

Cambridge Pedestrian Committee Notes

May 22, 2014

Cambridge City Hall Annex, 6:00 pm

Attendees: Elizabeth Bierer, Victoria Farr, Debby Galef, Magda McCormick, Nora Marantz, Sean Peirce, Helen Rose, Joseph Rose, Benjamin Williams

Staff Members in Attendance: Cara Seiderman

1. Minutes & Agenda Review
 - a. April's minutes approved by unanimous consent.
2. Kendall Square Walking Tour
 - a. Advertising
 - i. There isn't time to create a poster.
 - ii. Weekly e-Line Blast and Facebook are outlets the City can use.
 - iii. Allen could send out an email to MIT-related folks. There is no university-wide email list to use, but there may be a social events list.
 - iv. Nora will write a blurb this weekend (including a cute title: Insider's Guide to Kendall Square?) to send out to all neighborhoods and related organizations. Committee members can share it with their respective neighborhood organizations, volunteer organizations, and so on.
 - b. Timing
 - i. The test walks were 1 hour and 10 minutes, but didn't include any stops. 2 hours seems like a reasonable estimate.
 1. Perhaps not include an end time in the blurb, and we can judge the afternoon as it proceeds.
 - ii. Meet at 11am at Tatte Bakery on Third Street, maybe leave around 11:15 to give guests time to arrive.
 - iii. Rain or shine!
3. Elections
 - a. Positions: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary
 - i. There is nothing in the by-laws excluding co-chairs
 - ii. Chair / Vice-Chair: Runs meetings, helps with agenda, signs any formal correspondence. Appreciate Chairs who can corral if necessary. Decent amount of signing, scanning, sending back. Or drafting correspondence.
 1. The Vice-Chair performs these duties when the Chair is not present.
 2. Helen Rose will be stepping down as chair. Thank you for your service!
 - iii. Secretary: Minutes
 - b. Terms
 - i. Officer terms are one year. We last had elections June 2013
 - ii. There are no new members until the fall. As a reminder, membership is a two-year appointment, with a roughly ten-year term limit.
 - c. Nominations
 - i. Chair: Debby Galef

- ii. Vice-Chair: Magda McCormick (co-), Victoria Farr (co-)
 - iii. Secretary: Benjamin Williams
- d. Election: All nominated approved by unanimous assent. Positions will be effective as of next meeting.
- 4. Projects / DPW Update
 - a. Bill Dwyer couldn't make it to tonight's meeting.
 - b. Broadway project: currently stalled, completed? We would need Bill Dwyer's input.
 - c. New DPW website: Interactive Map now available!
[\[http://www.cambridgema.gov/theworks/ourservices/engineering/weeklyconstructionhighlights/constructioninteractivemap.aspx\]](http://www.cambridgema.gov/theworks/ourservices/engineering/weeklyconstructionhighlights/constructioninteractivemap.aspx)
 - d. A lot of projects under construction this year, and at least one movie filming currently. People were awfully magnanimous about the filming blocking the street.
 - e. There are now tons of patches in the tunnel, which have removed the bike lanes. The lighting is better, but the whole paving will be redone because the concrete has already failed. Will be repaved this year. The contractor is being asked to repave because it was not done correctly.
 - f. Lots of markings on Cambridge Common. It's starting! There is a meeting tonight about the construction.
 - g. O'Brien Highway
 - i. Project Summary
 1. North Point developers are responsible for the redesign and reconstruction of O'Brien Boulevard (nee Highway) into their project.
 - a. The project timeline has shifted earlier because of the Green Line Extension moving forward.
 - b. Stated project goals include accommodating existing traffic and potential increased traffic from North Point and improving the experience of the corridor for pedestrians and cyclists.
 2. Lechmere Station will be moving to the opposite side of O'Brien, meaning many existing Lechmere users will have to cross O'Brien.
 3. First Street will be punched through to O'Brien to relieve existing rush hour traffic backups on Third Street as well as provide access to/from North Point. First Street proposal adds one lane of automobile traffic by sacrificing the existing bicycle lane.
 4. O'Brien Boulevard may have bicycle lanes, buffered bicycle lanes, or a cycle track incorporated, but the design needs to be approved by MassDOT.
 5. O'Brien Boulevard will improve the pedestrian experience through wider sidewalks, landscaping, and improved crossings at traffic signals.
 6. Museum Way and Land Boulevard signals may be coordinated for better traffic flow.
 - ii. Pedestrian Committee Thoughts on Existing Plan

1. O'Brien Boulevard as proposed is problematically wide for pedestrians to safely cross, particularly given the relocation of the transit station opposite an existing transit-dependent population.
 2. Removing the bicycle lane on First Street in favor of an additional traffic lane is antithetical to the State's, the City of Cambridge's, and the North Point development's stated goals of improving access to sustainable forms of transportation and reducing dependency on automobiles.
 - a. The removal of the bicycle lane and lack of adequate bicycling facilities as a whole detract from the continuity of regional trails, including the Somerville Community Path and the Charlestown Waterfront Path, which under the current plan will not connect with the rest of Cambridge.
 3. Increasing traffic on First Street will cause traffic backups on both Third and First Streets, as induced demand for automobile traffic will overcome any short-term improvements in the rush hour traffic situation.
 4. The assumption of increased automobile traffic from the North Point Development does not conform to Cambridge's experience with Kendall Square, where the number of jobs has increased while the absolute number of automobiles traveling the corridor has decreased.
 5. The corridor between the Museum of Science and North Point Park is a very popular pedestrian path for young families using the park and the Museum, but the crossing is inadequate to insure the safety of these young families.
 6. The current proposal for O'Brien Boulevard represents a large missed opportunity for North Point, the City of Cambridge, and the State of Massachusetts to prioritize sustainable, human-scale forms of transportation over automobile traffic.
- iii. Pedestrian Committee Recommendations
1. The bicycle lane on First Street must be retained to ensure a safe environment for neighborhood users and regional cyclists.
 2. Narrower or no medians at the First Street punch-through, to make way for wider and safer sidewalk accommodations on the edges of First Street.
 - a. Median plantings are very hard to maintain, and are decorative, whereas additional plantings and non-motorized infrastructure along the roadsides will have a concrete benefit on the neighborhood.
 - b. Medians have been shown to increase traffic speeds, which is undesirable near a transit station.
 - c. Maintain a pedestrian crossing island for older pedestrians crossing O'Brien Boulevard to access Lechmere Station

3. A dedicated cycle track to provide protection for pedestrians from traffic and to encourage non-automobile trips.
 - a. A raised cycle track in particular will decrease the perceived width of the roadway and maintain appropriate traffic speeds.
 4. Speed limits for O'Brien Boulevard should be targeted to a design speed of 30 mph, the standard safe speed limit for vehicles in a thickly settled area, instead of using the state's wait-and-see approach.
 5. Pedestrian crossings around the Museum of Science and First Street should be very wide, visible, and at-grade.
- iv. Debby Galef will write a letter on behalf of the Committee outlining our position.
 1. Approved by unanimous consent.
- h. Beacon Street
- i. Currently digging up street and repairing infrastructure.
 - ii. Will temporarily pave Beacon for the winter
 - iii. The cycle track remains. Adding a sidewalk between Museum and Park, which means there's no room for the track, but Park to Washington and Oxford to Museum will have the cycle track.
 - iv. Adding crosswalks at Oxford and Prentiss Streets.
 - v. Adding a traffic signal at Sacramento, and removing a traffic signal at Museum
 - vi. Somerville is looking for parking accommodations for residents.
 - vii. 75% Designs are available: [<http://www.somervillema.gov/beaconstreet>]
- i. Development Projects
- i. Some discussion at Fresh Pond and Alewife among neighborhoods perhaps calling for a moratorium on development. There will be a master planning study for the city, and a specific study of the neighborhood.
 1. Haven't heard about TIGER grant yet. They received requests for 15x as much funds as they had, so it's a crowded field.
5. Upcoming
- a. The topic of next week's meeting will be the Grand Junction Path
 - b. Cara will not be available in June. Jeff Rosenblum will come to speak about Grand Junction and MIT's Feasibility Study
 - c. In July and August, the committee often goes on a walk.
 - i. July: Meet at the wooden benches at the Alewife Kiss and Ride. We'll walk through the area and begin preliminary preparations for the Master Planning studies.
 - ii. August: TBD