



## CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

# TRAFFIC, PARKING, + TRANSPORTATION

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Cambridge Planning Board

**From:** Joseph E. Barr, Director

**Date:** December 1, 2021

**Subject:** 180 Fawcett Street, CCF Fawcett Street Properties LLC (PB#385)

The Cambridge Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department (TP+T) has reviewed the Transportation Impact Study (TIS) and Special Permit Application for the proposed 180 Fawcett Street project by CCF Fawcett Street Properties, LLC.

The proposed Project includes construction of a four-story lab building of approximately 58,456 square feet at 160-180 Fawcett Street, which would replace an existing two-story gymnasium and office building. The Project proposes 53 parking spaces in a below-grade garage with access from Fawcett Street, a loading zone with access from Fawcett Street, 14 long-term bicycle parking spaces, and 8 short-term bicycle parking spaces. The project will close one existing curb cut on Smith Place and create a 22-foot-wide curb cut for the below-grade parking garage and a 14-foot-wide curb cut for the loading zone on Fawcett Street.

TP+T certified the Project's TIS as complete and reliable on August 20, 2021. As required in all TIS's, it evaluated the Project's trip generation and cumulative traffic impacts with other development projects. The TIS reviewed all modes of transportation (vehicle, transit, walking, and bicycling) and the Project's service and loading plan. The TIS indicated that the project will generate a total of:

- 356 daily vehicle trips (45 AM Peak/39 PM peak hour trips)
- 93 daily transit trips, (11 AM Peak/10 PM Peak hour transit trips)
- 23 daily pedestrian trips, (3 AM Peak/3 PM Peak hour transit trips)
- 59 daily bicycle trips, (5 AM Peak/4 PM Peak hour bicycle trips)

The TIS indicated that the Planning Board Special Permit transportation criteria were exceeded in 13 instances including the following:

- One vehicle level of service (LOS) exceedance at Concord Avenue/Smith Place for the AM Peak hour from LOS D rating to LOS E.
- Six pedestrian level of service (PLOS) exceedances at the signalized intersection of Concord Avenue/Blanchard Road for pedestrians crossing Concord Avenue during the PM Peak hour and for crossing Blanchard Road during both AM and PM Peak hours.

- Four pedestrian level of service (PLOS) exceedances at the unsignalized intersections of Concord Avenue/Smith Place and Concord Avenue Fawcett Street for crossing Concord Avenue during the AM and PM Peak hours. It should be noted that a new traffic signal will be installed at the Concord Avenue/Fawcett Street intersection as mitigation for the 55 Wheeler Street project (the Project is currently under construction).
- Two bicycle facility exceedances at Smith Place and Fawcett Street because they do not contain bicycle facilities. The reason why existing conditions can trigger a Planning Board transportation exceedance is to determine where a Project will be adding new trips to locations with sub-optimal transportation conditions and to help evaluate if the proposed Project can implement any planned or desirable transportation improvements (which would benefit the Project users too) or to not prevent potential future improvements from occurring.

The full TIS and the Planning Board Transportation Criteria Summary Sheet was included with the Planning Board Special Permit Application as Appendix 1. TP+T offers the Planning Board the following comments for your consideration:

### 1.0 Automobile Parking

The Project proposes 53 parking spaces in a new garage beneath the building or 0.91 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet. The current zoning has a **minimum** parking requirement of approximately 56 spaces or 0.95 spaces per 1,000 square feet. The City's 2019 Alewife District Plan recommends a **maximum** parking requirement of 0.8 parking spaces per 1,000 square feet for R&D/lab use buildings. TP+T does not know when the Alewife District Plan's recommendation might be incorporated into zoning, but a 0.8 parking ratio would represent approximately 47 spaces instead of the 53 spaces proposed, or a difference of 6 spaces.

According to the Planning Board Special Permit Application, the Applicant is seeking a Reduction in Parking under Section 6.35.1 because the Project is proposing 53 spaces instead of 56 required spaces under current zoning. Although TP+T supports a reduction in parking from 56 to 53 spaces, we also believe that it would be appropriate for the parking to be further reduced to be consistent with the Alewife District Plan's recommendation or 47 maximum spaces. TP+T acknowledges that an Applicant cannot be required to go below parking minimum zoning unless they request a reduction, and it is approved by the Planning Board.

The recently approved 75-109 Smith Place Project faced a slightly related zoning parking issue (i.e., the current zoning requires more parking spaces than proposed by the Alewife District Plan). For that Project, the Applicant (The Davis Company) agreed to reduce the number of spaces for the Project to be consistent with the Alewife District Plan in the future, based on the planned future completion of a bridge connecting across the Fitchburg Commuter Rail line train tracks. TP+T believes that could be one example of how the permit for this Project could be structured. However, another option is for the Applicant to request a parking reduction for 47 instead of 53 spaces. If the Applicant feels that they must have 53 parking spaces upon opening of the building (such as for marketing reasons) TP+T is open to supporting the 53 parking spaces for this Project with the following conditions:

1. If the Project initially has 53 total parking spaces on the site, they should have a condition to reduce the parking supply to 47 total spaces upon opening of a bridge over the commuter rail tracks. TP+T recommends the Planning Board permit a reduction for 47 spaces without a need to go back to the Planning Board for a permit amendment.
2. If the Project initially has 53 total parking spaces on site the Applicant commits to a \$10 per square foot contribution to the City (e.g., 58,456 sf x \$10/SF = \$584,560). This contribution shall be made prior to the issuance of the building's Occupancy Permit. If the City is able to utilize another source of funding for bridge construction, the funding may be used for a different Alewife area transportation improvement as approved by the City.
3. At the point when the pedestrian bicycle bridge is opening, the developer/owner will consider whether a reduction below 47 total spaces is possible, based on actual utilization of the parking spaces and sustainable transportation at that point in time. This would be a discretionary reduction by the developer/owner. And TP+T recommends that a reduction below 47 total spaces be permitted in the Special Permit by the Planning Board without the need for the developer/owner to go back to the Planning Board for an amendment.

In summary, if the Applicant agrees to 47 instead of 55 spaces upon initial building Occupancy, they will not need to contribute the \$10/sf or approximately \$584,560 contribution and would also not need to reduce parking from 55 to 47 upon opening of a bridge over the commuter rail tracks (because the Project would start off with 47 spaces). Upon opening of the bridge, the developer/owner will still be obligated to consider whether a further reduction in parking beyond 47 spaces is possible. A reduction in the number of spaces below 47 spaces would be supported by TP+T but would be discretionary for the developer/owner, not a requirement.

## **2.0 Roadways and Circulation**

The Applicant has been working with City staff on the Project's site plan to be consistent with the City's Alewife District Plan's roadway cross-sections. Like the recently approved 75-109 Smith Place Project, the Applicant developed a day one site plan and a future site plan to account for the City's proposed street cross-section for Fawcett Street and Smith Place. Those plans can be found in the TIS's Volume III Appendices. It should be noted that to achieve the City's future desired cross-section for Smith Place with separated bike facilities on both sides of the street, adjustments to the curb on the other side of Smith Place may be needed by that property owner. Until then, the proposed plan proposes a raised separated bike facility on the 180 Fawcett Street Project side of the street and a street-level bike lane on the other side. It should also be noted that some of the renderings, such as A-500.1 and A-501.1 show on-street parking on Smith Place but that is not accurate or consistent with the Overall Site Plan shown in A-100.1.

For the Proposed Project, some further adjustments may be needed, including potential changes to the access ramp alignment from the Smith Place onto the separated and raised bicycle lane. Overall, TP+T believes the plans are generally consistent with the City's Fawcett Street and Smith Place cross-sections, although some more work may be needed, such as to extend the elevated walkway on Smith Place for the full frontage of the building. The Plan will also require pedestrian and bicycle access easements or agreements with the City for the sidewalks and bicycle facilities, including maintenance.

An agreement on the nature and instruments to be used should be finalized and approved by the City prior to the issuance of a Building Permit.

### **3.0 Curb cuts and Loading**

As stated earlier, the Project proposed to close one existing curb cut on Smith Place and create a 22-foot-wide curb cut for the below-grade parking garage plus a 14-foot wide curb cut for the loading area on Fawcett Street. The loading area will accommodate a 40-foot-long truck (WB-40) and meet the loading bay requirements for the Project's size. The two curb cuts on Fawcett Street will be separated by approximately 8 feet. TP+T believes that Fawcett Street is the best location for the curb cuts (instead of off Smith Place).

Page 8 in the TIS describes how Hazardous and Flammable Material Delivery and Storage will be accommodated and the TIS graphically shows the plan in Figure C.16. A dedicated hazardous materials storage area will be provided near the loading area for flammable gas cylinders which will be transferred to the storage room manually from the truck parked in the loading zone and off Fawcett Street. The TIS also indicated that there will be no large storage tank requiring re-filling using hoses or piping for the building.

### **4.0 Bicycle Parking**

The Project proposes 14 long-term bicycle spaces and 8 short-term bike spaces. The number of long-term bike spaces appears to meet the minimum zoning requirements, but the layout for the long-term bicycle parking spaces can accommodate more bicycles since the bike racks are spaced 6 feet apart instead of 3 feet apart. As a result, if there is more bike parking demand in the future, the building should be able to accommodate this need.

The Project proposes at 8 short-term bike parking spaces to meet the short-term bike parking zoning. TP+T will work with the Applicant on the final short-term bike parking locations and layout prior to the issuance of a Building Permit.

### **5.0 PTDM Plan**

The Project is subject to an approved Parking and Transportation Demand Management Plan (PTDM) by the City's PTDM Planning Officer.

## 5.0 Transportation Mitigation:

TP+T provides the following recommendations for transportation mitigation to offset the project's transportation impacts.

Item#	Transportation Mitigation	Due Date
1	The Applicant shall provide a one-time \$5 per square foot contribution to the City toward the Alewife Pedestrian Bicycle Bridge or other Transportation Improvements in Alewife Area. (e.g., 58,456 sf x \$5/SF =\$292,280). This mitigation item was recommended in the Envision Cambridge Alewife District Plan for new development projects in the Alewife Area to contribute toward this long-term but needed project to connect the Quadrangle and Triangle to improve access within the district.	Prior to the issuance of the Building Permit.
2	If the Applicant chooses to construct 53 parking spaces (or any number of spaces above 47 spaces), then the Applicant shall provide a one-time \$10 per square foot contribution to the City toward the Alewife Pedestrian Bicycle Bridge or other Transportation Improvements in Alewife Area. (e.g., 58,456 sf x \$10/SF =\$584,456).	Prior to issuance of an Occupancy Permit.
3	If the Project opens with more than 47 parking spaces on the site it shall be required to reduce the parking supply to 47 total spaces upon opening of a bridge over the commuter rail track without needing to go back to the Planning Board.	Upon opening of a pedestrian bicycle bridge over the commuter rail tracks.
4	Upon opening of a pedestrian bridge over the commuter rail tracks, the developer/owner will consider whether a reduction beyond 47 total spaces is possible, based on actual utilization of the parking spaces and sustainable transportation at that point in time. A reduction beyond 47 spaces will be discretionary by the developer/owner but the parking data and reasoning should be provided to TP+T. TP+T recommends that a reduction below 47 total spaces be permitted in the Special Permit by the Planning Board without the need for the developer/owner to go back to the Planning Board for an amendment.	Upon opening of a pedestrian bicycle bridge over the commuter rail tracks.
5	Contribute \$58,000 to the City toward planning, design and or installation of transportation improvements in the Alewife District, such as a potential new traffic signal at Concord Ave/Smith Place, and/or other transportation projects in the area. This item will help mitigate the LOS exceedance at the Concord Avenue/Smith Place intersection. The contribution is based approximately on \$1/sf and consistent with contributions from other projects in the area.	Prior to the issuance of the Building Permit.

6	<p>Reconstruct Smith Place and Fawcett Street as approved by the City as necessary to align with the City's cross-section plans for Smith Place and Fawcett Street. This shall include, elevated and at-grade sidewalks, separated bicycle facilities adjacent to the site, and street trees/landscaping. The final design shall be approved by the City prior to the issuance of a Building Permit and completed prior to issuance of an Occupancy Permit unless a later date is necessary and approved by the City because of reasonable construction conditions. The Property owner shall also be responsible for receiving approval for a maintenance plan from DPW, including sidewalks and separated bicycle lanes adjacent to the building.</p>	<p>Final design and public access and maintenance plan agreement to be approved by the City prior to the issuance of a Building Permit. Construction shall be complete prior to issuance of the first Occupancy Permit unless approved by TP+T due to unforeseen or reasonable delays</p>
7	<p>To align with recent requests from the City Council for electrical vehicle charging in development projects, the Project will install 14 electric vehicle spaces (or 25% of total number of spaces), whether through 7 dual-head Level 2 chargers or 14 individual Level 2 chargers. In addition, the project will ensure sufficient capacity in the electrical panel and transformer(s) to support future installation of chargers serving all total spaces.</p>	<p>25% of the total parking spaces to have EV charging prior to the issuance of an Occupancy Permit.</p>