

CAMBRIDGE PEDESTRIAN COMMITTEE NOTES

November 17, 2011

Committee Members in Attendance:

Helen Rose (chair), Robin Finnegan, Mark Robinson, Sean Peirce, Andrea Yoder, Pete Kane, Elizabeth Bierer, Sara Freedman

City Staff in Attendance:

Cara Seiderman, Rosalie Anders

Public Members in Attendance:

(6) people including students from BU and Harvard's GSD

AGENDA & MINUTES

I. Minutes & Agenda Review

Minutes from previous meeting were approved at the close of this evening's meeting.

II. Updates, Projects, Announcements

A. Reports from the 'Hood

Brattle Street (raised by Sara)

Concerned about the sidewalks that are covered by leaves, which is made worse by rain. During the winter, many sections of the sidewalks in this area also do not get cleared of snow by the residents. It was brought up that there currently is no city regulation regarding leaves (Rosalie). Members decided they will bring this up with Bill Dwyer (DPW) the next time he attends.

Armed Robberies (raised by Andrea)

Member was curious about the status of these incidents. Helen stated that she believed someone had been arrested. Sara mentioned that there have been new reports around Porter Square.

B. Police Update/Report

There was no police update or report as a rep was not present. Cara and Rosalie are still working to find out who will be the police representative to the committee.

C. Construction Updates (covered by Cara)

The final week of construction for the year is coming up. The city was able to complete more paving this year because of the mild weather in November. Concord Avenue is mostly done, some striping and other details are still to be completed. More development is planned/occurring near Concord & Wheeler so

some of the road construction there is unfinished until the development is completed. Sidewalk work is currently underway on Vassar St. A section of Broadway has been patched.

Huron Ave “A” design meetings are coming up Dec 6th and 8th for the side streets. Discussed need for a walk along the street in anticipation of looking at the length of Huron Ave. itself. Winter time may be difficult for a walk. Consider a Saturday walk after the new year. Some members raised concerns regarding crossings along parts of Huron due to the width of the street. There’s enough space to do something more dramatic (ideas suggested: cycle track, trees, bump outs, angled parking, pocket parks).

DPW has also launched a Facebook page.

D. Development Projects (covered by Cara)

Novartis Expansion Project

The project includes a large site on MIT property along Mass Ave between Central and MIT. It will be going before the Planning Board on December 6th. They are proposing to close Smart St (a private street) and build two new buildings and renovate an existing building on the site. The building design is intended to invoke New England stonewalls and is designed by Maya Lin. It will serve primarily as an R&D building and will include ground floor retail. The committee supports the plan for ground-floor retail. Parking garage (below grade) access is from State St. It was noted that Novartis has one of the lowest single-occupancy vehicle rates - and this is further supported by their plans to include a little more than the minimum parking spots required for the site. Cara will provide the link so people can view the plans digitally (these were sent to the committee on 11/18).

Questions/concerns raised by the committee:

- Will they need a mid-block crossing to have flow between current Novartis building and new site?
- Will the central park area be publicly accessible? Project description states it will, however, it was not clear if that means 24 hours a day and with proper evening lighting.
- How welcoming will the park area be/look? Members noted that it seems nice and flowing.
- There should be a retail entry close to the corner of Mass & Albany.
- Members were also curious what the city’s drop-off area policy was as one has been designed for the site. It was noted that the City states pedestrians should have straight line access, though the implementation of such elements are done on a case-by-case situation.
- Members noted that there will need to be a commitment by Novartis to keep the park pathways cleared during the winter.

- Does the incline of the interior park keep people from wanting to enter the park?

E. Announcements

Read Your Pedestrian Reports

To encourage members to read the reports, Cara and Rosalie have devised a reward program that will be implemented in future meetings.

III. Projects

E. Kendall Square Project (Helen)

The past two meetings have dealt with traffic and transportation. They've noted that the driving rate in Cambridge has been dropping, while occupancy has been increasing. They feel that the current infrastructure can handle the growth in the area. The city staff has been coming to the meetings well prepared. They've discussed how some intersections will change. Plans for the area assume MBTA services will remain the same (though this may change due to current MBTA proposals for service changes and fare increases). The discussion regarding Third St and Broadway (to access Main St by car from Third St) has been postponed. It will be revisited in January. Traffic analysis shows that opening Third St to Main by car will make traffic along Third worse (there was already concern raised during a previous Kendall Square Project meeting that the traffic on Third currently was bad). Main St design will be discussed in January - focusing on pedestrians and connecting Point Park to the south side of Main St. Some design thoughts for Main St from committee included: raised crossing between Marriott and MIT; closing street to transit and pedestrians.

F. GoGreen Month (Rosalie)

Stephanie's position hasn't been fulfilled - staffer that oversaw GoGreen Month. Reviewed last month's discussion regarding concept of "I arrived by..." cards that can be given out by residents when they shop at stores. Pete will look into some potential designs for these cards (may include ability for resident to check off: bike, bus, T, walking). Member raised idea of possibly doing an educational outreach program during the month to encourage lower driving speeds ("I drive 25," "20 is plenty," "15 is green"). It would need to be sustained beyond the month to be impactful. Open to a committee member to further research the idea. An additional idea was to have a smartphone app that allows you to check-in as a walker to the location/business (could be coupled with the "I arrived by..." cards). Andrea will look into this.

G. New Pedestrian Plan (Rosalie)

The original plan was done in 1998. It's time for an update. The original purpose of the plan was to get the city departments to agree to various pedestrian-sensitive elements (policies) as well as to guide the committee. It was one of the first municipal pedestrian plans and has been used as an example for other

communities. Going forward, the idea was raised to provide the plan publicly via online rather than printed. Rosalie reviewed the original plan and found that there is a need to update the policies and think more about how to shape the future of the committee. A lot of the plan goals have also been accomplished. Question raised: how can we get info out easier to the public? For the plan update, we should focus on principles rather than specific projects. The group then reviewed Rosalie's initial list of policies to be included in the update and made the following remarks:

- Agreement around the need for a fence ordinance
- Request to add "leaves" to "snow and ice and botanical obstructions" item
- Maybe consider policy around sidewalk widths (such as how it relates to pedestrian counts)
- Should add in how bikes and pedestrians should interact (along with autos)
- Look at motorized traffic on sidewalks (Segways)
- Need to create more destination points (to walk to) such as parklets
- Other concerns regarding destinations: post office closings, need for more neighborhood grocery stores
- Add in sign clutter as an issue to address
- Expand the DCR line item to include all DCR property, not just along river
- Although it falls under bike committee, there was agreement that there needs to be more bike parking as the lack of parking results in bikes clogging sidewalks
- Consider moving pedestrian lighting poles to building mounting lights - freely up sidewalk space
- More shared streets, maybe in residential neighborhoods

If members have additional points/thoughts, they should send these to Rosalie.

IV. Planning for Upcoming Meetings

The December meeting will be the third Thursday of the month (Dec 15th @ 6pm) and will be a joint meeting between the Pedestrian and Bike Committees. It will be a potluck, so members are asked to bring an item to share.