



DESIGN WORKING GROUP MEETING

Tuesday, April 30, 2019

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Cambridge Police Station

125 6th Street – Community Room

| Design Working Group Members | City Staff |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| Joseph Aiello | Tegin Teich – CDD |
| Jason Alves | Andrew Reker – CCD |
| Rebecca Bowie | Drew Kane – CDD |
| Christopher Cassa | Erik Thorkildsen – CDD |
| Nicholas Dard | |
| Amy Flax | Consultants |
| Kathryn Lachelt Brown | Joseph Maliawco |
| Tony Lechuga | James Turnbull |
| Caroline Lowenthal | Jason Degray |
| Michelle Lower | Christi Apicella |
| Bill McAvinney | Jonathan Church |
| Sarabrent McCoy | |
| Miguel Perez-Luna | |
| Brad Pillen | Public |
| Diana Prideaux-Brune | Olivia Turner |
| Robert Ricchi | Giolvo Genovese |
| Jose Luis Rojas | |
| Dalila Salcedo | |
| Katrina Sousa | |
| Florence Toussaint | |
| Not here: | |
| Tom Evans | |
| John Sanzone | |
| Samantha Tracey | |

Key:

CDD = Community Development Department

TP&T = Traffic Parking & Transportation

The following is a meeting summary of the Design Working Group Meeting #1 for the City of Cambridge's Grand Junction Multi-Use Path and Conceptual Transit Design Project. For more information see <https://www.cambridgema.gov/GrandJunction>

Introduction

The meeting was initiated at 6:00pm by, Tegin Teich, Transportation Planner for the City of Cambridge, who gave a general overview of the project team, the project schedule and process, and the role of the Working Group.

Project Overview

Tegin provided a project overview. The Project Team consists of the Design Working Group members, City Staff, and the City's consultant team. Project facts include:

- Project limits are from Paul Dudley White/Memorial Drive through Vasser St. and Kendall Square ending at Medford/Gore Street, or the Somerville City line
- Grand Junction is currently used as the only North-South connection to move trains between Boston and Framingham
- Adjacent uses include street crossings, three grade crossings not at intersections and access and loading at MIT
- The corridor may be underutilized with 2-4 trains per day running on the Grand Junction through Cambridge but is still critical for freight rail operations
- Opportunities – the corridor touches 4 residential neighborhoods and MIT (5 total). 42% of jobs and 31% of residents are within a ½ mile of the Grand Junction corridor
- The Grand Junction multi-use path in the future can tie into the regional path network. In the near-term it will connect city neighborhoods, resources (e.g. schools, parks, etc.), and jobs
- The intent of the project is to fully design and create construction documents for the construction of the multi-use path in Cambridge. Tegin reviewed a cross-section example of the corridor showing the desired 14' path with 2' buffers on each side. She stressed that cross section elements could vary through corridor due to pinch points and the intent is not to preclude future transit opportunities, as may be identified within MassDOT's current RailVision process.
- Tegin also provided an overview of the project timeline and noted that survey field work within the corridor and traffic analysis at the roadways crossings is ongoing. She closed with the potential for public art and landscaping opportunities along the corridor.

Susanne Rasmussen, Director of Environmental and Transportation Planning for the CDD, provided opening remarks and a "welcome" to the Design Working Group members at 6:28pm. She has been

involved in this project for a very long time (since 2000) and for close to 20 years, the City has wanted to build this project. Nearly \$20 million in funding has been made available for its construction (see Context Setting section for details) and the City acknowledges and gives many thanks to MIT and MassDOT and the business community around Kendall Square for obtaining support and resources for the project. The City sees this project as a real opportunity to serve constituents of the area in the future by providing an important regional link connecting North Station to Cambridge and continuing across the Charles River and through to Allston.

Design Working Group Introductions and Member Roles

Tegin asked each of the Design Working Group members to introduce themselves and to say how they or people they know would use the path once it has been constructed. Each member responded and the following themes were noted for use of the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path:

- Commuting to work (either within Cambridge or to areas outside of Cambridge such as Somerville, Alston and the Longwood Medical Area)
- Recreational/exercise opportunities for students, residents and families
- Providing infrastructure that supports the Vision Zero policy
- A non-motorized connection between neighborhoods

Tegin turned the presentation over to Andrew Reker (Andy) to explain the role of the Design Working Group. The main focus of the Design Working Group is to facilitate a dialog with members about the project. The members of the Design Working Group were appointed by the City Manager. There are no alternate members of the Design Working Group and if a current member can no longer be a member of the Design Working Group, a replacement would need to be appointed by the City Manager. Andy highlighted the neighborhoods and organizations represented on the Design Working Group. He then engaged the members in a discussion about what “ground rules” would be effective for meetings to stay focused and on-time. The following suggestions were made by Design Working Group members:

- Have only one person speak at a time
- Members should not repeat topics just to talk (an “air knock” was suggested to signal agreement with comments said)
- Be “aware” of your air time
- If you want to speak, turn your tent card on its end (similar to raising one’s hand)
- Limit use of cell phones/distraction – Silencing phones is ideal, however if members need to take a phone call outside the room or text/email, that is OK with the members.
- Respect others
- Assume good intentions
- Step up to be heard and step back if talking too much
- Don’t criticize other members – listen even if you don’t agree
- Use restroom as needed (don’t have to ask)

- What ways can be created to have everyone be more comfortable to speak within group?
Perhaps use map tools to put comments (WIKIMAPS)
- Have an expectation that everyone speaks
- Send out notes to the members. Consultants will submit written notes to City staff. City Staff will send to members.
- If members have comments after the meeting, staff send comments out to everyone and add into notes before posting.

Design Working Group members asked to share contact information with each other. Tegin asked that any member not wanting to share their information send an email to her to “opt out”.

Context Setting - Planning and Case studies

Tegin provided an update of the historical work and policies leading up to the initiation of this Grand Junction Multi-Use Path Design project. This project is not starting from scratch and is now at its next stage of planning and implementation. The project has been studied extensively since the concept’s inception in City planning processes in 2000. Tegin mentioned the following multi-use path studies:

- **2006 City of Cambridge Feasibility Study** - Examined the potential alignments for the multi-use path while maintaining the current rail operations and accommodating proposed transit improvements at the time (through the Urban Ring process)
- **2014 MIT Feasibility Study** - MIT funded study to explore the feasibility and impacts of the multi-use path on the MIT campus.
- **2015 “Closing the Gaps” Study** - Forward Fund grant from Cambridge Redevelopment Authority. Looked at opportunities for placemaking/entry points and connections across the rail right of way and regionally.
- **Kendall Square Mobility Task Force 2016 Grand Junction Feasibility** - Explored feasibility of future passenger transit service that Kendall Square Mobility Task Force members felt would meet the transportation needs of a growing Kendall Square, and specified a range of widths to not preclude for that passenger transit.

The City also has foundational ordinances and policies in place that support the project: The Vehicle Trip Reduction Ordinance (1992), the Cambridge Growth Policy (1993/2007), Complete Streets Policy (2016) and the Vision Zero Policy (2016). Guiding/relevant overarching city plans include the Pedestrian Plan (2000), Play in the Public Realm (2014), Bicycle Plan (2015), Transit Strategic Plan (2015), Community Health Improvement Program (2015), Urban Forest Master Plan (in progress) and the New Mobility Blueprint (formerly called the Future of Mobility Blueprint, initiated just after this public meeting).

Tegin also explained the current status of funding and right-of-way for the various segments of the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path that have been identified with supporting maps of each segment. Since 2016, the Grand Junction Park was completed and the next section to be constructed is the Binney Street Park parcel. The City has allocated \$10 million to design and construction of the path between Binney

Street Park and the Cambridge/Somerville city lines. Lastly, MIT has committed \$8.5 million for the design and construction and well as the right of way for the path on MIT property, primarily between Main Street and Pacific Street. The only portion of the project's right-of-way that does not have committed funding is the MassDOT owned portion from Pacific Street to close to Memorial Drive.

Tegin further explained that the Public Engagement Plan for the project will be extensive and include more than the Design Working Group process. A total of six potential public meetings may be held and methods/techniques to provide online communication (e.g. surveys, comment forms) are being developed. Staff also expects to go directly to citizens and attend neighborhood committee meetings, have table/chair "pop-ups" at existing events, attend standing and other committees, and coordinate with the Cambridge Housing Authority and Health Alliance.

Additional collaboration will be held with MassDOT, local institutions (e.g. MIT), property developers, the Cities of Boston and Somerville, other state agencies (e.g. MBTA – bus/rail issues, DCR – for the Memorial Drive Phase 3 with BU rotary project). Collaboration/coordination with these agencies will also help to provide regional connections to other multi-use paths, such as the Community Path in Somerville and paths created as part of the I90 Interchange project. The Grand Junction multi-use path is an important connecting segment in the LandLine network as defined by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

Generally, the Design Working Group will meet on Tuesday evenings approximately every other month. These meetings may not always meet at the Cambridge Police Station and may move to another location. Brad, a member of the working group, offered the possible use of a meeting room at the Department of Public Health.

Project Examples and Group Input Session

Christi Apicella from the consultant team introduced the input session. The Design Working Group members were asked to complete a visual preference type survey of what people like or don't like about elements of eight project examples from around the United States that have similar characteristics to the proposed Grand Junction Multi-Use Path. Design Working Group members split into groups of 3 or 4 to review the case study packet, briefly discuss each case study and express "preferences" among the various elements in each project example. Thereafter, each group's preferences were summarized by City staff to discuss the elements that were most liked, needed more information, or were not liked.

Public Comment

Members of the Design Working Group asked the following questions and comments:

- Tony Lechuga – *If the ARE (Alexandria Real Estate) agreement goes through, would the City build the section of trail identified on that land?* Tegin at this point the City has allocated \$10 million towards the construction and there is no indication yet that would change. Construction strategy would be determined by working with ARE.

- Kathryn Lachelt Brown – *Would you please clarify what you mean by single- and double- track?* Tegin clarified this with an explanation of what sections of the corridor currently have single-track and double-track rail operation.
- Bill McAvinney – *Is the MassDOT section of the corridor included in our work?* Tegin answered that it is for the purposes of design, however we don't have the right of way or funding allocated to construct this section of the path. We are assuming up to three construction packages so that we can phase construction.
- Amy Flax – *Can you walk the corridor from end to end?* Tegin stressed that members should not walk the corridor! To do so safely requires special MBTA training and flag persons because it is active rail. It is possible to get a sense of the corridor from certain vantage points such as roadway intersections.
- Christopher Cassa – *How will the Grand Junction multi-use path connect to Memorial Drive or Cambridgeport?* Tegin answered that those details are currently "moving pieces" and will be addressed as the project moves on with DCR and MassDOT collaboration.
- Caroline Lowenthal – *What are the Working Group member's roles in the public meetings?* Tegin encouraged all Design Working Group members to attend the public meeting and be ambassadors for the project.

Upcoming Meetings

- The first Public Meeting for the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path project is tentatively scheduled for either June 4 or 6, 2019. A meeting location is being determined and the date being coordinated around other city meetings.
- The second Design Working Group meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 18, 2019 (please note that after this meeting, the second Design Working Group meeting was rescheduled to July 22nd). At that meeting, it is expected that the group will discuss data collection completed to date along the Grand Junction corridor and begin to talk about cross-section/design of the pathway.
- The third Design Working Group meeting (date TBD) will potentially discuss challenge areas along the corridor and conceptual design solutions.

The meeting ended at 7:58pm.