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February 8, 2007

Secretary Ian A. Bowles  
EOEA, Attn. MEPA Office  
Deirdre Buckley, EOEA# 13944  
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900  
Boston, MA 02114

Attn.: Deirdre Buckley, MEPA Analyst

**Re: J. Michael Ruane Judicial Center / Salem Trial Courts project (EOEA # 13944)**

Dear Secretary Bowles:

The Massachusetts Division of Capital of Asset Management (DCAM) would like to respond to several questions raised during the Monday, January 22, 2007 MEPA scoping meeting for the J. Michael Ruane Judicial Center/Salem Trial Courts project. Questions regarding the project's consistency with municipal, regional, state and federal plans and policies related to bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, future traffic projections connected with a potential nearby MBTA garage, and opportunities for public input as the Judicial Center project progresses are addressed below.

## Bicycle and Pedestrian Accommodations

As stated in the project's Environmental Notification Form, the improvements that will result from the proposed removal of the North Street/Bridge Street interchange loop ramp will greatly improve the pedestrian, bicycle and vehicular safety of a heavily traveled location that serves as a gateway to the downtown and provides direct pedestrian access to the adjacent MBTA commuter rail station. Ongoing coordination among DCAM, the Massachusetts Highway Department (MassHighway), and the MBTA will ensure pedestrian and bicycle accommodations are maintained and enhanced as a result of the project. Because the roadway improvements to the North Street / Bridge Street interchange will be carried out by MassHighway as part of the on-going North Street Reconstruction project, consistency with state and federal bicycle and pedestrian plans and policies will be ensured. Further, DCAM and MassHighway will be working closely with City officials to ensure consistency with the City of Salem's 1996 Master Plan Update and Action Plan and the Open Space and Recreation Plan currently being developed by the City's Planning Department. See the attached memorandum from Earth Tech dated February 7, 2007 regarding specific pedestrian improvements and traffic calming measures planned for the North Street/Bridge Street interchange.



Future Traffic Projections for MBTA Garage

A question was raised during the scoping meeting as to whether the traffic analysis prepared by Earth Tech in its November 2006 Functional Design Report for MassHighway could be revised to include traffic generated by a proposed MBTA garage to be located across Bridge Street from the Judicial Center. DCAM has provided MEPA with a copy of the Functional Design Report and also made a copy publicly available at the Salem Planning Department on December 20<sup>th</sup> at the request of the Citizens' Steering Committee. Since the MBTA garage project was withdrawn from MEPA review and has not yet received construction funding, traffic generated by the proposed garage was not included in the projected future traffic flows analyzed in the Functional Design Report. However, in response to the question raised, Earth Tech has revised the projected future traffic flows to include a new MBTA garage. See the attached memorandum from Earth Tech dated February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Earth Tech concludes that even with the additional traffic generated by a future MBTA garage, proposed mitigation from the DCAM project will provide the same or improved operations in the study area. As noted below, there will be additional opportunity for public question and comment on the changes to the North Street/Bridge Street interchange and the related Functional Design Report when MassHighway holds its public hearing on the planned changes to the North Street Project.

Additional Opportunity for Public Input

Once the Secretary's Certificate is issued for the Judicial Center project, DCAM plans to proceed immediately with the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) historic consultation process. Parties interested in participating in the consultation process include the Salem Historical Commission, Historic Salem Inc., the Federal Street Neighborhood Association and the Salem Partnership. The process is expected to involve a series of meetings to assess impacts to historic resources, review in detail the three project alternatives, and explore options to mitigate impacts to historic resources. As design of the project progresses there will be opportunity for public comment on the design, either arising out of the MHC consultation process or through separate presentations to the wider community, such as the public informational meeting DCAM held on January 9th. In addition, DCAM expects to work closely with local officials to develop preferred reuse options for the Superior Court and County Commissioner's Building.

In addition to the historic consultation process and the reuse planning process, another opportunity for public input in the near term will occur when MassHighway conducts a public hearing on the proposed changes to the North Street/Bridge Street interchange. Although the hearing will be conducted by MassHighway in furtherance of its North Street improvements project, DCAM expects to participate to the extent the changes to the North Street project are related to the proposed Judicial Center.

Finally, DCAM plans to continue meeting regularly with the established Citizens' Steering Committee comprised of Salem officials, court representatives, local preservation groups, neighborhood groups, and business and civic leaders to keep lines of communication open and address project-related issues as they arise.

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Thank you for the opportunity to submit this additional information. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact Gail Rosenberg, Project Manager, at 617-727-4050 ext. 572.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Minnis, Director, Courts Facilities Unit  
Office of Planning, Design and Construction

Attachments

cc: ENF Recipients  
Douglas Kelleher, Epsilon Associates  
Carol Meeker, DCAM  
Gail Rosenberg, DCAM