December 12, 2011

Dear Reader:

The Department of Energy (DOE) invites comments on the enclosed document, Draft Environmental Assessment for the Boston Architectural College's Urban Sustainability Initiative for the Renovation of Public Alley #444, Boston, Massachusetts (DOE/EA-1885D). The draft Environmental Assessment (EA) can also be found on DOE's National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL) website at http://www.netl.doe.gov/publications/others/nepa/ea.html.

DOE's proposed action is to provide Boston Architectural College (BAC) with a $1.6 million grant under a cost-sharing arrangement based on a FY10 congressional earmark. Total direct cost for the Geothermal Solution and Green Alley Phase II project is estimated at $1.8 million.

DOE prepared this Draft EA in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) implementing regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508) and DOE's NEPA implementing procedures (10 CFR Part 1021). It evaluates the potential environmental impacts of DOE's providing a financial assistance grant to BAC in a cooperative agreement between the college and DOE. This financial assistance, would allow BAC to design, construct, and implement the renovation of Public Alley #444. The main component of the project would be the installation of 13 to 15 open loop geothermal wells (about 1,500 feet deep) to provide heating and cooling energy to the facilities of BAC; and plumbing and electrical upgrades to accommodate the geothermal solution into the benefiting facilities. The geothermal solution would serve the hot and chilled water needs for three of BAC's campus facilities, 320 Newbury Street, 322 Newbury Street and 951 Boylston Street. The project would also include the installation of a green screen trellis system, planting soils, free-draining pavement, and landscaping to reduce storm water runoff from the Green Alley into the Charles River Basin.

The draft EA evaluates the resource areas DOE commonly addresses in EAs and identified no significant adverse environmental impacts from DOE's proposed action or BAC's proposed project. The proposed project would create temporary construction jobs and provide work for local firms. The project would also provide long-term energy related cost savings estimated to be approximately $60,000 per year, reduce storm water runoff, generate power through alternative energy sources, substantially reduce BAC's carbon footprint, and upon completion, become an ongoing tool for the BAC curriculum and community public education.

It is also envisioned that the aesthetics of Boston's Historic Back Bay District community would be enhanced with the addition of the green screen trellis system, planting soils, free-draining pavement, and pavers.

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A Notice of Availability will be published in the *Boston Herald* and the *Boston Globe* on December 11, 12, and 13, 2011, to announce the beginning of the 30-day public review and comment period. Comments should be marked "BAC Public Alley #444 Draft EA Comments" and sent to:

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Individual names and addresses, including email addresses, received as part of the comment documents normally are considered part of the public record. Persons wishing to withhold names, addresses, or other identifying information from the public record must state this request prominently at the beginning of their comments. DOE will honor this request to the extent allowed by law. All submissions from organizations, businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations or businesses will be included in the public record and open to public inspection in their entirety.

The public comment period ends on January 13, 2012. DOE will consider late submissions to the extent practicable.

Sincerely,

Fred Pozzuto
NEPA Document Manager