

City of Cambridge

Transit Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, June 6, 2018

Milne Ballroom, Citywide Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Avenue

Attendance

Members (12) John Attanucci (Chair), Devin Chausse, Chantal Eide, Charles Fineman, Andrew McFarland, Katherine Rafferty, Rob Ricchi, Arthur Strang, Saul Tannenbaum, Alexander Taylor, Miles Taylor, Melissa Zampitella

City Staff (4) Tegin Teich, Cara Seiderman, and Andrew Reker (CDD), Adam Shulman (TPT)

Others (5) 5 members of the public

Tegin Teich (TT) opened the meeting at 5:35 PM. City staff invited members of Pedestrian (PAC) and Bicycle Advisory Committees (BAC) to join this Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting to participate in the discussion of the South Mass Ave Corridor Safety Improvement (SMACSI) Project. Three members from the other committees joined this meeting: one from the BAC and two from the PAC. The order of items was changed as a result of not having enough TAC members at the beginning of the meeting; public comment was first, with May meeting minute approvals at the very end of the meeting.

Public Comment

James Williamson made a public comment about MBTA buses. He noted that buses on MBTA route 83 are getting stuck at the turn around loop in Russell Field as a result of badly parked vehicles. He also noted problems with boarding at the Johnson Gate stop of MBTA Route 1 as a result of other routes' buses laying over at that bus stop.

Presentation: Updates on Bus Service Planning

TT summarized the MBTA's Better Bus Project (BBP) for members of the combined advisory committees, including history, project goals, and the current MBTA outreach plan. TT also shared the outreach postcards with information on how to provide feedback to the MBTA. As a supplement to the MBTA's BBP, TT presented the outline of two scopes of work that the City will be conducting: (1) update to the Cambridge transit service analysis and (2) supplemental public outreach to the MBTA's BBP.

TT first presented news on the project to update the Cambridge transit service analysis. This project is expected to update the results of the 2014 Cambridge Transit Service Analysis, using more recent data. The reports will have results on travel times and unreliability that MBTA buses and passengers experience in the City of Cambridge. Consultants will expand the analysis to include almost all stop to stop segments in Cambridge.

TT presented on the supplemental outreach to the MBTA BBP. This scope of work will involve doing outreach work in the late summer and early fall to incorporate any additional feedback from Cambridge community members about the MBTA's bus services.

A member of the public shared the date and location of the next MBTA BBP meeting which took place on June 7 in Somerville. John Attanucci (JA) asked about additional detail on the new scope of work for the Cambridge Transit Service Analysis Update and expressed concern about the statistical significance of automated passenger counter (APC)-based datasets. TT responded that this project would include all stop-to-stop segments in the City of Cambridge that are not terminal locations and that the most recent APC data includes a more statistically robust dataset than in previous years. Related to the MBTA BBP, JA expressed concern that the MBTA's public outreach process will result in an analysis that shows that each route is going to need additional running time (i.e. investment in time and labor) to meet the service standards. As a result, JA expressed concerns that this outreach process could lead to decisions that will negatively affect service quality, i.e. to extend headways, reduce frequencies and accept more crowded service.

Arthur Strang (AS) asked how the update to the Cambridge Transit Service Analysis would distinguish between bunching or issues from other parts of the bus network or the region. TT stated that the update would not address service quality issues, rather, it would identify areas of delay and unreliability that could be the result of street design, traffic signal, or other infrastructure issues that the City has direct control over.

[Discuss: South Mass Ave Corridor Safety Improvement Project](#)

TT and Cara Seiderman (CS) shared the project goals, context, and expected outcomes of the City's project to improve safety on South Mass Ave from Lafayette Square (the intersection with Sidney St) to the Charles River. In addition to safety goals, this project also aims to reduce transit delays. As Cambridge is a Vision Zero city, the way that transit plays a role is to give people viable alternatives to using automobiles to get around. This project is a quick-build project with only striping and very limited construction included. The public process has involved advisory committee meetings, communitywide meetings, and additional one-to-one meetings with stakeholders. The City aims to finish this project by late summer.

TAC members asked about MBTA bus delay and reliability issues, the sources of bus unreliability data that was presented. TT responded by saying that this project is expected to improve travel times for buses in this corridor and confirmed that the bus data is from 2014.

Returning to the project context, CS noted that this corridor is a high-crash corridor for the City. TT presented some features of the project -- a floating bus lane and ride-hailing/live-loading and unloading zones. TAC members asked about potential issues that may negatively affect a floating bus lane including skewed parking or cars loading/unloading within the bus lane.

CS presented cross-sections and plans for the project. The cross-sections include the following features: parking-protected separated bicycle lanes for most of the corridor, conflict points with green markings, bus stops that "mix" bicycle and bus traffic, and additional consideration for floating bus stops in the future. A member of the public, Marc Ebuña (ME), asked if temporary installation floating bus stops were being considered for this project and mentioned that temporary bus stop installations will be used in Everett in the near future. Staff responded that this

approach could be considered, but not in time for the initial implementation. CS resumed the presentation noting a new crosswalk crossing Mass Ave at Windsor St with rapid rectangular flashing beacons. In addition, signal modifications proposed in this project should reduce conflicts between turning vehicles and people on foot and bicycle. CS noted that separated bicycle facilities are also designed with ADA-accessible parking spots.

TAC members expressed concerns about the cross-section of this proposal. One concern was that removing one lane and having parking adjacent to a bus priority lane would make this an unappealing project, especially to drivers. In addition, TAC members indicated a desire to expand the geographic scope beyond Sidney St into Central Square. CS and TT responded stating that a project going through Central Square would involve a much more resource-intensive reconstruction and that the City has not identified funding for such a project. TT mentioned that development projects that may affect Mass Ave could potentially improve segments of streets in Central Square. TAC members asked questions about the status of the Mount Auburn Street Bus Priority Project. Members of the public asked about moving bus stops to far-side locations and staff responded that the City is not planning to move stops for this project but is considering them as follow-up items.

Returning the presentation, CS presented on the ADA and live-loading locations but noted that locations are not finalized in the plan and welcomed comments about their locations. CS presented that at the critical intersections in this project, design features include dedicated turning lanes and efficiency of signalized intersections. CS used the example of Vassar at Mass Ave, which will feature separated signal movements for left and right turns to separate through bicycle and pedestrian crossings from turning traffic.

JA asked about food trucks and their dedicated spaces and about tour bus loading zones. CS mentioned that MIT's representatives have asked that space for food trucks be included in this design. Andrew McFarland asked for some additional detail about the crosswalk at Windsor Street, and whether there will be improvements beyond markings. CS noted the rapid-flash beacons providing more visibility for the pedestrian crossing.

After having finished the slide show presentation, City staff asked to go around the table to engage with all of the advisory committee members and to get their thoughts on the design thus far. TAC members expressed the following:

- Design appears to be progressive toward people on foot, on bike, and in transit
- Hopeful about coordination with state agencies to extend the bus priority treatments onto the Harvard (Mass Ave.) Bridge
- Concerns about how drivers would perceive bus lanes
- Questions about private bus shuttles
- Questions about regulations for ride-hailing companies using the proposed loading zones
- Concerns about tour bus stopping and parking locations
- Concerns for pedestrians crossing Mass Ave with excitement for new pedestrian crossings
- Questions about stopping locations for the MIT SafeRide shuttles
- Questions about the two-stage left turns for bicycles at the key intersections in the project
- Winter maintenance of the separated bicycle facility's flex posts
- Interest in lessons learned from Cambridge St. implementations and how these lessons affected South Mass Ave.

Members of the public expressed the following:

- Concerns about Boston-bound at the Vassar St intersection.
- Concerns about right-turns from Central Square-bound Mass Ave to northbound Vassar St.
- Questions about enforcement of new signals at these intersections

CS and TT shared that the Cambridge and MIT Police Departments have been engaged with for enforcement in this design.

[Additional updates](#)

TAC members moved to cancel the July meeting as the regular meeting day falls on US Independence Day this year.

TT reported that Mt Auburn Bus Priority Pilot has strong momentum and support but is dependent on improvements being made by the DCR at Fresh Pond Parkway, so the project cannot now be implemented until early fall.

Actions: Committee Introductions and Approval of Minutes

The TAC moved to approve the May 2018 meeting notes. ST moved to approve with a second from JA. The meeting notes were approved unanimously by voice vote

Public Comment

No additional public comment.

At 7:30 PM, TAC moved to adjourn the June meeting.