

Transit Advisory Committee

February 2022

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

Members

Present (11) John Attanucci (Chair), Arthur Strang, Saul Tannenbaum, Jim Gascoigne, Peter Septoff, Casey Berg, Carl Rothenhaus, Katherine Rafferty, Sylvia Parsons, Kristiana Lachiusa, Devin Chausse

Absent (5) Matthew Coogan, Kelley Brown, Bill McAvinney, Melissa Zampitella, Jackson Moore-Otto

City staff (3)

Andrew Reker, Kelsey Tustin (CDD); Adam Shulman (TPT)

Others (2)

Olivia Mobayed (MBTA); 1 member of the public

Note: CDD = Community Development Department; TPT = Traffic Parking and Transportation Department; MBTA = Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Welcome and committee introductions

Andy Reker (AR) began the virtual meeting at 5:37 PM by welcoming members of the TAC, members of the public and presenters. AR gave a tour of the virtual space for people joining by application and telephone and shared some ground rules for virtual meeting participation.

Kelsey Tustin (KT) then conducted a roll call of the members of the Transit Advisory Committee – 11 members were present, 5 were absent. The committee then approved the meeting minutes for January 2022.

Presentation: Preparation for upcoming conversations on Zoning, Development, and TIS Updates

AR began by presenting updates on zoning, development, and the transportation impact study (TIS) process. He presented a slide show discussing the following:

- Development review process
 - Intensity of development (ex. height, square footage)
 - Type of development (ex. housing, work, institutions)
 - Other characteristics (ex. bike parking, auto parking, other required features)
 - Environmental factors
- Zoning + Development review process
 - Definition of zoning
 - Special permits
 - Board of Zoning Appeals + Planning Board
 - TAC can provide comments to these groups
- What is a Transportation Impact Study (TIS) and how is it going to be updated?

- A TIS is required for projects with specific designations and features. The study involves:
 - Reviewing current transportation conditions
 - Estimating new trips to the proposed project area
 - Evaluating impacts that may result from new trips
- The city is reviewing modifications for the 5 specific indicators that the study targets. Adam Shulman (AS) will provide a presentation on this next month.

TAC members asked the following questions. MBTA and city staff responses are found below the question, in italic text.

- Does these reviews address the number of new workers or residents that are expected to come to the area?
AR will follow up with community planning for more information, but the city has some information on this in Envision Cambridge.
AS responded that the development review focuses on specific project impacts, and most projects address how many new residents will come to the specific area. Anyone can add up the number of expected residents by looking at the estimates in each plan. The city keeps track of this, but the development project is not responsible.
- A comment was made that this line of questioning comes from members of the community who have opinions about the amount of development in Cambridge. They recommended that the TAC should not spend time on the question of the amount of development.

AR continued the presentation by discussing Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) plans and other types of development review.

- PTDM: The city's ordinances to improve mobility and access, reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, and increase safety
 - The process depends on the amount of parking provided in the development
 - AS added that the city's website has more information on this topic for anyone interested in learning more
- Other types of development review
 - Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) review
 - Certain projects require asking the state for a permit or other action
 - The state then reviews for any potential environmental impacts and to minimize negative impacts
 - Sometimes this can lead to a full environmental impact study
 - For example, a full impact study was done for the Everett Casino
 - There may be opportunities for the TAC to write comment letters to MEPA in the future
 - AS explained the difference between the terms TDM (umbrella term) vs. PTDM (this has a list of TDM measures)

Public Comment

AR opened a short comment period for members of the public.

One commentor spoke to a concern about the increased density planned for Jefferson Park. They also made a comment on the definition of planning and zoning board members. The commentor concluded by addressing a concern to the TAC mitigation.

Discussion: TAC Work Plan and Committees

AR then transitioned to a discussion around the TAC work plan and potential subcommittees. He began by reviewing the process to date and tonight's objectives, which include reviewing and finalizing the 2022 work plan and subcommittees. This discussion will help flush out the TAC's role in advising the city.

- Outreach and engagement
 - It is evident that the TAC wants to bring more people into our conversations
 - While we still have traditional meetings, the city has also shifted to different types of engagement, such as tabling and attending community events. This was motivated by the realization that certain groups of people have been excluded
- Infrastructure and planning
 - TAC's overall task remains to advise on the implementation of the Transit Strategic Plan
 - This includes state agency and city projects such as street and sidewalk projects, bus priority, and several upcoming projects

AR then transitioned to some of the logistics for potential subcommittees. He noted that some months may not have regular meetings due to other tasks or preparations activities taking priority. He also shared upcoming meeting dates to give an idea of relevant topics and discussions. He then posed several questions intended to help coordinate the logistics of the Outreach and Engagement and Infrastructure and Planning subcommittees. AR opened the discussion to the committee:

- The whole committee should decide on the priorities of the subcommittee before any decisions are made. For example, what are we doing outreach for? This should be discussed by all committee members first.
AR: Does anyone have specific reactions to this comment? Should the committee set a scope first?
- For the outreach committee, there should be clarification for how we are thinking about the outreach process. Would the outreach committee members talk to the public and then relay their feedback to the larger committee? If there are specific projects that the city is targeting, the group should connect with residents who will be most impacted by those projects.
AR agreed, and suggested that the broader group come up with priorities and projects, and then the subcommittee can address how the outreach will take place.
AS explained two types of outreach. There is outreach that the subcommittee can undertake to promote transit (educate the greater public, tabling, parking day, etc.). There is also more specific project-based outreach, for example, if there's a project going on and the committee would like to submit comments to the city
- Concern that the outreach related to ongoing projects will be too late by the time feedback is collected. It's also important not to overburden people with work. Suggests

that subcommittees can meet during the middle of the month, and that there should be a consistent flow of meetings.

AR: A survey will be shared with the best dates for these meetings to understand the availability of those who are interested.

- Will subcommittee meetings be subject to open meeting laws?

AR: Subcommittee meetings don't need to have a public comment period, but the meetings do need to be advertised in the same manner as regular TAC meetings.

- Are regular citywide events still happening in the midst of COVID-19?

AR: The city is not permitting large events at least until at least mid-March. These decisions are made on a month-to-month basis.

AR then asked if the committee feels that this is the right direction based on the discussion. He suggested that if there are long-term projects under review, the subcommittee can discuss two or three processes for the outreach.

City, MBTA, + TAC Updates

AR presented updates for the TAC, including:

- TAC member opportunities
- TAC officer elections

AR went on to review other updates for the TAC, including:

- Several city projects with updates
- MBTA projects with updates
- A public meeting about the MBTA bus electrification, trolley-replacement bus service on Routes 71 and 73, and the conversion of the North Cambridge Carhouse to a battery-electric facility

TAC members made comments about attending the MBTA public meeting about bus electrification.

Public comment

There were no public comments.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:08 PM

Version Information

Draft: 2/18/2021 KT + AR

Approval: 3/3/2022 Unanimously with 8 votes