




CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

TRAFFIC, PARKING, + TRANSPORTATION

MEMORANDUM

To: Cambridge Planning Board

From: Joseph E. Barr, Director 

Date: March 19, 2020

Subject: 711-727 Massachusetts Avenue Project (PB#361)

The Cambridge Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department (TP+T) has reviewed the Special Permit Application from Gas Light Building LLC, and Chevron Partners, to renovate the existing 711-727 Massachusetts Avenue building and construct a new 37-room hotel addition behind and above the building. TP+T offers the Planning Board the following comments for your consideration.

- The project did not trigger the zoning thresholds for a Traffic Impact Study (TIS) however the Applicant provided a Transportation Analysis by VHB dated January 23, 2020.
- TP+T believes that from a transportation perspective, a key impact for the Project is that it will eliminate an existing off-street loading zone area off of Temple Street which currently serves the existing building. Therefore, all future loading needs for the building and the new hotel will need to occur on-street, which is less desirable than when loading activities are accommodated on-site. If the Planning Board approves the Project, TP+T believes that we can manage Temple Street to accommodate the building's loading and taxi/shared ride drop-off/pick-up activities (such as a creating a new loading zone), but we may have to also eliminate a few parking meters. It is also important to note that TP+T always reserves the right to change parking regulations in response to changing conditions and needs, so any curb management plan that is put into place would not be guaranteed to remain constant in the future.
- The Applicant evaluated modifying the locations of parking meters on Temple Street from one side to the other, but TP+T believes parking meter locations on Temple Street should remain on the side of the street that they are on today, otherwise trucks may have difficulty exiting the private loading zone areas across the street. TP+T believes that at a minimum, loading activity, such as laundry, cleaning and other hotel operating services should not occur during peak morning and evening commuting hours (i.e., 7-9 AM, 5-7 PM) to minimize traffic impacts. And, at no time shall loading or drop-off/pick-up activities park, stop or block a bicycle lane or block traffic flow in any way on Massachusetts Avenue, Temple Street, or any other public street.
- The Project is seeking relief from the zoning requirement for 12 automobile parking spaces (i.e., no parking for the Project). The Applicant indicated they will pay a cash contribution to the Central Square Improvement Fund. The Applicant also indicated

that there will be parking offerings at private garages and parking lots nearby for hotel staff/guests. The Planning Board members may want to ask for more information about this statement regarding parking offerings. The Project's Transportation Analysis mentioned three parking facilities, however only one of the parking facilities mentioned is a permitted Commercial Parking Facility (i.e., the 55 Franklin Street garage is a Commercial Parking Facility, but 30 Pilgrim Street and 80 Landsdowne Street garages are not Commercial Parking Facilities and are therefore not open to the general public). Overall, TP+T believes that a reduction of 12 parking spaces will not have a substantial adverse transportation impact because 1.) Many hotel guests will arrive/depart by transit, taxi, and ridehail service, and 2.) Employees will have access to nearby public transit options, such as Bus Routes #1, #47, #64, #70, #70A, #83, #91, MBTA Central Square Red Line Station, Bluebikes Bike Share Stations, and nearby car-sharing spaces (i.e. Zipcar).

- TP+T supports the Project's proposal to provide 8 long-term bicycle parking spaces.
- The Project proposes zero (0) short-term bicycle spaces. According to the Planning Board Special Permit Application, zoning requires 6 short-term bicycle spaces. TP+T agrees with VHB's transportation analysis that short-term bicycle parking spaces are not feasible for this site because the site as planned does not have enough space to accommodate them on their site. TP+T recommends that if the Project is approved, the Applicant should contribute to the City's Public Bicycle Fund for 6 bicycle spaces (3 racks).
- TP&T recommends the Planning Board consider adding the following **Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Measures** to any Planning Board Special Permit that may be granted for the Project to encourage and support non-single occupancy vehicle travel for hotel guests and employees, and office and retail patrons and employees.
 1. Provide 65% transit pass subsidies to full time hotel employees. This may be prorated for part-time employees.
 2. Offer Gold level membership to all employees at the site who wish to enroll in the Bluebikes Bike Share program.
 3. Provide a real-time transit and Bluebikes display screen in in the Hotel lobby to help people decide which mode to choose for each trip.
 4. Provide incentives for patrons to not bring a car to the hotel.
 5. Promote public transportation and other sustainable modes of travel on the hotel's web site.
 6. Have available an air pump and bicycle repair tools for employees and customers to use when needed.
 7. Provide lockers and showers for employees.
 8. Designate an employee of the facility as a Transportation Coordinator (TC) to manage the implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures including:
 - a. Compile and provide to all employees up-to date transportation information explaining all commuter options. This information should also be distributed to all new employees as part of their orientation.
 - b. Provide or describe to customers information on transportation options to access the site.
 - c. Provide and maintain information on the project's website, newsletters, social media, etc. on how to access the site by all modes, with emphasis on non-automobile modes.

- d. The TC will participate in any TC training offered by the City of Cambridge.
- e. If requested by TP+T or CDD, perform an annual transportation survey to employees and guests. The survey shall be approved by TP+T and CDD.