

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTES

Date, Time & Place:
August 3, 2016, 5:30-7:30
MIT building 32, Room 124

Attendance

Committee Members

John Attanucci, Devin Chausse, Charlie Fineman, Robert Fitzgerald, Jim Gascoigne, Katherine Rafferty, Robert Ricchi, Simon Shapiro, Saul Tannenbaum

City of Cambridge

Tegin Bennett and Cleo Stoughton (Community Development); Patrick Baxter and Adam Shulman (Traffic, Parking, and Transportation)

Presenters, official entities, and members of the public

Five members of the public were present. Philip Groth (MBTA) was present.

Committee Introductions, Administrative Business, and Updates

June notes were not approved because quorum was not met.

Public Comment

There were no comments at this time.

Inman and Porter Square Intersection Projects

The Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department has been studying these and other intersections. Patrick Baxter (TP&T) discussed proposed improvements in Inman and Porter Square.

Discussion, Inman Square:

- Proposed short term improvements include modifications to signs and striping. Medium- to longer-term improvements may be possible in 2017 and likely include reconstruction of streets, incorporation of separated bicycle facilities, and other more substantial changes. Early conceptual designs for the intersection propose splitting the large intersection into two coordinated intersections by bending either Cambridge Street or Hampshire Street.
- The Committee encouraged the TP&T Department to investigate the impacts each proposed design would have on transit users if implemented. These impacts include changes to bus routing and stop locations, introduction of delay to transit vehicles, and others. Transit impacts must be weighed against other types of impacts. At least one Committee member urged the TP&T Department to consider removing parking where needed to ensure safety for all users while minimizing delay to users of sustainable transportation modes.
- Designs should incorporate treatments to minimize bus delay (e.g., queue jump lanes, transit signal priority) where possible. Illustrating current queue lengths would help the City and Committee identify where queue jump lanes are needed.
- The Committee discussed potential changes to traffic flow through the intersection due to each design, including possible changes in traffic volumes on residential side streets. The Committee also discussed potential treatment of left turns in the intersection.
- The TP&T Department will be doing further analysis and outreach related to this project.

Discussion, Porter Square:

- Possible changes to this intersection include the removal of the left turn from the shopping center parking lot onto Mass Ave, as well as allowing left turns from White Street onto Somerville Ave and from Somerville Ave onto Mass Ave. The TP&T Department would be able to simplify the signal phasing from five phases to three.
- The Committee discussed parking capacity and traffic volumes in and out of the shopping center, which currently has vacant storefronts (and so may not be inducing as many trips as usual) and generally is most busy in September (which is not when data about the shopping center were collected). It was also noted that the left turn out of the shopping center was eliminated years ago but brought back.
- Currently, queues at various locations (e.g., Upland Road) sometimes block the intersection, preventing traffic from moving in other directions. The Committee urged the TP&T Department to include in their evaluation of

alternatives all approaches to the intersection and relevant side streets (e.g., Upland) and to address these types of problems in their design, using modeling where necessary to get an accurate impression of the potential impacts of a design. The Committee discussed the importance of using models that can incorporate transit vehicles, even if that type of modeling requires more resources.

- The Committee also discussed the southbound bus stop at Upland Road and older plans to place the stop closer to the Red Line and Commuter Rail headhouse on the west side of Mass Ave, with a pullout for buses. The Committee proposed making improvements to this headhouse to encourage Red Line and Commuter Rail users to use this headhouse rather than crossing Mass Ave.
- Impacts on buses that travel along Mass Ave and Somerville Ave must be considered.
- The Committee also briefly discussed air rights development over Porter Square station.
- The TP&T Department will be doing further analysis and outreach related to this project.

NACTO Transit Program Accelerator

City staff summarized the kickoff of the NACTO Transit Program Accelerator. Learn more about the Accelerator, which is taking place in three other cities in the US as well, [here](#). The first phase of this program will focus on Massachusetts Avenue north of Porter Square. Staff also presented preliminary findings from a Transit Priority Groundwork Study conducted in May, which will serve to inform the Accelerator.

Discussion:

- The Accelerator will consist of a digital design charrette, a multi-day “roadshow,” demonstration project(s), and a strategy for long-term implementation of transit priority treatments. These events will take place this fall through summer 2017.
- The Transit Priority Groundwork Study consisted of data collection—multi-modal counts of users, curb regulation inventory, and parking utilization along Mass Ave—to inform projects like the Accelerator. These data can be viewed alongside data from other sources like the Transit Service Analysis study (2014), which looked at delay and unreliability on major bus routes in Cambridge.
- The Committee asked whether cameras were used to collect data. They were not used for this study. The Committee briefly discussed whether cameras should be allowed for use in traffic studies, as long as data are handled appropriately (appropriate data storage and use policies to be determined). City staff will follow up on this issue.

Final Public Comment

James Williamson suggested that neighborhood groups be made aware of the NACTO program and events. He advocated for talking with bus drivers to brainstorm changes that would improve bus operations. He talked with a bus driver who thinks that the lanes on the reconstructed Western Ave are too narrow, and with another driver who said that removal of a couple parking spaces on Garden Street just past the Common would ease operations. He noted that Participatory Budgeting ideas had been submitted. He discussed signal coordination issues north of Porter Square and pedestrian safety in the Square. He noted the paint on the bridge at the west headhouse in Porter Square is in poor condition.

Announcements, Events, and Updates

- *Everett tour:* City/MBTA staff plan to organize another tour of the rail side of the facility in the near future.
- *Transit priority marketing materials:* This will be a topic for discussion at the September meeting.
- *Participatory Budgeting:* City staff will send out links to the transit-related ideas that were submitted.
- *Kendall Square Mobility Task Force:* This will be a topic for discussion at an upcoming meeting.
- *Kendall Square Transit Enhancement Program MOU:* Comments on the draft MOU were due July 26. The Committee may discuss this topic further at the September meeting.
- *Green Line Extension (GLX):* The Commonwealth is seeking federal approval of the scaled-back project.

Adjourned at 7:30 pm