

For Office Use Only
 Executive Office of Environmental Affairs
 MEPA Analyst: *Holly Johnson*
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NPC

Notice of Project Change

The information requested on this form must be completed to begin MEPA Review of a NPC in accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act and its implementing regulations (see 301 CMR 11.10(1)).

Project Name: The Wachusett Extension		EOEA #: 14516	
Street: Authority Drive in Fitchburg (Station Site) and Batherick Road in Westminster (Layover Facility Site)			
Municipality: Fitchburg and Westminster		Watershed: Nashua	
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:		Latitude: 49° 33' 11.57" N Longitude: 71° 50' 59.02" W	
Status of project construction: 0 %complete			
Proponent: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority			
Street: 10 Park Plaza			
Municipality: Boston		State: MA	Zip Code: 02116
Name of Contact Person From Whom Copies of this NPC May Be Obtained: Lois Baxter			
Firm/Agency: Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority		Street: 10 Park Plaza	
Municipality: Boston		State: MA	Zip Code: 02116
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In 25 words or less, what is the project change? The project change involves . . .

The project consists of a new commuter rail station and a new end of the line layover facility for train storage. The changes to the project involve (1) an increase in the number of parking spaces at the station from 286 to 370 and (2) a change in the location of the layover facility. Consistent with the original Environmental Notification Form, no MEPA EIR thresholds are exceeded.

See full project change description beginning on page 3.

Date of ENF filing or publication in the Environmental Monitor: November 23, 2009

Was an EIR required? Yes No; if yes,
 was a Draft EIR filed? Yes (Date:) No
 was a Final EIR filed? Yes (Date:) No

was a Single EIR filed? Yes (Date:) No

Have other NPCs been filed? Yes (Date(s):) No

If this is a NPC solely for lapse of time (see 301 CMR 11.10(2)) proceed directly to "ATTACHMENTS & SIGNATURES" on page 4.

PERMITS / FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE / LAND TRANSFER

List or describe all new or modified state permits, financial assistance, or land transfers not previously reviewed:

- o No new permits or financial assistance are required.
- o Additional acquisition of 0.6 acres of undeveloped industrially zoned property at the station site.

Are you requesting a finding that this project change is insignificant? (see 301 CMR 11.10(6))
 Yes No; if yes, attach justification.

Are you requesting that a Scope in a previously issued Certificate be rescinded?
 Yes No; if yes, attach the Certificate

Are you requesting a change to a Scope in a previously issued Certificate? Yes No; if yes, attach Certificate and describe the change you are requesting:

Summary of Project Size & Environmental Impacts	Previously reviewed	Net Change	Currently Proposed
LAND			
Total site acreage	57.6 acres	1.6 acres	59.2 acres
Acres of land altered	22.4 acres	1.6 acres	24.0 acres
Acres of impervious area	4.1 acres	1.6 acres	5.7 acres
Square feet of bordering vegetated wetlands alteration	2,300 sf	620 sf	2,920 sf
Square feet of other wetland alteration	18,295 sf	9,020 sf	27,315 sf
Acres of non-water dependent use of tidelands or waterways	0 acres	0 acres	0
STRUCTURES			
Gross square footage	2,400 sf	0 sf	2,400 sf
Number of housing units	0 units	0 units	0 units
Maximum height (in feet)	18 ft	0 ft	18 ft
TRANSPORTATION			
Vehicle trips per day	765 trips	168 trips	933 trips

Summary of Project Size & Environmental Impacts	Previously reviewed	Net Change	Currently Proposed
Parking spaces	311 spaces	84 spaces	395 spaces
WATER/WASTEWATER			
Gallons/day (GPD) of water use	825 gallons	0 gallons	825 gallons
GPD water withdrawal	0 gallons	0 gallons	0 gallons
GPD wastewater generation/ treatment	750 gallons	0 gallons	750 gallons
Length of water/sewer mains (in miles)	0 miles	0 miles	0 miles

Does the project change involve any new or modified:

1. conversion of public parkland or other Article 97 public natural resources to any purpose not in accordance with Article 97? Yes No

2. release of any conservation restriction, preservation restriction, agricultural preservation restriction, or watershed preservation restriction? Yes No

3. impacts on Estimated Habitat of Rare Species, Vernal Pools, Priority Sites of Rare Species, or Exemplary Natural Communities? Yes No

4. impact on any structure, site or district listed in the State Register of Historic Place or the inventory of Historic and Archaeological Assets of the Commonwealth?

Yes No; if yes, does the project involve any demolition or destruction of any listed or inventoried historic or archaeological resources? Yes No

5. impact upon an Area of Critical Environmental Concern? Yes No

If you answered 'Yes' to any of these 5 questions, explain below:

PROJECT CHANGE DESCRIPTION (attach additional pages as necessary). The project change description should include:

(a) a brief description of the project as most recently reviewed

(b) a description of material changes to the project as previously reviewed,

(c) the significance of the proposed changes, with specific reference to the factors listed 301 CMR 11.10(6), and

(d) measures that the project is taking to avoid damage to the environment or to minimize and mitigate unavoidable environmental impacts. If the change will involve modification of any previously issued Section 61 Finding, include a proposed modification of the Section 61 Finding (or it will be required in a Supplemental EIR).

Please see attached report.

ATTACHMENTS & SIGNATURES

Attachments:

1. Secretary's most recent Certificate on this project
2. Plan showing most recent previously-reviewed proposed build condition
3. Plan showing currently proposed build condition
4. Original U.S.G.S. map or good quality color copy (8-1/2 x 11 inches or larger) indicating the project location and boundaries
5. List of all agencies and persons to whom the proponent circulated the NPC, in accordance with 301 CMR 11.10(7)

Please see attached report.

Signatures:

<u>1/5/12</u>	<u>Holly Palmgren</u>	<u>1/5/12</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>
Date	Signature of Responsible Officer or Proponent	Date	Signature of person preparing NPC (if different from above)

Holly Palmgren
Name (print or type)

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I Description of the Project

1. Overview of the Project

The Service Extension: The project will involve extending commuter rail service about four and a half miles further to the west beyond the present terminus of service at Fitchburg Station in downtown Fitchburg. The service will run along an existing railroad right of way to a new station on the west side of Fitchburg to be called Wachusett Station. The new station will be located adjacent to the existing railroad right of way in an industrial area near the interchange of Route 31 with Route 2. The accessibility of the new station from Route 2 is expected to make the use of commuter rail service to downtown Boston more attractive in comparison to roadway travel into downtown Boston. In order to improve operations on the extended commuter rail service, a new layover facility will be provided in a trackside industrial area in Westminster. The new layover facility will replace an existing, spatially constrained layover facility in Fitchburg that is not well located to support commuter rail operations on the Fitchburg Line.

Wachusett Station: The new station will consist of a high-level passenger platform and a parking lot (see Figure 1 "Wachusett Station Proposed Work"). The platform will be 800 feet long, which is a sufficient length to accommodate a nine car commuter rail train. There will be a canopy, access ramps, railings, bicycle racks, and other typical commuter rail station features. The parking lot will provide 370 spaces. The parking lot will be accessible from Authority Drive which is the access road from Route 31 into the 231 Industrial Park. The station will be located within the railroad right of way; the parking lot will be located on adjacent industrially zoned property. The presentation of the project in the Environmental Notification Form indicated that there would be 286 parking spaces at the station; there are now 370 spaces planned. This increase of 84 parking spaces is a change in the project. Design analysis undertaken since the Environmental Notification Form was issued has indicated that the site layout can support additional parking spaces with little change in the project costs or the impacts to the area. Since the purpose of the project is to draw commuters into the station, it was determined that it is advisable to provide the additional spaces since it will be feasible to do so.

The Fitchburg Line Layover Facility: The new layover facility will be located immediately adjacent to the railroad right of way and it will have a capacity for the storage of six train sets (see Figure 3 "Preferred Layover Facility Alternative"). Train sets will be stored here to be in position to provide inbound service in the morning. The layover facility will include a parking lot which will provide 25 spaces for railroad personnel, a service building with about 2,400 square feet of floor area, and an electrical

substation. The layover facility will not be accessible to the general public; it will be a secure facility intended for the use of railroad personnel. The location of the layover facility described in the Environmental Notification Form was at the west end of the Westminster Business Park on the south side of the railroad right of way opposite Crocker Pond; the currently proposed location of the layover facility is at the east end of the business park closer to the business park entrance off Batherick Road (see Figure 2 "Layover Facility Alternatives H and G2" where Location H is the previously proposed location and Location G2 is the currently proposed location). The currently proposed location for the layover facility is a change in the project. This new location emerged through continued interaction with the community; the new location proposed for the layover facility has the same operational advantages as the originally proposed location but is not in the vicinity of Crocker Pond and the associated Town recreational area.

The Project Changes: The proposed project changes are:

- An increase in the number of parking spaces to be provided at the station from the 286 spaces indicated in the Environmental Notification Form to 370 parking spaces and
- A change in the proposed location of the end of the line layover facility to a new location about a half a mile further east along the railroad right of way at the easterly end of the Westminster Business Park.

2. Project Development and Documentation

The Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Review Process: The project review under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Process was initiated with the submittal of an Environmental Notification Form by the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority. The Environmental Notification Form was noticed in the Environmental Monitor on November 23, 2009, and File Number 14516 was assigned; ten letters of comment were received. The Certificate of the Secretary was issued on December 23, 2009. The certificate stated that further analysis through an Environmental Impact Report was not required.

The Secretary's Comments: Prior to the filing of the Environmental Notification Form, the Secretary had requested that the commenters on a previously reviewed project, the Westminster Business Park, File Number 8074, be made aware of the proposed layover facility use within the business park. These commenters were included in the distribution list for the Environmental Notification Form. The Certificate addressed issues at both the station site and the layover facility site. With regard to the station site, the Secretary

encouraged continued coordination with the City of Fitchburg and the neighborhood to effectively manage traffic and parking, especially during peak periods. With regard to the layover facility, the Secretary stated that comments were received expressing concern about the potential for noise, vibration, and air pollution impacts. The Secretary pointed out the importance of the enforcement of existing policies and procedures regarding locomotive idling and the use of engine heaters to keep locomotive idling time at a minimum in cold weather. The Secretary required the completion of a noise and vibration study under Federal Transit Administration guidelines as part of the National Environmental Policy Act Review Process. Continuing coordination with the Town of Westminster to reduce potential impacts on the nearby Crocker Pond Recreational Area was stressed.

Layover Location Alternatives Analysis: Because of concerns that had been expressed about the location of the layover facility, an extensive and systematic alternatives analysis for the layover facility location was carried out. It was through this analysis that a proposed change to the layover facility location emerged. Eight possible sites were considered in the analysis. The originally proposed location at the west end of the business park opposite Crocker Pond that was presented in the Environmental Notification Form was identified as Alternative H. The currently proposed location at the east end of the business park was identified as Alternative G2. Alternative G2 was selected as the preferred alternative as superior to Alternative H and the other sites that were considered. Alternative H, the former location, has the disadvantages of being in the vicinity of the Crocker Pond Recreational Area, of not being favored by the community, and of requiring the construction of an access road deep into the furthest reaches of the business park. Alternative G2, the currently proposed layover facility location, is much closer to the constructed section of the business park access road, is still within the confines of the industrially zoned business park, is well away from Crocker Pond, and is the location preferred by the community. The decision was made to propose the new site for the layover facility.

The National Environmental Policy Act Review Process: The Environmental Assessment for the project was issued by the Federal Transit Administration on September 27, 2010, about nine months after the Secretary's Certificate had been issued and after further studies of the area had taken place. The Environmental Assessment described a station site with 286 parking spaces. The layover facility is described at the currently proposed location - different from the originally proposed location shown in the Environmental Notification Form. The Environmental Assessment presented the results of the extensive and systematic alternatives analysis that was done for the layover facility location; the currently proposed location, Alternative G2, was described as having emerged as the preferred choice. The Environmental Assessment included a noise and vibration study as required by the Secretary with the layover facility in the currently

proposed location; it was concluded in the Environmental Assessment that there are no significant noise or vibration impacts associated with the project.

The Finding of No Significant Impact: A 30 day review period for the Environmental Assessment took place and a public hearing was held. A Finding of No Significant Impact was signed by the Federal Transit Administration on October 1, 2010.

Design Refinements: The design process is now underway. A 15% Conceptual Design was prepared for the station and issued on May 12, 2011. A 15% Conceptual Design was prepared for the layover facility and issued on September 1, 2011. The design process, as is typically the case, has resulted in refinements to the project program that was set out in the early planning stages. Most notably, these refinements have included (1) the recognition that the station site can provide more parking spaces than originally contemplated and (2) that the storage track layout within the layover facility site can be reconfigured to reduce the need for land taking and the level of impacts on wetlands resources. These refinements are described in the next chapter.

The Next Steps in the Project Development Process: The design process will continue through further stages of design development leading to a bid process and construction. During this time period the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority will be taking the necessary steps for the operation of the extended commuter rail service.

Further Review: The project will undergo further review through the processes involved in obtaining permits. For the station site, the required permit will be an Order of Conditions from the Fitchburg Conservation Commission. For the layover facility site, the required permits will be (1) an Order of Conditions from the Westminster Conservation Commission and (2) a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit for the Operation of a Transportation Facility from the Department of Environmental Protection. The project will require a generic Section 410 Water Quality Certificate from the Department of Environmental Protection, a Section 404 Programmatic Category 1 General Permit from the Army Corps of Engineers, and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction from the Department of Environmental Protection; these permits will not require site specific review processes.

II Description of the Project Changes

1. An Increased Number of Parking Spaces at the Station Site

The Opportunity to Increase the Number of Parking Spaces: The original planning for the station, as described in the Environmental Notification Form and later in the Environmental Assessment, called for a parking area with 286 parking spaces for commuter rail users (see Attachment 2a “Previously Reviewed Proposed Build Condition – Station”). As the design was advanced, it became clear that the site could support a parking area of 370 spaces without any major increases in impacts to the area. The increase of 84 spaces was possible through (1) the elimination of a local roadway right of way as an impediment to parking layout and (2) the acquisition of an additional parcel of undeveloped property.

The Elimination of a Local Roadway as an Impediment: Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike, a local street that bisected the site of the proposed parking area, will no longer be maintained as a through roadway. As can be seen in Attachment 2a “Previously Reviewed Proposed Build Condition – Station”, the roadway right of way was originally planned to be maintained through the parking lot area. Attachment 3a “Currently Proposed Build Condition - Station” shows this right of way eliminated though the station parking area; Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike now terminates at a turnaround on the east side of the station parking lot. This approach maintains the accessibility of Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike and serves to isolate the residential use along Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike from station related traffic and activities. This termination of Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike was proposed with the concurrence of the community. About 1.0 acre of the former right of way can now be used for parking spaces and the overall parking layout and circulation is more efficient without the interruption of the roadway right of way. The newly available space and the greater layout efficiency resulted in an increase in the number of parking spaces that can be provided at the site.

Additional Property: Attachment 2a “Previously Reviewed Proposed Build Condition – Station” shows a very narrow section of property lying between Authority Drive and Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike being used for the parking lot. As the project development process has proceeded, a small adjacent area of undeveloped industrial property was added to the west side of the site. This additional area of about .6 acres is shown as used as part of the parking lot layout for the site in Attachment 3a “Currently Proposed Build Condition - Station”. The inclusion of this additional property as part of the station site was proposed with the concurrence of the community. This additional property can now

be used for parking spaces and the overall parking layout and circulation is more efficient with a wider site.

Reasoning for Increasing the Number of Parking Spaces: Given the purpose of the project to provide an opportunity for potential commuter rail users, it was determined to be prudent to provide the additional spaces that the site could support.

2. A New Location for the Layover Facility

The New Location: Because of the spatial requirements of a layover facility there are only a limited number of sites where a layover facility can be located. In the case of this project, there was the fortunate situation of having large areas of undeveloped industrially zoned property adjacent to the railroad right of way. The layover facility could essentially be slid along the railroad right of way to a new location about a half mile further to the east from the originally proposed location to avoid having the layover facility in the vicinity of the Crocker Pond Recreational Area. This situation is shown on Figure 2 “Layover Facility Alternative H and G2”. The Alternative H location to the west is the location originally identified for the layover facility and reported on in the Environmental Notification Form; Alternative G2 to the east was the preferred location in the Environmental Assessment and is the currently proposed location. Avoiding proximity to Crocker Pond with the new location satisfied a concern of both the community and the Secretary.

Site Requirements: The layover facility must of necessity be located adjacent to the railroad mainline. Because of the need for six storage tracks with a length of approximately 800 feet, the layover facility requires a large site. The need for an access road, the parking area, the service building, and the electrical substation add to the spatial requirements. Because of the flat grades required for the tracks, extensive earthwork and grading is required to create the nearly level site required.

Location Requirements: The optimal location for the layover facility is outbound of the terminal station. The layover facility is a unique type of facility but it is most similar to an industrial use and industrial uses are the most compatible uses with the layover facility.

The Westminster Business Park: The Westminster Business Park is an industrially zoned area of large development parcels that is contiguous to the railroad right of way for a distance of over a mile. The entire business park is outbound of the new Wachusett Station. The entrance to the business park is off Batherick Road at the far easterly end of the property. An access road runs from the entrance for about a quarter of a mile into the

mile long site; the access road is planned to eventually run the entire length of the business park. The business park is in the very early stages of its development; at present there are developed lots along the quarter mile access road but the remainder of the park remains available for development.

The New Location Choice: The development parcels in the Westminster Business Park provide a very favorable opportunity for providing a layover facility. The development parcels are immediately adjacent to the railroad right of way, they are outbound of the proposed Wachusett Station, they are large in area, and they provide an industrially zoned environment for the operation of the facility. The original choice of a development parcel at the far western end of the business park had merit in that it met the requirements for adjacency to the railroad mainline, an outbound location, adequate space, and an industrially zoned environment. The currently proposed site is also a development parcel within the Westminster Business Park; it provides all the same advantages and its use requires very similar types of site development impacts. The differences that make it superior to the originally proposed site is that the currently proposed site (1) is not in the vicinity of Crocker Pond and its associated recreational area and (2) does not require the extension of the access road across the entire length of the business park. The community favors the currently proposed location.

Design Refinements for the Layover Facility: The original plan for the layover facility at the Alternative H location near Crocker Pond, as described in the Environmental Notification Form, and the plan for the layover facility at the more easterly Alternative G2 location, as described in the Environmental Assessment, both showed long length of storage tracks. The long lengths of storage tracks are a preference for railroad operations. As the design of the layover facility at the new location was developed, it became clear that it was not possible to entirely avoid wetlands impacts at this location or at any location in the area with a site so large in size. The area drains from south to north and there are a series of streams that run from south to north across the area. These streams cross under the railroad tracks at culverts at fairly regular intervals along the railroad right of way. The Alternative G2 location was developed with the goal of having a developed area that would fall into the space between two of these crossing streams. Alternative L3, as shown on Figure 2 “Layover Facility Alternatives H and G2”, was developed in reaction to the need to minimize the wetlands impacts of the layover facility. The Alternative L3 design proposes shorter storage tracks, shorter lead tracks from the railroad mainline, and a different orientation of the storage tracks. The Alternative L3 design manages to minimize the impacts of this large site on resources. A detailed version of the refined layover facility layout is provided in Attachment 3b “Currently Proposed Build Condition – Layover Facility”.

III Changes In Impacts

Project Benefits: Neither the project purpose nor the project benefits are compromised by the proposed changes. Because the station location has not changed, the opportunity for potential commuter rail service users to the west of Fitchburg to access commuter rail service to downtown Boston will not change. The provision of 84 additional parking spaces makes a contribution to the project purpose by providing greater capacity at the station for park and ride commuters. The potential benefits of the station as a focal point for local economic activity will not change. The potential for decreases in traffic congestion, for decreases in vehicle miles traveled, for less fuel use, and for less generation of greenhouse gases remain the same. The currently proposed location of the layover facility will provide an efficiency of support for commuter rail operations that will be equivalent to that provided at the previously proposed location.

General Socio-Economic Impacts: The station with an increased number of parking spaces will remain essentially the same type of facility with the same type of relationship to the surrounding community that was originally contemplated. The currently proposed layover facility site will be within the same industrially zoned business park as the originally proposed site; adjacent areas will eventually be developed for industrial, non-sensitive types of land uses.

Traffic Impacts: The greater availability of parking spaces for park and ride commuters will increase the level of local traffic activity in the area if the station reaches full capacity. Assuming that when the station reaches full capacity each of the 84 parking spaces will generate two trips - one into the parking space in the morning and one out in the evening - there will be an addition of 168 trips on area roadways beyond the 765 trips that were reported in the Environmental Notification Form. This is an increase of 22%.

Existing traffic operations along the route to the new station will not be significantly affected by this increase in traffic. Route 2, Route 31, and Authority Drive will all be able to absorb increases in traffic volumes. The station has been located and designed to make use of existing high capacity roadways and to avoid any passage of station bound traffic through residential areas or other areas that might have sensitivity to an increase in traffic volumes. The nature of Route 2 varies over its length, but in the area of the Route 31 interchange, Route 2 is a limited access, four lane freeway intended to carry high traffic volumes. The Route 2/Route 31 Interchange is a modern grade separated interchange with Route 31 crossing over Route 2. The interchange is a modified diamond interchange with long ramp lengths. The ramps intersect with Route 31 at tee intersections with dedicated turning lanes, generous turning geometry, and unrestricted

site distances. The nature of Route 31 varies over its length, but in the short distance between the Route 2/Route 31 Interchange and the intersection with Authority Drive, Route 31 is a modern two lane roadway. There is a median barrier and a dedicated left turn lane into Authority Drive. Authority Drive is a modern two lane industrial park access road with generous turning geometry and shoulders designed to accommodate truck traffic. Authority Drive is a dead end roadway so traffic generated through the Route 31/Authority Drive Intersection will necessarily be limited. The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority does not expect any peak industrial park traffic activity that will coincide with the peak station traffic activity related to arriving commuter rail trains.

Cultural Impacts: The station will remain in the industrial zoned area as originally proposed. The additional parking will be located on a former roadway right of way and on undeveloped industrial property. The relationship of the station to its surroundings will not change. The currently proposed layover facility site is very similar to the previously proposed site. They are both large, industrially zoned parcels located adjacent to an active railroad right of way and within an existing business park. There are no community facilities affected by activities within this isolated industrial area. As part of the National Environmental Policy Act review process carried out by the Federal Transit Administration, the State Historic Preservation Officer reviewed the project, including both the station and the layover facility at its currently proposed location, and concurred with the Federal Transit Administration's determination that there will be no historic properties or archaeological resources affected.

Noise and Vibration Impacts: As part of the National Environmental Policy Act review process carried out by the Federal Transit Administration, the potential noise and vibration impacts on sensitive receptors were analyzed (see Attachment 6 Environmental Assessment Noise and Vibration Impact Analysis). It was determined that the project, including the station and the layover facility at its currently proposed location, would have no significant impacts on any sensitive receptors in the area.

Habitat Impacts: Neither the station site nor the currently proposed layover facility site are located in areas that have any listed species habitats.

Wetlands Impacts at the Station Site: It is not possible to perform any development in many areas of the railroad right of way and completely avoid impacts to wetland resources; the railroad right of way contains drainage ditches and drainage pockets that support wetlands vegetation. The impacts to wetlands resources at the station site are related to the proposed track work and platform in the railroad right of way and the resultant removal of ditches and small pockets of wetlands. There were no wetland impacts associated with the parking lot as previously proposed and there will be no wetlands impacts associated with the parking lot with 84 additional parking spaces. The

current estimate of wetlands impacts is 2,920 square feet as opposed to the figure of 2,300 square feet reported in the Environmental Notification Form. This 27% increase in the area affected is not related to any new types, locations, or nature of potential impacts; it is a result of a more recent delineation and survey of the resource areas within the railroad right of way.

Wetlands Impacts at the Layover Facility Site: The currently proposed layover facility site is located between two of the multiple stream systems that run across the business park area. This location was set and the layout of the facility was refined in order to minimize impacts to wetlands resources. There will be no wetland impacts involved in the development of the layover facility site.

Riverfront Area Impacts at the Station Site: A trackside stream runs along the south side of the existing railroad right of way in the area to the west of the station site. The Riverfront Area along the north side of this stream encompasses a portion of the existing railroad right of way. The proposed trackwork along this section of the railroad right of way will take place within a previously disturbed Riverfront Area, which contained tracks in the past. The Environmental Notification Form described a similar amount of Riverfront Area alteration due to trackwork between the Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike and the existing railroad right of way, in an area that is partially disturbed. The proposed station site – involving both the platform and the parking lot - are well to the east of the stream area and outside of its associated Riverfront Area (see Attachment 3a “Currently Proposed Build Condition - Station”). The proposed 286 space parking lot as presented in the Environmental Notification Form would have had no impact on the Riverfront Area; similarly, the currently proposed 370 space parking lot will also have no impact on the Riverfront Area.

Riverfront Area Impacts at the Layover Facility Site: At the Layover Facility site, the developed area is strategically located between a stream to the west and a stream to the east. These streams run from south to north through the industrial park property and cross under the railroad right of way at culverts. A significant portion of the railroad rights of way fall within the Riverfront Areas associated with these crossing streams. The proposed trackwork along these sections of the railroad right of way will take place within the previously disturbed Riverfront Areas. The new Layover Facility lies to the south of the existing railroad right of way and between and back from these streams (see Attachment 3b “Currently Proposed Build Condition – Layover Facility”). Beyond the developed area of the railroad right of way, the new developed area of the Layover Facility site impinges on a portion of the undeveloped Outer Riparian Zones of the streams. This impingement covers 9,020 square feet of the Outer Riparian Zone; 5,895 square feet at Stream 1 and 3,125 square feet at Stream 2. (Refer to Figure 3 to see the Riverfront Areas altered.)

IV The Consideration of Environmental Consequences

1. The Seven Factors to Be Considered

Regulatory Review Requirements: Section 11.10(6) of the MEPA Regulations “Secretary’s Consideration of Environmental Consequences” states that in determining whether a change in a project might significantly increase the environmental consequences of the project, the Secretary will consider seven factors. The seven factors are (1) an expansion of the project, (2) the generation of future impacts, (3) a change of the project site, (4) new permit needs, financial assistance needs, or land acquisition needs, (6) reductions in benefits to environmental quality, resources, or public health, and (7) change in or new information about the ambient environment. The following sections review these seven factors as they relate to the change in the location of the layover facility.

2. Expansion of the Project

The project will expand through the provision of 84 additional parking spaces. The additional parking spaces are the only element of project expansion; the station will otherwise involve exactly the same features as originally presented and the layover facility at the currently proposed site will involve exactly the same features as the layover facility at the previously proposed location. The project size with a station with 370 parking spaces does not exceed any review thresholds for a mandatory Environmental Impact Report.

3. The Generation of Future Impacts

The project will not change significantly in its generation of impacts. The station will involve the same features and the same type and level of operation as previously represented. The layover facility at the currently proposed location will involve the same features and the same type and level of operation as the layover facility at the previously proposed location. The project impacts for a station with 370 parking spaces do not exceed any review thresholds for a mandatory Environmental Impact Report. There are small potential increases in impacts for a project with more parking spaces. The level of local traffic will increase if the parking spaces available at the station are used to capacity. Automobile emissions from local traffic activity in the area of the station would increase in the future if the use of the station parking lot by park and ride station

users reaches capacity. Discharges and emissions related to railroad operations will remain the same since the projected number and frequency of train operations at the station and within the layover facility will remain the same. The discharges and emissions related to railroad operations could grow in the future if there is an increase in demand for commuter rail services. Discharges and emissions related to activities at the service building and at the electrical substation at the layover facility will remain the same since the type and size of the facilities and the nature of activities will remain the same.

4. Change in Expected Date for the Commencement of the Project

The estimated commencement date given in the Environmental Notification Form was the first quarter of 2010; the estimated completion date given was the first quarter of 2012. This ambitious initial project development schedule will not be met for a variety of reasons associated with the challenges of developing a large public transportation project. The delay in the development of the project has not been related to the increase in the number of parking spaces planned at the station or the new location for the layover facility.

5. Change of the Project Site

One of the elements of the project – the end of the line layover facility – was relocated from its originally proposed location at the far western end of the Westminster Business Park opposite Crocker Pond to a new location at the easterly end of the business park and closer to the business park entrance off Batherick Road. The new location is approximately half a mile further to the east than the originally proposed location. The change has been proposed because analysis developed during subsequent reviews of alternative locations revealed that the now proposed location for the Layover Facility will be equivalent to the originally proposed location in terms of the support of railroad operations, will involve less environmental impacts than the originally proposed location, and is favored by the community.

6. New Permit Needs, Financial Assistance Needs, or Land Acquisition Needs

Permit Needs: There are no new permit needs associated with the increase of 84 parking spaces and with the currently proposed location for the layover facility. For the station site, the requirement for an Order of Conditions from the Fitchburg Conservation Commission has not changed. The currently proposed layover facility site is within the

Town of Westminster as was the formerly proposed site. The requirement for an Order of Conditions from the Westminster Conservation Commission has not changed. The other permit requirements - a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit for the Operation of a Transportation Facility from the Department of Environmental Protection, a generic Section 410 Water Quality Certificate from the Department of Environmental Protection, a Section 404 Programmatic Category 1 General Permit from the Army Corps of Engineers, and a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit for Stormwater Discharges Associated with Construction from the Department of Environmental Protection – have not changed.

Financial Assistance Needs: The overall cost and funding needs of the project remain the same. The station with 84 additional parking spaces involves the same types of features as previously proposed. The 84 additional parking spaces do not involve material quantities or the type of construction that will add significantly to the construction cost of the station. The layover facility at its currently proposed location involves the same types of features at a site that is very similar in development characteristics to the previously proposed site.

Land Acquisition Needs: The station site has been expanded to allow for additional parking spaces as the project has developed. The property added to the originally proposed station site to allow for additional parking is a .6 acre undeveloped industrially zoned property immediately adjacent to the originally proposed site and a 1.0 acre section of the former right of way of Fifth Massachusetts Turnpike.

7. Reduction in Benefits to Environmental Quality, Resources, or Public Health

The benefits of the project – including primarily decreases in traffic congestion, decreases in vehicle miles traveled, less fuel used, and less generation of greenhouse gases – will remain the same with the increase of 84 parking spaces at the station and with the layover facility in its currently proposed location.

8. Change In or New Information about the Ambient Environment

There have been no significant changes in the ambient environment. More detailed information about the environment in the area of the sites has been acquired but this new information did not change the original understanding of the environment or the potential impacts of the station or the layover facility. During the course of the design process the potential for providing more parking spaces without significant changes to the nature of the impacts of the project was revealed. The gain of 84 additional parking spaces was

MBTA Wachusett Extension Project
Notice of Project Change
Project Change Description

determined to be a benefit to the project that could be achieved without significant additional costs or impacts. During the course of further project development and the preparation of the Environmental Assessment for the National Environmental Policy Act review process, greater understanding of community preferences was achieved. The change in the location of the layover facility from the vicinity of Crocker Pond to a more easterly location within the same industrially zoned business park was one of the results of interaction concerning the project.