

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
JOINT TRANSIT, BICYCLE, & PEDESTRIAN
COMMITTEE MEETING
MEETING NOTES

Date, Time & Place:
Cambridge Housing Authority Conference Room
5 Western Avenue
September 25, 2017, 6:00-8:00

Attendance

Committee Members

Michael Proscia, Andrea Williams, Corby Bacco, Mark Boswell, John Ellersick, Debby Galef, Stacey King, Devin Chausse, Saul Tannenbaum, Johanna Pittman, Olivia Turner

City of Cambridge

Tegin Teich Bennett and Cara Seiderman (Community Development), Jerry Friedman, Kathy Watkins, and Melissa Miguel (Public Works), Patrick Baxter (Traffic, Parking, & Transportation)

Presenters, official entities, and members of the public

Philip Groth (MBTA)

Presentation

Kathy Watkins from DPW presented on existing conditions and challenges on Eliot and Brattle Street in Harvard Square. She referenced Complete Streets and Vision Zero, and highlighted key design features related to those efforts. She also summarized recent projects that have already been completed in the area: installing the “super crosswalk” in the Square, the new MBTA elevator, the new crossing at Mount Auburn Street, and sidewalk improvements that are ongoing in front of the JFK School. She also highlighted the recent work to install a two-way bicycle facility on Brattle Street that intersects at Eliot. She showed MBTA bus routing on Eliot Street and the group discussed that there are 40 buses per hour on one segment, and also other shuttles like Bentley. Buses often use both lanes at the MBTA bus stop on Eliot Street.

Discussion

Topics that were discussed include:

Crosswalks and pedestrian access:

- This scope will likely include adding the last remaining crosswalk missing across Mt Auburn Street. Attendees asked whether the crosswalk would be raised, and whether the curb radius could be reduced because it is hard to see pedestrians and drivers tend to take turns faster than desired.
- A suggestion was made to add another super crosswalk around Brattle to the small triangular plaza called Brattle Square.

Transit and bus/bike conflicts:

- Attendees discussed ideas to reduce conflicts including:
 - Introducing a floating bus stop.
 - Creating a multi-use path in the sidewalk zone behind the bus stop. Attendees noted that there are many pedestrians.
 - Moving the bike lane to the other side of Brattle. People noted that the curb usage on the other side of the street accommodates loading.
- Attendees discussed the possibility of moving the bus stop closer to the new elevator and access to the MBTA station. There are grading issues and utilities, but the stop will be temporarily relocated during other construction work.
- An MBTA representative pointed out that the MBTA is moving toward next generation of fare payment system, which may decrease dwell times with all-door boarding. The MBTA can look at how many people pay cash now to understand how this impacts dwell times.

Vehicle circulation

- Attendees discussed that the only location that looked likely to be a candidate for eliminating a vehicle lane is the block between Mt Auburn and Brattle – if this were possible, an idea was presented that it could be used for a two-way bicycle facility.
- Some suggested considering making Harvard Square car free and continuing to discourage driving through the Square.
- Attendees discussed an idea to require drivers to turn right from Mt Auburn onto Eliot St instead of allowing them to cross Eliot to continue on Mt Auburn Street.
- Attendees asked whether two-way circulation had been considered for vehicles.
- Attendees pointed out that other uses should be considered, such as pick-up/drop-off and compatibility with loading/delivery zones.

Open Space

- Attendees suggested adding seating or other features to make the plaza near Charlie's Kitchen more pleasant for lingering.
- Attendees discussed the possible enlargement of Brattle Square.
- Staff pointed out that trees in this area are healthy and the intent is to not damage them during construction.

Next Steps

Kathy Watkins summarized the next steps for the Eliot/Brattle project design process, which will include:

- 2-3 larger community meetings
- Setting up a stakeholder working group with a representative from each committee

Construction is currently expected to begin in summer of 2018. The MBTA representative mentioned work planned for the bus tunnel in summer of 2018, which could complicate construction start. The current estimated disruption for the bus tunnel work includes four months during which the busway will only be operating in one direction, with more buses circulating on the surface. The MBTA will be replacing the elevator in the main plaza with Out of Town News as well.

Adjourned at 8:00