

Dorchester Reporter

Proponents outline next steps for Greenway over tunnel cap

By Jennifer Smith, News Editor

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Advocates for a “Dot Greenway” on top of the Red Line tunnel cap between Park and Ashmont Streets announced a new fiscal partnership with LivableStreets and reviewed the potential timeline for this \$5-7 million project at a meeting on Tuesday night.

Jenn Cartee, of the Greater Ashmont Main Street group, hosted the meeting at the main street organization’s headquarters next to Ashmont Station. It was attended by a handful of city and community representatives and neighbors.

Travis Lee, a local developer, and Cartee have been shepherding this project through initial meetings with city and state departments. All 13 departments at the MBTA have signed on to a letter supporting the prospect of the Greenway, Cartee said. Ownership would be transferred from the MBTA via a 99-year lease for \$1, most likely.

A non-profit entity would either need to be created or found to take management responsibility for the project and create a secured maintenance plan, MBTA contractors would construct the hardscaping around the site “needed to get it ready for planting,” and city assistance would be mostly limited to trash and snow removal.

Cartee noted that this will not be a Main Street greenway, though her group and Fields Corner Main Streets are both actively involved in the process.

“Greater Ashmont Main Street’s role is getting this conversation as out and as far as possible and keeping it moving forward,” Cartee said.

The Greenway is envisioned as an integrated recreational path for pedestrians and cyclists, able to accommodate some outdoor events. A coUrbanize page drew hundreds of comments, suggestions, and survey responses for the project.

“People want everything and a pony,” Cartee joked, noting that the only thing people asked for that would be a “non-starter” is some kind of water feature, which would not be permissible with the T’s structural concerns.

As far as the structural integrity of the site itself, the Thornton Tomasetti engineering firm’s initial report back found that the tunnel cap’s carrying capacity is safe at 100 pounds-per-square foot, and recommended the project be built out at 80 pounds-per-square foot, which should be fine for their intended use.

The LivableStreets Alliance is coming on board as their fiscal agent, preparing a Memorandum of Understanding to get the ball rolling on applying for Community Preservation Act funding in the spring. They are seeking \$400,000 dollars for design and structural engineering.

State delegation members are working to secure at least \$2 million for the project build out in the Environmental Bond Bill, Cartee said, highlighting Sen. Nick Collins’ leadership and Rep. Dan Hunt’s support for the project.

Another new partner, the Trust for Public Land (TPL), did a review of the Greenway’s likely service population. Assuming the people that would use it are mostly within a 10-minute walk of the eight or so access points, the TPL expects it to serve around 7,548 households, or 21,441 people.

Demographically, this would include mostly adults between 20 and 64, split roughly evenly between income categories, and a population that is about 47 percent black, 21 percent white, 16 percent Asian, and 16 percent Hispanic, “roughly the same” as the main streets service area, Cartee notes.