

Offered by Councilors Kim Janey and Julia Mejia, Wu, Campbell, Essaib-George, Flaherty, Arroyo, Bok, Flynn, Edwards and Breadon



CITY OF BOSTON IN CITY COUNCIL

ORDER FOR A HEARING TO REVIEW THE MELNEA CASS BLVD DESIGN PROJECT

WHEREAS: Named after the “First Lady of Roxbury,” Civil Rights Activist Melnea Cass, Melnea Cass Blvd was created after successful opposition by residents during the 1960s of a proposed interstate highway (I-95) that would have gone through neighborhoods like Roxbury and Fenway; and,

WHEREAS: In 2011, the City of Boston along with MassDOT started working on the Melnea Cass BLVD Design Project to address the growing concerns around pedestrian safety and high volumes of traffic; and,

WHEREAS: While the proposed road design addresses some of the safety concerns, the plan that was presented raised other concerns as it called for the removal of 124 mature trees; and,

WHEREAS: The plan to remove a large number of trees is a cause of grave concern due to the fact that the removal of such trees will increase the disparate impact from extreme heat urban communities like Roxbury and the South End already face; and,

WHEREAS: Predominantly black neighborhoods like Roxbury will face additional disparate impact due to the health disparities that cause higher rates of poor health among Black and Latino residents, who suffer from conditions like asthma at much higher rates than their white counterparts; and,

WHEREAS: Due to years of organizing and advocacy from the community, in recent days, there has been a commitment to reevaluate the proposal by the City. It is critical to ensure that the next plan does not compound the decades of redlining and structural racism that have left communities like Roxbury and the South End vulnerable to the inequities of urban planning/development; and,

WHEREAS: Reviewing the current plan is essential in order to ensure that the City has done all it can to put forth a plan that encompasses a thorough community process, promotes racial and environmental justice, and ensures quality of life. ***NOW THEREFORE BE IT***

ORDERED: That the appropriate committee of the Boston City Council holds a hearing to examine strategies that improve safety while preserving the mature trees along the corridor. Representatives of the Boston Planning & Development Agency, Department of Transportation, Parks & Recreation Department, and members of other interested parties shall be invited to testify virtually.

Filed on: September 16th, 2020