Project: Government Center Station Accessibility and Modernization**

**Applicant: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority**

**Project Location: Boston, Massachusetts**

**Purpose and Need**

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires public transit agencies to identify key stations and develop a plan to implement accessibility improvements at these stations. The Government Center Station (Blue and Green Lines) has been determined to be a key station based on ADA criteria. The primary purpose of this project is to make the station compliant with the ADA and to modernize the station.

**Alternatives Considered**

Blue Line Alternatives

**Platforms:** In order to meet current and projected transit ridership demands the MBTA proposes to operate six-car train sets. However, the current station and platforms cannot accommodate six-car train sets and require modifications. The no build alternative was determined unacceptable since it would necessitate closing this transit station and shifting riders to either State Station or Bowdoin. Extending the platforms to the east is not practical due to proximity to the State Station and the curved geometry of the subway tunnel between State and Government Center stations. It was determined that the only practical platform alternative was to refurbish the existing Blue Line platforms to the north of the existing temporary end wall in the station.

**Head house:** The MBTA investigated the following alternative head house locations.

**Alternative 1 (fountain head house)** – this head house would be situated at a substantially lower elevation in the fountain area than the existing plaza or sidewalk and require use of potentially hazardous exposed stairs and/or a long access ramp. Property acquisitions, utility impacts, maintenance costs and construction costs would be greater than the preferred alternative. However, the preferred alternative is a modification of this alternative without the head house at Two Center Plaza.

**Alternative 2 (fully accessible Two Center Plaza and down-scaled Plaza head house)** – increased impacts to privately owned property, conflicts with a major sewer line and additional construction costs and less desirable accessibility for passengers requiring use of the elevator make this an undesirable alternative.

**Alternative 3 (JFK Federal Building area head house)** – This location would require a long (100 foot) underground pedestrian passageway which produces increased utility impacts, substantially increases construction costs and creates a more congested pedestrian area. Therefore Alternative 3 was not selected as the preferred alternative.

### Green Line Alternatives

The no-build alternative would not address ADA requirements, the visual impact would not be corrected, and passenger circulation and orientation at the platform level would remain congested and confusing.

The MBTA examined seven schemes to address the accessibility and modernization needs. The seven schemes include (1) narrow Cambridge Street and relocate Brattle loop, (2) retain Cambridge Street but relocate Brattle loop, (3) pinwheel around elevator shaft and retain Cambridge Street, (4) modest build alternative, (5) minimum building alternative, (6) pinwheel around elevator shaft and narrow Cambridge Street and (7) narrow Cambridge Street, retain Brattle loop. Each of these alternatives were evaluated and it was determined that each had disadvantages ranging from insufficient natural lighting, spatial constraints, multiple stairs, decreased vertical circulation capacity and increased costs. As a result the MBTA conducted further design refinement and evaluation that included elements of some of the above seven alternatives to develop the preferred alternative.

### **Proposed Project**

The improvements to Government Center Station include the following major components:

#### Blue Line

Construct a new head house on the east side of Cambridge Street near the fountain at City Hall Plaza with an elevator, escalator, and stair access to a mezzanine area above the Blue Line platforms. Passengers entering this new head house will also have access to the Green Line via two existing stairwells and an existing escalator. An ADA accessible fare collection area will be provided at the mezzanine level. Inbound and outbound platforms will be increased to accommodate six-car train sets. Passenger information systems, lighting, landscaping and other amenities will also be provided.

#### Green Line

A new head house will be constructed in the immediate vicinity of the current head house that will be designed asymmetrically and fit into the urban design at the Plaza. From this new head house new vertical circulation elements will connect the Plaza level and the Green Line platforms. ADA compliant fare collection and turnstile facilities will be provided. Platforms will be renovated to comply with ADA requirements. A new elevator will be installed to address vertical circulation requirements between the Green Line and the lower level Blue Line platform. In addition, station finishes; graphics, tactile edge strips, LED signage and improved circulation will be provided. Four power panel rooms will be required to house power panel distribution equipment.

**Determinations and Findings**  
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Finding

FTA serves as the lead agency under NEPA for this project. The MBTA prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) in compliance with NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et.seq. and with FTA's regulations, 23 CFR Part 771. The Environmental Assessment dated July 2002 analyzes and describes the project's potential significant impacts.

After reviewing the EA and supporting documents and public comments, the FTA finds under 23 CFR 771.121 that the proposed project will have no significant impact on the environment. The record provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.

Section 106 Compliance

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act requires the review of federally assisted projects for impacts to districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects listed in, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. Federal agencies must coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and potentially affected Tribes to make this determination. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) has established procedures for the protection of historic and cultural properties in, or eligible for, the National Register (36 CFR Part 800).

The area surrounding the Government Center Station has been substantially modified over the years and as a result there is no historical significance in this area. The Blue Line portion of the project will utilize some of the former Scollay Square station that has been covered over for many years. This will have the potential to be partially restored as one of the early components of Boston's subway system, one of the oldest in the country.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has been consulted regarding this project. The MHC was concerned about the visual impacts of the new Green Line head house on the Sears Block and the Sears Crescent, Boston City Hall and the Old North Church view corridor. The design of the new Green Line station entrance will complement the historic Sears Crescent historic district. The predominantly glazed head house will afford views from and through the structure to the historic context beyond. Based upon review of drawings, the MHC has determined that the head house will not impact the view to Old North Church. By letter dated August 18, 2003, the MHC concurred in FTA's determination that the proposed project will have "no effect" on historic properties.

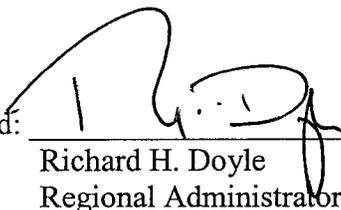
In a follow-up letter dated November 18, 2004, MHC confirmed that the finding of no effect also pertained to the segment of wall remaining from the original Scollay Square Station which will not be altered as a result of the proposed project.

Section 4(f) Findings

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966, codified as 49 U.S.C. 303, declares a national policy that a special effort should be made to preserve the natural beauty of the countryside, public park and recreational lands, wildlife and waterfowl refuges, and historic sites. The Secretary of Transportation may not approve the use of land from a significant publicly owned park, recreation area, or wildlife and waterfowl refuge, or any significant historic site unless a determination is made that there is no prudent and feasible alternative to the use of land from the property and the action includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property resulting from such use (23 CFR 771.135). FTA has determined that the project will not result in a "use" of a Section 4(f) resource for the following reasons:

- Visual Impact of Proposed Headhouse on Historic Properties. A constructive use resulting from a project's proximity impacts does not occur when compliance with the requirements of Section 106 results in an agreement of "no effect." 23 CFR 771.135(p)(5). The MHC concurred in FTA's determination that the redesigned headhouse will not impact the viewshed to the Old North Church and that the proposed project will have "no effect" on historic properties. Therefore, Section 4(f) does not apply to the view corridor.
- Segment of Wall Remaining from the Old Scollay Square Station. This wall segment may be eligible for listing on the National Register. MHC's letter of November 22, 2004, clarified that it understands the wall will not be altered as a result of the proposed project and reiterated its determination that no historic properties will be affected by the project. Accordingly, FTA determined that any proximity impacts to the wall segment that may result from the project will not constitute a use under Section 4(f).
- City Hall Plaza. By letter dated August 10, 2004, the City of Boston Parks and Recreation Department stated that City Hall Plaza is not included in the Parks Department inventory of parks, playgrounds, squares, malls and miscellaneous open spaces listed in the City of Boston Municipal Register. The Department also stated that the plaza is not identified as parkland in the Boston Parks and Recreation Department Open Space Plan 2002-2006 that contains a comprehensive listing of open space in the City. Therefore, FTA determined that City Hall Plaza is not a resource subject to Section 4(f) requirements.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Richard H. Doyle  
Regional Administrator  
FTA, Region I

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

11/29/04

Concur: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Margaret E. Foley  
Regional Counsel

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

11-24-04