



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

REGION I
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Massachusetts,
New Hampshire,
Rhode Island Vermont

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

MAY 14 2004

Re: Arlington Street Station Environmental Assessment
Finding of No Significant Impact

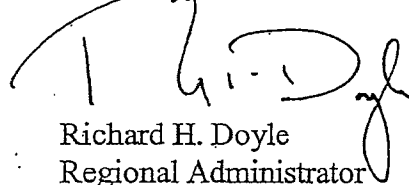
Dear Mr. Mulhern:

Based upon a review of the environmental documentation, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) has issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the Arlington Street Station accessibility improvement project. The purpose of this project is to make the station compliant with the American's with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 through the construction of a safe, barrier-free pedestrian access to the station and platforms.

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 adverse 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: Arlington Street Station Accessibility Improvement

Applicant: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Project Location: Boston, Massachusetts

Purpose and Need

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 requires public transit agencies to identify key stations and develop a plan to implement accessibility improvements at these stations. The Arlington Street Station 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.

Alternatives Considered

Over a four-year period a total of ten different locations for the street level elevator were proposed and reviewed in meetings with state and city agencies and the community. The no build alternative was determined unacceptable since it does not provide for accessibility from the surface to the mezzanine and does not comply with the federally mandated key station plan to make the station accessible to individuals with disabilities. At a July 1997 community meeting the four corners at Arlington and Boylston Streets were rejected as possible locations. The northeast corner was not acceptable due to the National Historic Landmark status of the Public Garden. The southeast corner adjacent to Heritage on the Garden was not acceptable to the abutter and due to low pedestrian traffic from that quadrant. The southwest corner adjacent to Shreve, Crump & Low was not acceptable to the abutter and due to the narrow sidewalk. The northwest corner adjacent to the Arlington Street Church was not acceptable due to its obstruction of the view of this National Historic Landmark church.

In April 1998 a second community meeting was held to review the six remaining sites. Two of these sites further south on Arlington Street were not acceptable to the abutter and due to narrow sidewalks. A site in a "neck down" at the southeast corner was rejected due to adverse traffic effect. Two mid-block sites were also rejected due to poor accessibility and adverse traffic impacts. The accepted site moves the elevator and stair head houses about 120 feet west from the Arlington Street corner along the north side of Boylston Street, close to the Arlington Street Church Parish House.

Proposed Project

The primary purpose of the Arlington Street Station accessibility project is to meet the federally mandated key station plan objectives of accessibility to individuals with disabilities. Making this station accessible will require new work or renovations at surface, mezzanine and platform levels. At the surface level a new elevator and an enclosed stairwell will provide access from the street to the fare mezzanine near Arlington Street Church Parish House on the north side of Boylston Street.

Other accessibility improvements include a reconfiguration of the mezzanine fare array to provide accessibility, new accessible restrooms, new elevators from the mezzanine to each of the two platforms, removal of columns at the platform level to provide unobstructed access to the train doors and raising the platforms above top-of-rail to allow wheelchairs to enter the new low-floor trains by means of bridge plates at the doors.

Agency Coordination and Public Opportunity to Comment

Since 1996 the MBTA has involved a number of agencies, local officials and the public in the planning and design for the Arlington Station project. The EA was made available to the public on July 21, 2003 with the comment period closing on August 20, 2003.

Determinations and Findings
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Finding

FTA served as the lead agency under NEPA for the 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 EA 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 adverse impacts 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 project site is immediately adjacent to the Arlington Street Church and across the street from the fence of the Public Garden, both National Historic Landmarks and is within the Back Bay Historic District. The MBTA has coordinated closely with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) and the Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) to ensure the surface elements of the Arlington Street Station accessibility improvements are compatible with these historic structures. The surface kiosks and stairwells will have granite bases with painted steel structure and railings similar to the Public Garden fence. The new stairwell and elevator will be enclosed in vandal resistant glass within the steel structures. The structures have been carefully sited and detailed to minimize their visual impact on the adjacent landmark church. During construction, the protective measures of the Arlington Street Church will include protective glazing of the Tiffany windows and plywood barriers between pedestrian traffic and the church walls. Mitigating measures at the surface restoration of the Arlington Street Church garden above the new tunnel will include bringing the granite garden wall back to its historic location at the property line, providing a new painted steel fence that will be more in keeping with the historic fence and constructing a new ADA compliant ramp and stairs to improve access to the church.

There will be no impact on the Neolithic fish weir since all construction activities will take place within 16 feet of surface grade and the top 19 feet of soil at the project site is fill from the 19th century filling of the Back Bay. The new elevator and stairwell are to be constructed on top of the tunnel roof, thus requiring no new disturbance of soils.

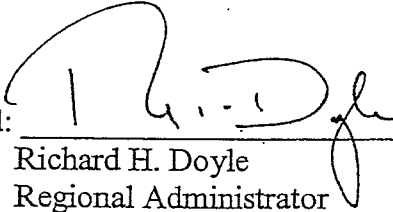
The MHC via letter dated January 31, 2003 concurred with FTA's determination that the proposed project will have "no adverse effect" on the Back Bay Historic District provided that the MBTA and the church submit more detailed plans of the accessibility modifications to the Arlington Street Church for MHC review and approval when they become available. Additionally, the MHC indicated that the project will have no adverse effect on the Boylston Street Fish weir, an ancient Native American fish weir site.

Water Quality

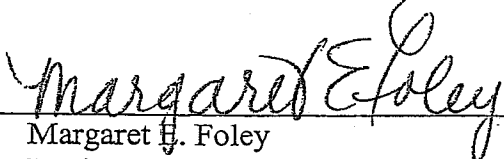
The Arlington Street Station is located in the Back Bay area of downtown Boston. The level of ground water in the Back Bay is of particular concern. Prior to construction, four new groundwater-monitoring wells will be installed in the Arlington/Boylston Street location in coordination with the Boston Groundwater Trust. During construction, ground water levels will be monitored and monitoring reports will be provided to the Boston Groundwater Trust. At project completion the four monitoring wells will be turned over to the Boston Groundwater Trust. During excavation if dewatering is required the contractor will recharge as required to maintain the existing level and to protect the wood pilings of the adjacent buildings before the dewatering begins.

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 transportation projects that adversely affect such resources unless a determination is made that there is no feasible and prudent alternative, and that all possible planning has been done to minimize harm (23 CFR 771.135). The FTA has determined that the Section 4(f) requirements do not apply since the proposed work will not adversely affect the historic qualities of the Arlington Street Church within the Back Bay Historic District.

Approved: 
Richard H. Doyle
Regional Administrator
FTA, Region I

Date: May 14, 2004

Concur: 
Margaret H. Foley
Regional Counsel

Date: May 14, 2004