Fitting Transit—and TOD—Into Established Communities

The Silver Line and the South Boston Waterfront

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“We’ve got 13 million square feet of high-end waterfront development built or approved...but finally, today, everyone thinks it’s real.”

‘Remember all the fights we had on this one?’

Thomas M. Menino, Boston’s mayor, on Fan Pier’s difficult history

Boston Globe, September 26, 2007
How We Got There
The South Boston Waterfront

A Century of Land-Making
- 1,000 Acres
- Cargo, Fish, Passengers
- Boston Naval Shipyard

1960: Still Humming
- Changes in Technology
- St. Lawrence Seaway
- Navy Shutdowns

1975: Virtually Silent
- especially the 300 acres next to downtown
A Complicated Environment

Physical surroundings:
- downtown financial district
- working Port of Boston
- residential South Boston
- Logan Airport
- highly regulated shoreline
- just off the edge of the MBTA system core

Multiple jurisdictions—the MBTA and:
- Boston Redevelopment Authority—all-in-one planning, zoning, development agency
- Massport—largest landowner, substantial legal autonomy
- The Big Dig Project—Mass Highway and Turnpike Authority
- The state’s emerging tidelands regulatory process
From Weeds, Abandoned Rails, and Parking Lots To High-Value TOD: 6 Interventions

1. The Big Dig
2. The Silver Line (and the Courthouse)
3. The Parking Freeze
4. The Chapter 91 Regulations
5. The Convention Center
6. Joint Development
Intervention #1: The Big Dig

- Connects Waterfront to regional highway system (I-90 and I-93).
- Direct three-minute link to Logan Airport.
- Three-layer roadway system provides an urban TOD street grid.

Map: Massachusetts Turnpike Authority; overlay: author
Intervention #2: The Silver Line...

What We Talked About (1980s)

- The “Red Line Hook”—heavy rail, **but**: just one station; Orange and Green Line transfers at the most congested core hubs; travel time hit for existing riders.

- A Waterfront Monorail or LRT—multiple stops, **but**: point-to-point; no Orange or Green Line connections; no one-seat ride for anyone.
Intervention #2: The Silver Line...

What We Built (Opened 2005)

- A **BRT subway** from South Station to the waterfront.
- Three stations—everything within a 7-minute walk
- 60-foot articulated buses, with dual propulsion (catenary / clean diesel)
- 90-second peak headways
- *Future connections to Orange, Green, and Washington Street Lines.*
Building Livable Communities with Transit

**Intervention #2: The Silver Line...**

- A **BRT subway** from South Station to the waterfront.
- Three stations—everything within a 7-minute walk
- 60-foot articulated buses, with dual propulsion (catenary / clean diesel)
- 90-second peak headways
- *From Silver Line Way, splits into four surface routes— including Logan terminals.*
The Silver Line...and a Courthouse?

US Courthouse at Fan Pier

- Ended the transit alignment and technology debate.
- The pioneering investment at the downtown end of the district—dedicated 1998
- Controversial siting process...great outcome.
- Cong. Moakley secured FTA funding to ensure access to Courthouse and related development.
Intervention #3: The Parking Freeze

- Boston and Portland: two US cities that use parking “caps” or “freezes”.
- 1992 agreement among City, state, and Port Authority: all pre-existing commercial spaces plus a 10% “bank”.
- Results: TOD parking ratios (1 space or less per 1,000 sf) before the Silver Line opened.
- Almost no controversy. Developers save $35-50,000 per space; “the devil made them do it.”
Intervention #4: Chapter 91

- A decade of State / City consensus building.
- An urban public waterfront: pedestrian values; 24/7 mixed uses; retail at grade.
- Strong emphasis on Silver Line and water transit.
- Curbside parking required, but off-street parking must be underground.

Site plan: Fan Pier Land Development Co.
Intervention #5: The Convention Center

- A 10-year siting conflict resolved in 1997; Center opened in 2004.
- At 550,000 sf of contiguous exhibit space, one of largest in US.
- 1200-room headquarters hotel.
- High level of 24/7 activity; minimal local traffic; good spillover to hotels, restaurants, public amenities.
- A 600-foot walk from World Trade Station, plus a dedicated Silver Line stop of its own.
Intervention #6: Joint Development
Massport:
- owns Commonwealth Flats land
- conveyed ROW to MBTA, made capital and operating contribution to Silver Line
- designates developers and enters into long-term ground leases

MBTA:
- built and operates Silver Line

Private Developers:
- design and build their projects
- incorporate and maintain key transit and pedestrian features
Results
## So Far... TOD Built, Approved, or Close

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Sq. Ft.</th>
<th>Uses</th>
<th>Parking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston Convention and Exhibition Center / Hotel</td>
<td>3.4 million</td>
<td>New convention center, one of nation's largest; Westin HQ hotel</td>
<td>1,365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Pier and Fidelity Ground Lease</td>
<td>2.4 million</td>
<td>World Trade Center (pier), Seaport Hotel, 2 World Trade office towers, public park</td>
<td>2,300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Massport Core Block and Parcels F, G, and J</td>
<td>3.4 million</td>
<td>Manulife HQ; Park Lane Seaport Apartments; Marriott Renaissance Hotel; Waterside Place retail / mixed-use center</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fan Pier</td>
<td>2.7 million</td>
<td>9 new city blocks: Grand Hyatt, park, condos, office, retail (all permitted); Institute for Contemporary Art (built)</td>
<td>2,280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pier 4</td>
<td>1.0 million</td>
<td>Office, hotel, condos, major restaurant, public park (all permitted)</td>
<td>1,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Square feet:</strong> 13.0 million</td>
<td><strong>Parking:</strong> 10,145</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
World Trade Station: 3.5 Million SF

Photos: Alden S. Raine

Proposed Waterside Place: Core Development Group
(The Drew Company / Voronado Realty)
Silver Line Way Station: 2.3 Million SF

Photos: Alden S. Raine
The Fan Pier
Image: The Fallon Company
Institute for Contemporary Art Open
Office Tower #1 Under Construction
20 acres, 9 New City Blocks
2.7 Million Square Feet

Pier 4
Image: New England Development
In Final Permitting
1.0 Million Square Feet
Waiting in the Wings, Seaport Square

- Gale International, Morgan Stanley, W/S Development
- 24 acres long held by McCourt family; had been seen as Red Sox site
- Proposed: 12 new city blocks; 6.5 million square feet of mixed use, with school and cultural center
- Early permitting stages
- Directly across boulevard from Fan Pier and Pier 4, sharing Court House Station
The Bigger Picture
The Silver Line: Still Not Finished

What We Built (Open 2005)

- The Waterfront Silver Line begins and ends at South Station.
- What about those future connections to the Orange, Green, and Washington Street Lines?
Silver Line III: The Connection
Silver Line III: The Connection

- Will connect the Silver Line Waterfront to the Orange and Green Lines—turning three-seat rides into two, and shifting transfers from the most congested downtown core stations.

- Will turn the Silver Line Washington Street and Silver Line Waterfront services into a continuous, one-seat transit line—with 140,000 daily riders.

- Essential for the full, long-term build-out of the South Boston Waterfront—there’s another 10-15 million square feet to go.

- Will connect several of Boston’s most disadvantaged neighborhoods to the City’s job growth frontier.
Silver Line III: The Connection
Fitting Transit into Established Communities—All Over Again

- Orange, Green, and Washington St. Lines
- Boston Common and Public Garden
- Chinatown and the Chinatown YMCA
- Parks and churches
- Bay Village
- Theater District
- Tufts New England Medical Center
- Emerson College

MBTA; overlay by author
The Solution: None of the Above

- Charles Street Modified Alignment
- Let’s build it:
  - Final EIS early 2008
  - Permission for final design late 2008
  - Construction 2010
  - Revenue Service 2016
Fitting Transit and TOD Into Existing Communities...

...means getting four things right:

- Technology
- Alignment
- Stations
- Connectivity
Thank you.

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