

## Boston and the Northeast Region Try Initiatives Centered on Passenger Rail Corridors

The 1.4 million- square-foot (130,000-sq-m) Waterfront Square project—located adjacent to Wonderland Station, the northern terminus of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Blue Line—will link the city with Revere Beach, the first public beach in the United States, and is intended to offer a new civic and commercial heart for the neighborhood. The project began in 2005, when the city of Revere issued a developers' request for proposals, based on a newly defined series of guidelines to encourage a sustainable approach to development on the nine-acre (3.6-ha) site. With the goal of increasing commercial development—and its associated tax base—while preserving open space and integrating sustainable technology, the city took the opportunity to work in partnership with the MBTA.

“A major turning point in the process came with the suggestion to consolidate parking into a 1,900-car garage designed to accommodate a new intermodal transit facility on an adjacent MBTA parcel,” says George Tremblay, a principal with Somerville, Massachusetts–based Arrowstreet, project architect and planner. “This has become a catalyst for the neighborhood design, allowing for the integration of automobiles, a new bus station, and bike facilities into the existing MBTA stop, while creating a pedestrian link to Revere Beach by way of the new civic plaza in Waterfront Square.”

Revere has been instrumental in helping secure state infrastructure dollars, in addition to federal grants for job creation under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and Federal Transit Authority funds for improved bus facilities and connectivity. A highly collaborative process is necessitated by a complex series of relationships that has Boston-based Eurovest Development acting as the redeveloper and leasing the land from the city, which in turn is acting as a developer for the MBTA.

While the Waterfront Square project meets the criteria for many state planning and infrastructure programs, including the



Waterfront Square, a new project at Revere Beach located adjacent to the Wonderland Station, the northern terminus of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority Blue Line, is designed to create a new civic and commercial heart for the neighborhood.



The recently completed Phase 1 of the Maine Street Station project, a mixed-use development, will accommodate the extension of Amtrak's Downeaster line from Boston to Portland on north to Brunswick, Maine.

Growth Districts Initiative, it also will showcase the tenets of sustainable development as a pilot project in the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) program.

This framework for smart economic growth is one equally valid in smaller communities across northern New England. Other states, including Maine and New Hampshire, have active initiatives centered on passenger rail corridors, and transit-oriented developments are pushing forward, relying on the same equation of public/private partnerships and place-making principles.

The Obama administration announced in January that it will allocate \$35 million in federal stimulus funds to extend Amtrak's Boston-to-Portland passenger rail service 30 miles (48 km) north to Brunswick, Maine. The expansion will take the Downeaster line through Freeport to Maine Street Station, a mixed-use development funded through a public/private partnership between the town and JHR Development of Maine. Phase I of the project, which includes shops, a visitor/train station, restaurants, and office space, was

completed this past fall; full buildout, including additional commercial space, condominiums, and an inn, is anticipated in 2012.

In New Hampshire, the state Department of Transportation (DOT) continues to actively pursue funding grants through the Federal Rail Authority for service along the New Hampshire Capitol Corridor. "Bringing high-speed passenger rail from Boston to Manchester, Concord, and ultimately Montreal would have such a positive impact on the economy of our region," says Chris Clement, former deputy commissioner of the New Hampshire DOT. "The \$1.7 million Track 3 planning grant, in conjunction with a 50 percent state match, would kick-start the environmental documentation process, as well as other critical planning initiatives, from more in-depth ridership studies to station site analysis."

Amtrak has expressed a great deal of interest in the Capitol Corridor project, says Clement, and potential upgrades to the network would also benefit the freight operations of Pan Am Railways, the owner of the tracks. Clement estimates that the Boston-to-Concord line upgrades will total about \$300 million in capital costs and expenses for rail cars.

The connectivity that a fully realized intercity passenger rail network could provide across the Northeast can be expected to encourage smart economic growth along transportation corridors. In addition to strategies that continue to facilitate the creative assemblage of parcels near transit nodes and incentivize public/private collaboration, it will be more important than ever to coordinate transit planning with land use policies at both the regional and local levels.

**MICHAEL A. WANG** is a principal with Arrowstreet Inc. in Somerville, Massachusetts, the architects and master planners of Waterfront Square and Maine Street Station.