

**Community process begins for Rutherford Avenue/Sullivan Square project** by Dan Murphy

On July 24, the Boston Transportation Department sponsored the first meeting at the Knights of Columbus Hall to begin the public process for the proposed reconfiguration of Rutherford Avenue and Sullivan Square.

"Most of this meeting will be spent listening to you because we want to bring out all the concerns and opportunities for this corridor," BTD Director of Planning Vineet Gupta said to the more than 75 in attendance. "We want to find a way to give Sullivan Square and Rutherford Avenue back to the neighborhood."

According to Gupta, the BTD will collaborate with both city and state agencies on the project and has pledged to work "hand in hand" with the Charlestown Neighborhood Council, Friends of Sullivan Square, Friends of City Square Park and other community organizations. The BTD plans to hold future meetings in regard to the project at the Knights of Columbus Hall every two months, Gupta said.

The city has allocated \$600,000 and an additional \$13 million in federal funding has been earmarked for the project, which aims to facilitate traffic flow in the areas of Sullivan Square and Rutherford Avenue, Gupta said.

Per the project schedule, the first phase is set for the fall of 2008 and will entail the establishment of design principles and the identification of conceptual alternatives. The second phase, slated for spring 2009, includes the analysis, review and selection of conceptual design. The third and final phase is planned for the summer and fall of 2009 and will include a review of the preliminary design.

"We hope to finish the project in about a year," Gupta said.

Mike Hull, senior project manager for Framingham-based Tetra Tech Rizzo, said the preliminary study would examine the existing conditions of Sullivan Square and Rutherford Avenue, including proposed development at both locations. Preliminary design will also include pedestrian and bike accommodations and the placement of road signals, he said.

Steven Cecil of the Cecil Group, a Boston design and architectural firm, said the project would allow residents to have input on the usage of open spaces in the area, as well as "where people walk and shop."

"You're going to define the character of the streets," Cecil said. "It's an opportunity that comes along once in a generation to put the pieces together."

Cecil said the project would also provide a prime opportunity to reintegrate Bunker Hill Community College into the neighborhood, adding that the college "has been isolated from the community for a long time."

Meanwhile, Ken Stone, governor of the Friends of City Square Park, urged the design team to not view Rutherford Avenue as a highway.

"Turning Rutherford Avenue back into a city street will tie the whole community back together," Stone said.

Gupta countered that the design team believes that while regional traffic should use the highway rather than Rutherford Avenue, it cannot be eliminated from the roadway.

"We don't see it as a highway but as a road belonging to the neighborhood," Gupta said. "At the same time, we want to keep peak connections."