

City of Cambridge

Transit Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, September 5, 2018

Ballroom, Citywide Senior Center, 806 Massachusetts Avenue

[Attendance \(22 people\)](#)

Members (11) John Attanucci (Chair); Kelley Brown; Devin Chausse; Chantal Eide; Kristiana Lachiusa; Katherine Rafferty; Robert Ricchi; Arthur Strang; Saul Tannenbaum; Alexander Taylor; Melissa Zampitella

City Staff (3) Tegin Teich and Andrew Reker (CDD), Adam Shulman (TPT)

Others (8) 2 members of the public; Alexandra Markiewicz, Jennifer Slesinger (MassDOT); Andy Smith (MBTA); Christi Apicella, Jeff Brubaker, Kevin Duffy (Outreach consultant team)

As a result of the lengthy and presentation-heavy agenda, this meeting of the Cambridge Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) began 30 minutes early at approximately 5:05 PM. Tegin Teich (TT) opened the meeting and gave an overview of the extended meeting agenda.

[Committee introductions and August meeting notes](#)

TAC committee members, city staff, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) representative, and members of the public present at the start of the meeting introduced themselves. Because quorum was not reached, the TAC did not approve the August meeting notes.

[Public comment](#)

No members of the public made a comment.

[Discussion: MassDOT Focus40](#)

Jennifer Slesinger (JS) from MassDOT presented an overview of Focus40. JS summarized the Focus40 project with the following points:

- Focus40 was formerly the Program for Mass Transportation (PMT).
- Focus40 is a long-range plan for the MBTA to be able to reach the transit needs of the region in 2040.
- Many other planning processes are under the umbrella of Focus40, such as the MassDOT Water Transportation Study, MBTA Rail Vision, etc.
- Focus40 had a robust community engagement
- Focus40 was data driven
- Overall goals focused on making the MBTA reliable and safe, robust (meaning additional capacity), and resilient to climate change.

TAC asked to clarify “financially unconstrained”. JS responded that there is no costing for the projects but Focus40 selected financially responsible projects. JS stated that the program doesn’t set expectations for revenue for the next 25 years. On the other hand, Capital Investment Plans are financially constrained with project costs defined.

TAC asked if Focus40’s future scenarios were quantitative or qualitative. JS responded that the future scenarios were generally qualitative, conceptual, but a significant component of the scenarios were based on projections. The data analysis looked at regional travel demand model outputs and extrapolating recent trends that correlate population growth with transit ridership.

TAC asked about Focus40’s “Priority Places”, including the definition, areas of Cambridge and nearby communities that were not highlighted, and how to get from Priority Places to the programs that Focus40 defines. JS responded that the list of Priority Places in the report is not exhaustive. Some specific neighborhoods may not appear in Priority Places in Focus40 but could still be secondary places of focus. The Focus40 team brought Priority Places into the planning process to focus the conversation about expansion on employment centers outside of the Boston core, inner core communities that lack rapid transit, and urban gateway communities just outside of the rapid transit network. JS also mentioned that Transit Action Plans (like the one in Everett) as a model to get from priority places to programs.

JS continued to describe Focus40 by showing the program framework and objectives. JS showed examples of cross-cutting programs, such as “customer

experience” and accessibility. TAC asked about station improvements and if this would result in improvements to street-level bus transfer facilities.

JS continued to describe Focus40 with the modal programs: Bus 2040, Red Line 2040, and Commuter Rail 2040.

TAC members made comments and asked questions, including:

- Buses aren’t given enough priority within the overall plan
- How does the MBTA Rail Vision process relates to Focus 40
- How do priority places relate to the modal programs
- How do Focus40 and the CIP relate to each other
- Requested further transparency with CIP project ratings

Andy Smith from the MBTA (AS) mentioned the integrated fleet and facilities plan and its relationship to parts of Focus40. JS and TT both mentioned the Kendall Square Mobility Task Force recommendations being relevant to the place-based recommendations found in Focus40. JS also responded that the Focus40 is expected to map much closer to CIP in future years. Responding to questions about transparency, JS responded that MassDOT does know that transparency is a concern, though the process continues to evolve.

TT then presented a summary of the City’s comments on Focus40. TT highlighted the following topics:

- Emphasizing previously-advocated initiatives
- Supporting items in the current document/approach
- Identifying some overarching challenges to the Focus 40 process
- Identifying projects that Cambridge has recommended from various planning processes, but not explicitly included in Focus40 document

After TT finished her summary of the City’s proposed comment letter, the TAC commented on:

- The need for collaboration with bus operators or non-MBTA service operators like private shuttles
- Consideration of late-night service and effects on bus fleet planning

Break

6:25 to 6:30 PM

Discussion: Supplemental outreach for MBTA BBP

TT introduced the consultant team Christi Apicella, Jeff Brubaker, and Kevin Duffy again. Then, TT presented a slideshow of the supplemental outreach for the MBTA's better bus project. After presenting the slides and an overview of the outreach materials, the TAC discussed the elements of the supplemental outreach project.

TAC asked about how we are reaching out to existing bus riders and if the City had also contacted: neighborhood associations, TMAs, and health facilities.

TAC discussed the materials including the Wikimap, online survey, survey, and ideas map. TAC suggested including all links on all the materials and suggested that offer a raffle prize for participation.

Presentation: Bus priority update

After concluding the discussion on the supplemental outreach project, TT shared an update on the Mount Auburn Street Bus Priority Pilot project. The City recently completed restriping, though the city has not installed bus priority paint or signage. TAC members asked about signal priority for buses. TT responded that the city, with the MBTA, is considering TSP at Homer and Aberdeen. In addition, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is planning to do further work at Fresh Pond Parkway and Mount Auburn Street for bicycle, pedestrian, and other safety work in the spring.

TT stated that the South Mass Ave. Corridor Safety Improvements project continues to develop. The City will hold a stakeholder meeting and open house in the near future.

TT announced that the Kendall Square Mobility Task Force will be meeting later in September. One highlight will be further work on creating compelling graphics.

In addition, TT announced that consultant selection processes for Grand Junction Multi-use Path and Conceptual Transit Design and River Street design are in progress.

Finally, TT announced that a MBTA Rail Vision stakeholder group is meeting next week and that the City has a representative on this stakeholder group.

Public Comment

James W. made a comment on changes to the announcements at the Red Line stations. JW said that the announcements are becoming a bit excessive with announcements at 2-minute intervals and now also announcing how many stops away trains may be.

James W. continued, making a second comment on the difficult to read text on TransitScreen devices. TT responded that the city has communicated this concern to TransitScreen but does not have direct control over the content.

James W. made a final comment requesting that the MBTA follow-up on customer complaints. He used the example of maintenance of the old ticket windows at the mezzanine-level of Harvard station. AS (MBTA) replied that resources are not always scheduled to resolve these types of maintenance issues and quicker action could be found by following up with the MBTA using social media such as Twitter.

Following the close of public comment, at 7:30 PM, the TAC moved to adjourn.

Version Information

Draft: 9/26/2018 AR

Approved: Unanimous voice vote – no changes – 11/7/2018