

In the Green

Successes and Challenges for the GLX After Construction

Epilogue

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In early 2018, as momentum built for the GLX, the new U.S. Secretary of Transportation, Elaine Chao, threw in an additional \$225 million to ensure the project was sufficiently financed.¹ In June 2018, Mayor Curtatone joined Secretary Chao, Governor Baker, MassDOT Secretary Pollack, and many others at a groundbreaking ceremony in Union Square.²

Active construction of the GLX began immediately. By spring 2019, GLX construction was fully underway, with nearly 400 workers diverting bridges, building retaining walls, and laying track. It was never certain this moment would arrive, and there were times few thought the GLX had a chance.³ Its advocates were cautious; GLX construction had encountered unanticipated challenges before, and many construction, management, and financial uncertainties remained. Yet with construction underway, there was now a sense that the train had left the station.

Nonetheless, members of the community remained frustrated with the state and the construction process. There were concerns about how the GLX would impact Somerville residents facing increasingly higher housing prices and how this might contribute to displacement and neighborhood change. Frustrations also stemmed from changes to the Community Path, which would be narrower than previously designed. Once home to working-class communities, Somerville was now home to a large and growing “creative class” and, increasingly, managerial and professional elites. Properties near and abutting the GLX route grew more and more unaffordable.

Many advocates speculated that Curtatone would seek higher office. But in the summer of 2019, he kept his focus squarely on Somerville and yet another mayoral term. “Vote on September 10! Vote on September 10!” Curtatone shouted exuberantly at an August 2019 campaign event near Porter Square.⁴ He and his team passed out flyers that prominently read: “Our community fought for the Green Line Extension for decades, and in 2021 it will open, putting 85 percent of Somervillians within half a mile of a T station.” It also read: “Over the last two years we have begun picking up the pace and laying the groundwork for progress. In the next two years, we are going to accomplish goals our city has pursued for decades and continue working to overcome our community’s next challenges.”⁵

Endnotes

¹ “U.S. Transportation Secretary Elaine L. Chao Announces \$225 Million in Funding for Boston Green Line Extension,” *Federal Transit Administration, FTA*, June 25, 2018, accessed July 31, 2019, <https://www.transit.dot.gov/about/news/us-transportation-secretary-elaine-l-chao-announces-225-million-funding-boston-green-line>.

² Kristen Toussaint, “Officials Break Ground on Green Line Extension project in Somerville,” *Boston Metro*, June 26, 2018, accessed July 14, 2019, <https://www.metro.us/news/local-news/boston/green-line-extension-groundbreaking>.

³ Adam Vaccaro, “Making Tracks: Pace of Work on Green Line Extension Project is Picking Up,” *The Boston Globe*, April 21, 2019, accessed July 31, 2019, <https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/04/21/slowly-but-surely-green-line-extension-coming-along/pVGdQ6TsSMmdU8p91zvBmL/story.html>.

⁴ Joe Curtatone, campaign event, August 22, 2019.

⁵ Ibid.