

RAIL SERVICE TO NEWTON UPPER FALLS AND NEEDHAM



**Needham Street Area Vision Plan
Community Engagement Group**

***Light Rail Extension in the
Needham Street Corridor***

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Light Rail expansion in the Needham Street Corridor

Newton's development was shaped by railroad expansion. Many of the favorable qualities that we seen in Newton's villages are a result of growth patterns that were a consequence of rail service that came to the city in the 1800's.

Currently, the Needham Street corridor has been identified as a potential area of significant positive change and economic growth in Newton. An extension of the Riverside "D" Green line along the unused rail corridor between Newton Highlands,

Newton Upper Falls, and Needham would

allow for direct rail access of this area to the Longwood Medical Area and downtown Boston. In addition to potentially

stimulating significant economic

development in the corridor, the new rail line will support the creation of a vibrant new, wholly integrated, mixed-use and

mixed-income district. The new line represents a cost-effective investment of

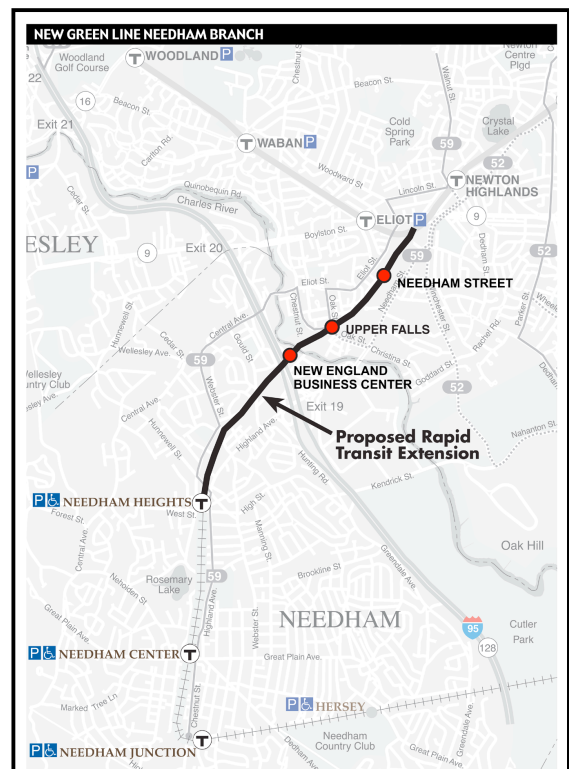
state and federal transportation funds, as the anticipated residential and commercial

densities and intensity of land use in the corridor are supportive of implementing

light rail. According to the MBTA's Program

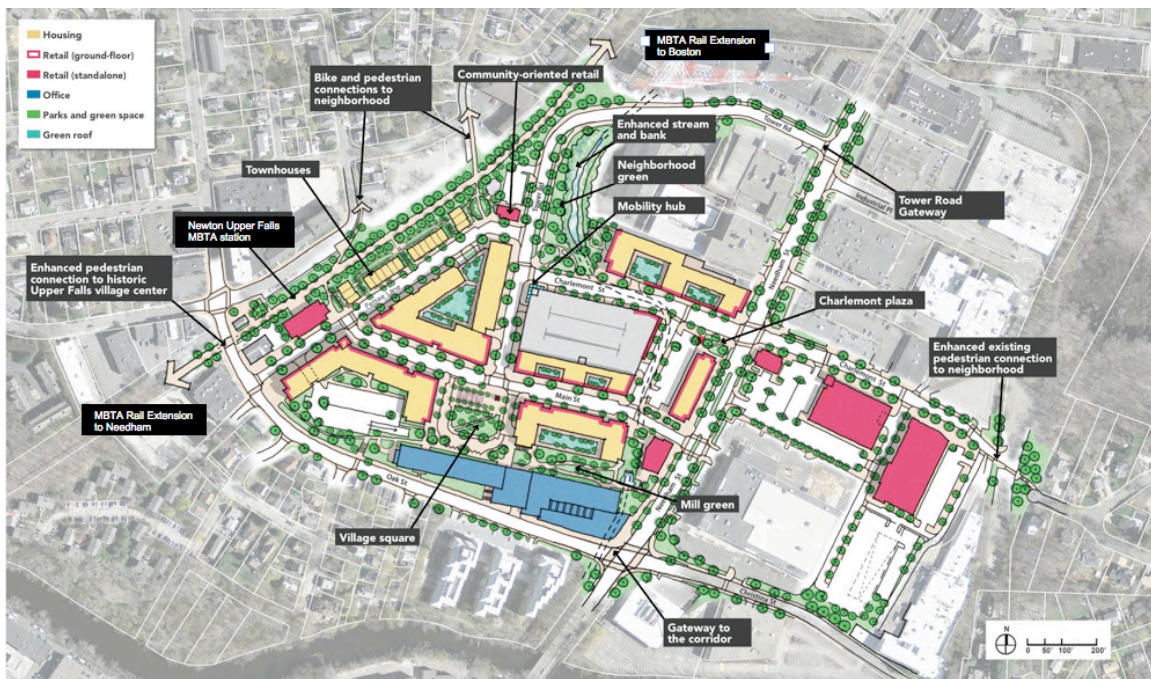
for Mass Transportation (PMT) analysis published in 2010, ridership on the new line is projected to be significant, even without including inevitable new growth that has already happened and that will occur in the corridor.

The cost-benefit analysis is favorable towards significantly supporting the operating expenses of the new transit extension. In addition, local options to implement and maintain the operating expenses for the line may be considered, such as through the



use of newly generated funds from economic growth, by implementing mechanisms such as tax-increment and district improvement financing.

Furthermore, the new line will stimulate development in the Needham Street corridor such that it will have a more pedestrian-friendly and transit orientation. The potential benefits of the new line may be not only to create an environment for new growth, but it may allow for new development to take a form that is not solely reliant on providing automobile access, parking supply, and dependent on further roadway expansion.



Proposed Northland Development – with addition of MBTA extension

With the implementation of high frequency, reliable service that connects the Needham Street corridor to the central Boston downtown area, the Longwood Medical Area, and other sites of major economic activity, future development will allow for density bonuses and reduced parking requirements that will enable vibrant walkable, pedestrian-oriented environments. The Needham Street corridor will be transformed from an auto-oriented strip to a new 21-st century village in Newton.

Because of the potential advantages described above, Newton should advocate for the undertaking of a feasibility analysis of the Needham Street corridor for light rail expansion. This study should be completed by a reputable transportation planning firm to evaluate:

- The range of anticipated project costs for design and construction
- How costs may change over time
- An estimate of anticipated ridership upon completion
- Ridership on the line with potential build out of the corridor
- A detailed examination of engineering and construction issues
- A concept design

The cost of such a study would likely be completed for a modest allocation of funds. A local firm with experience in this area of study, such as Cambridge Systematics or Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, among others, may be commissioned to do this work, chosen by RFP process. The same firm would produce a conceptual plan. The Needham Street Area Vision Planning Group may provide support to the City's undertaking of this study.



One of the major advantages of initiating a planning process for the Green line extension is that it

represents an opportunity for the preservation of the Newton Upper Falls Greenway. As it currently stands, the MBTA may revert this corridor to transit use as needed. A robust planning process will work to preserve an adequate right-of-way such that the Greenway can continue to exist adjacent to the restored rail service extension. New bridges across the Charles River and Route 95 (Route 128) into Needham will serve to expand and enhance the overall utility of the Greenway for pedestrians and bicyclists for years to come.