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All sides agree: Final hurdle for Arborway bus facility is funding

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By Matt Rocheleau, Town Correspondent

Design plans for a \$220-million transit facility at Arborway Yard are nearing completion and after 12 years of negotiations and disagreements, the city, MBTA and local community are all on the same page in regards to the project.

But a potential snag remains: money.

"It's an expensive project," said Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority General Manager Richard Davey Thursday, but "We remain focused and committed to this."

Davey said T officials are searching for cost-saving measures within the current design which may be a large factor in whether the authority can afford to start soliciting bids for the project as it hopes to do in the spring.

Currently, he said it is "too soon to tell if the funds will be there," to move forward with the project by then.

One money-saving possibility would be to move around 100 employees who work inside the station to another location, which would eliminate the need to construct an underground parking facility, he said. Several locations owned by the state transportation are being considered for the employee relocation.

The 17-acre site along Arborway and Washington Street currently houses 118 compressed natural gas buses in a temporary facility built in 2003, which allowed buses from Bartlett Yard in Roxbury – which the T has since sold to a developer – to move to Arborway Yard the following year.

The now seven-year-old temporary bus storage, fueling, maintenance and cleaning facility is two years overdue for a replacement, said 38-year resident of Forest Hills Henry Allen, chair of the [Community Planning Committee for the Arborway Yard](#) (CPCAY), which formed several months after the facility plans were first announced in summer 1998.

Twelve years ago, the initial plans called for the bus facility to encompass the entire site. But, the community committee formed, fought back and eventually reached an agreement with the T to consolidate its plans and leave room for around eight acres to be used for city development including affordable housing and youth recreation space.

Over the past decade, T, city and community committee officials have had

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back-and-forth talks on details of the facility's design.

In the latest design revision, with the community group agreeing two years ago to forfeit one-third of an acre to the T, resulted in the T agreeing to take measures to make the bus facility less noisy.

Allen's committee, local residents and T officials will meet on at 7 p.m. on Oct. 27 at English High School to review on the **latest design plans**, which are around 90 percent complete, according to Davey, and will be open to public comment.

"It's been an odyssey," Allen said. "But, we have a strong working relationship with the MBTA. We haven't always been on the same page, but we are now ... which is rare because you don't always get the MBTA, city and community on common ground."

At the meeting in two weeks, Allen expects all sides will express strong support and move forward toward 100-percent-complete design plans by spring.

But the good terms between the three parties now may hinge on whether the MBTA will be able to afford to add the Arborway Yard facility project to its list of planned investments in the spring.

"This has to be in their plan [in the spring], or I think everyone in the community would be skeptical that this will ever be built," said Allen. "We're going to push very hard to get this completed by early next year."

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