



**To:** City Council  
**From:** Council President Albright  
**Date:** November 20, 2023  
**RE:** Timeline on progress to upgrade Auburndale/3 Newton Stations

Councilors,

Many are unaware of the progress over the last 20 years with respect to efforts to upgrade Auburndale and the three stations on the north side of Newton (the Worcester Line). Many think we have been talking for over 20 years but have made no progress. Specifically, folks were unaware that we are awaiting a presentation from MassDOT this fall on the 75% design of the option which fixes accessibility at all three stations and gives Newton access to both tracks. I worked with Representative Khan to create this simplified timeline of the events at Auburndale and the three stations over the last roughly 20 years.

- Over 20 years ago after a constituent from Auburndale complained to Rep. Khan about the inaccessibility of the commuter rail stations in Newton she reached out to Barney Frank, who in the days one could earmark brought to MA 2-3 million from Federal Transportation Funds that helped get the MBTA to focus on the inaccessibility of Newton Commuter Rail Stations.
- First efforts focused on Auburndale Station
- Rep Khan, continuing to work with MBTA was able to get 20 million in the CIP earmarked for work on the stations but primarily Auburndale at that time.
- Under Governor Patrick, 3 entities, Mass Pike, CSX who owned tracks, was purchased by the state, and Mass Highway Dept. all brought under one roof creating the Mass DOT. This made it better to advocate for station accessibility and better service in Newton.
- MassDOT decided to upgrade the Auburndale station as the one station in the region where accessibility would be fixed
- 2017 – MassDOT held a Public community meeting organized by Kay, DOT and community members, held at Village Bank in Auburndale. Purpose: share the proposed design of Auburndale Station and get feedback
- Transit Matters weighs in at meeting saying that Auburndale Station, as presented, would not be a viable plan. Though making it accessible it would **not** have fixed the one track problem, and, because there would be a switch at Auburndale would have delayed the upstream cities and towns i.e.the rest of the Worcester line. Thus, Transit Matters and the upstream cities and towns objected strenuously to this plan so the plan was scrapped.
- 2017 Council writes to Secretary Pollack urging her to move forward with a 2 track solution for Newton's stations
- Back to the drawing board. There were many meetings with the T including with Stephanie Pollack, Senator Creem, Secretary of Transportation, Ward 2 Councilors (in Kay's office and at city hall) who explained how many problems the T has before it fixes the 3 Newton stations but agreed to keep working on the problem (see letter from Stephanie Pollack dated 2017.)

- Councilor Norton organized a public meeting at Newton Free Library for DOT to make updated presentation of status of the station project
- The Mayor's connection to the Baker administration helped to move our stations to the next level.
- 2019 MBTA presents 3 options for the 3 stations ranging from accessibility to full access to 3 tracks
- We had several meetings at City Hall where the T came to discuss the 3 options – Ultimately all decided that the most expensive solution but most useful for Newton was the 3 station solution- to fix the 3 stations for accessibility and to have access to both tracks was the best choice
- Oct 2021 - T calls for a zoom meeting to discuss the 3 stations. Here is the description provided by the T for this meeting: Description: Please join us for an online public meeting to learn more about the Newton Commuter Rail Stations Accessibility Improvements Project. We're planning accessibility upgrades at Auburndale, West Newton, and Newtonville Stations in Newton on the Worcester Line. These stations are in disrepair and not accessible to people with disabilities. This work includes constructing fully accessible, high-level platforms at each station as well as accessible pathways to each platform.
- 2022 - Creem and Khan secured \$85M in State Transportation Bond Bill going through the legislature, Jake secured \$7M from Feds. All of which has yet to be spent.
- Representative Auchincloss by then a Congressman began work on federal money to match the state money. As the full design was not yet fully developed, MassDOT refused to include the 3 stations in the CIP and without that, Feds would not interested in a match
- MBTA promised to show us the 75% design this fall but now we are hearing possibly early 2024.
- The inclusion of Auburndale as a stand-alone village with the MBTA Compliance villages was never an issue until the Council began to seriously consider not including the Non-MBTA Compliance Villages into the Village Center Overlay District– which happened within the last week.