

June 3, 2005

Mr. Daniel Grabauskas, General Manager
MBTA
10 Park Plaza
Boston, MA 02116

Subject: Copley Station Light Rail Accessibility Project

Dear Mr. Grabauskas:

The Boston Groundwater Trust was established by the Boston City Council to monitor groundwater levels in sections of the City where wooden piling supported building foundations are threatened with failure because of lowered groundwater levels and to make recommendations for ways to overcome the problem. We commented on groundwater issues related to the Copley Station project in a letter dated July 26, 2004.

In its response to that letter included in the Environmental Assessment for the project, dated Sept. 14, 2004, the MBTA says:

“There are a number of coordination issues, such as those referenced in this comment, which the MBTA would like to discuss and review with the GWT. As the MBTA develops final plans and specifications, which will act as the direction to the contractor, the MBTA would like to seek the assistance of the GWT on how these matters can be handled. The MBTA will contact the GWT to meet to set off what we believe will be a series of meetings prior to and during construction to coordinate groundwater issues.”

The plan to have these meetings was, arguably, the most important response to groundwater issues raised by the Trust. Unfortunately, no such contact was made by the MBTA during the preparation of plans and specifications, which I understand are now complete, with bids due June 15 according to the MBTA website. That such a prominent commitment, offered voluntarily by the T, was ignored, raises reasonable concerns about the credibility of other MBTA commitments. No attempt has been made to coordinate with the Trust on the location of the monitoring wells that the T promised to install.

I am very disappointed in this failure to follow through on the part of the MBTA. I believe that proceeding with construction without completion of commitments that were to be fulfilled during the design phase could lead to negative consequences. The issue of foundation deterioration is too important, and the physical and economic consequences of ignoring the groundwater problem too great, for a simple apology. What was to have been done upfront should be completed before work commences.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director

Cc:

Mr. Richard H. Doyle, FTA Regional Administrator, Region 1

Mr. Andrew Gottlieb, Deputy Secretary, OCD

Sen. Diane Wilkerson

Rep. Marty Walz

James Hunt, Mayor's Cabinet Officer on Environment and Energy

City Councilor Mike Ross