



TOWN OF WESTWOOD
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
BOARD OF SELECTMEN

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June 22, 2009

Mass Highway
c/o Outdoor Advertising Division
Ten Park Plaza, Room 7515
Boston, MA 02116-3973
c/o Mr. Edward Farley

Dear Mr. Edward Farley, Outdoor Advertising Board and the MassHighway Department:

On behalf of the entire Westwood community, and in our joint efforts with the town of Dedham, we respectfully offer our concerns about the billboard location on Route 128/I-95 at the northeast corner of the T garage/multi-modal rail structure along the Dedham/Westwood line. We have overriding concerns as well, which are briefly stated further on, but our detailed comments will address the particular sign location at the T garage.

First, with regard to this sign location we have a number of specific concerns:

1. In 711 CMR, 3.07 (6), and in the 12-31-1971 implementing Agreement between the Commonwealth and the federal government (to carry out the aims of the federal Highway Beautification Act), signs are prohibited within 300 feet of virtually any variety of park, open space or recreation area. The location of the T garage sign might well lie within 300 feet of the closest edge of Neponset River reservation. In addition to this issue, this area is overlain by a designated Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), which triggers special review and protective measures.

2. In the 12-31-1971 implementing Agreement between the Commonwealth and the federal government (to carry out the aims of the federal Highway Beautification Act), signs are prohibited within 500 feet of "an interchange or intersection at grade...along the Interstate Highway (*for cities and towns under 50,000*).” The ramps from I-95 to Blue hill Drive/University Avenue appear to lie within 500 feet of the sign location.

3. In 711 CMR, 3.07 (4), the language includes the following, excerpted: “No permit shall be granted for (a) sign which the Board determines...would not be in harmony with or suitable for the surrounding area or would do significant damage to the visual environment...the scenic beauty of the area; (*the Board may consider*) the structure, height and size of the sign....” Major portions of the large established residential neighborhoods lying west and north of the sign site and T garage will be visually impacted in dramatic fashion, by virtue of their elevated topography above the University Avenue site and the 85 foot high sign looming on the other side, “across the valley.”

4. While the Federal Highway Beautification Act attempts to keep billboards confined to “zoned and unzoned commercial or industrial areas,” this sign, in fact, impacts a mixed use area that is zoned for residential, as well as retail, office and hotel uses. Westwood Station ultimately will contain 1000 dwelling units; 484 are already permitted. The land use on the abutting acreage is, in no small part, residential, as codified by the Mixed Use Overlay District zoning.

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5. The sign might exceed dimensional limits in the 12-31-1971 implementing Agreement between the Commonwealth and the federal government, in #1 under SIZE OF SIGNS. The upper limit on total sign area is 1200 square feet and we do not possess the data to determine whether or not the T's sign will exceed that. The 85 foot total height certainly exceeds the 25 foot height limit set in the Agreement

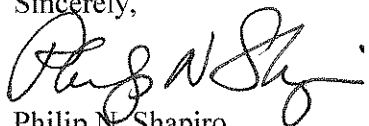
6. Cabot, Cabot and Forbes, developers of the mixed use Westwood Station (WWS) project, have a signed agreement with the MBTA that grants them (WWS) the right to mount banners on the visible facades of the T garage. An 85 foot high sign structure with substantial lateral dimensions, looming over a 45 foot high building (the T garage), will at least significantly impede the view of those important identifying banners, in possible violation of this agreement.

We have tried to be as factual as possible and bring up specific issues with standing under the laws, regulations and public policy agreements. This particular sign location is fraught with legal and permitting problems and serious negative impacts and cannot, in our opinion, be permitted by the OAB.

We sympathize with the MBTA's serious financial condition and appreciate the valuable public service it provides and the positive environmental impacts it generates by taking cars off the road. But the aggressive rush to throw up these signs along the US highway system in the Commonwealth will create some visual degradation that will last for generations—no one gives up a sign location. Short term fiscal expediency might not be in the long term interests of the state, and the sign location by the Westwood T garage is a particularly egregious one in this regard.

Thanks you for listening and considering our arguments.

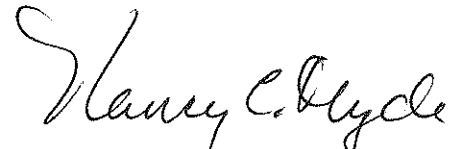
Sincerely,



Philip N. Shapiro
Chairman, Board of Selectmen



Patrick J. Ahearn
Board of Selectmen



Nancy C. Hyde
Board of Selectmen

Cc: Senator Marian Walsh
Representative Paul McMurtry
William Keegan, Town of Dedham
William Friel, Town of Canton
James Fox, Whitewood Neighborhood Association
Howard Davis, Cabot, Cabot & Forbes