

Cambridge Pedestrian Committee

June 26th, 2014 Meeting Minutes - DRAFT

6:00pm, Cambridge City Hall Annex, 544 Broadway

In Attendance: Elizabeth Bierer, Robin Finnegan, Debby Galef, Magda McCormick, Benjamin Muller, Sean Peirce, Helen Rose, Joseph Rose

City Staff in Attendance: Brian DeChambeau, Bill Dwyer, Jeff Rosenblum

Others in Attendance: Thomas Doolittle (Kleinfelder), Don Kindsvatter (Kleinfelder), Melissa Shakro (MIT Office Campus Planning)

1. Minutes, Agenda Review, & Introductions
2. Grand Junction
 - a. Project was initiated by the Bike Committee years ago, with a City Feasibility Study completed in 2006. Brian DeChambeau will give a historical overview, then MIT and the Kleinfelder team will discuss their feasibility study.
 - b. Introduction
 - i. What is the path?
 1. It follows the Grand Junction rail line from BU, across the Charles River, through Cambridgeport, through Kendall Square and East Cambridge, to the North Point development.
 2. A sample section includes the existing single rail, with barriers, and a roughly 16-foot multi-use path (Rail with Trail paradigm)
 3. Arose out of early 2000s open space planning, a concept from the Bike Committee in 2001, and a 2006 Feasibility Study. In 2008, MassDOT created a concept design for the lower portion, including the bridge. There have been various design concepts from different parties.
 4. Section 1: Charles River Crossing
 - a. Rail bridge under BU bridge, tunnel under Memorial Drive
 5. Section 2: Charles River - 250 Feet West of Pacific St
 - a. Owned by MassDOT and connects to MIT's property.
 - b. Wide, triple-tracked section
 6. Section 3: Near Pacific Street to Main Street
 - a. Owned by MIT, and MIT will be discussing this section this evening.
 - b. Narrow section, bordered by MIT facilities
 7. Section 4: Main Street to Binney Street
 - a. Southern half of abutting open space is owned by CRA, who has proposed a redesign
 - b. Northern half of abutting open space is owned by the City, and is part of the ECKOS planning
 8. Section 5: North of Binney Street
 - a. Multiple use and owner abutter-ship.
 - b. The narrowest portion of the path

9. Active Rail: Tracks are currently used for servicing commuter rail, as the only connection between North and South Station. Also used once per day to serve the produce market in Chelsea, and used intermittently for a circus. There are approximately four trains on any given day.
- ii. Why is it important?
 1. A completed path would be a major regional connection for cyclists and pedestrians
 2. There is increased demand for low-stress, off-street facilities as cycling commuting increases
 3. Over a quarter of Cambridge residents live within 0.5 miles of the path.
 4. 70% of MIT students live on campus or relatively near MIT, and 10% live in Somerville.
 5. Three public libraries and multiple schools and parks are within walking distance of the trail.
 - iii. Next steps?
 1. Connection over the Charles River
 - a. There are several options floating about for improving the bridge, including creating a cantilevered plan (MIT students' plan) or widening (from the Urban Ring Study).
 - b. May also connect to the Boston Bike Pike through the Mass Pike Realignment, to provide access to Cambridge Street, Lower Allston, and Harvard Business School
 2. Connection to path along the Charles
 - a. DCR has a plan to connect the path through their property
 3. MIT Feasibility Study
 4. CRA section under design
 5. Connection to Somerville Community Path
 - a. Could connect through Medford Street to Union Square and along the south of Twin City Plaza
 6. Broader questions:
 - a. MBTA vision for 2024 includes a DMU along the Grand Junction with stops at "West Station" (should that be built), a station by Kendall Square, and North Station. They would like the space preserved as two lines not one, which could preclude the path. This is a new proposal that hasn't been included in earlier studies. The minimum width with two-way rail operations would be 42 foot (30' for the two rails and 12' for the path). The narrowest portion of the corridor is 36'.
 - i. Does the MBTA has funding for this sort of project? The representative from MassDOT said there was no timeline, but projecting future budgets is difficult.
 - c. MIT Feasibility Study Team
 - i. Melissa Shakro from MIT's Office of Campus Planning on the Feasibility Study:

1. Purpose: Look at what is currently happening in the corridor and how a path might be accommodated. We're looking closely at deliveries and operations of abutters, utilities along the corridor, and other MIT-related activity.
 2. Beginning looking at intersections (Mass Ave, Main Street), and at the ends of the path
 3. Kleinfelder, the consultant on the study, will be discussing their schedule and their plan.
 4. Final report will be out and available to the City in late September or early October.
 5. There is an advisory committee for the project, roughly a dozen people, including MIT community members, faculty, students, City staff, a rep from the Bicycle Committee, and other bicycling advocacy groups.
- ii. Kleinfelder:
1. Project Schedule:
 - a. Preview of Existing Materials and Documentation (mid-May)
 - b. Existing Conditions Review & Analysis (late May)
 - c. Stakeholder Engagement (early June)
 - i. Finding out the needs (once and future) from folks
 - ii. This is the last meeting of the Engagement process, which included an open house and an online survey (150+ responses)
 - d. Develop Evaluation Criteria (June 16th)
 - i. Developing clear criteria for judging the value of particular solutions, based on the goals and objectives arising from the Stakeholder Engagement
 - e. Design Alternatives (mid-July)
 - i. Current process. 5-10% designs: just maintaining the level of design necessary to determine potential impacts while suggesting alternatives. (5-10% designs)
 - f. Analysis and Evaluation (early August)
 - i. Develop rankings of different design solutions to create a scheme for the corridor
 - g. Additional Analysis (late August)
 - i. Cost estimation, legal analysis (liabilities)
 - h. Final Report (Draft by 8/25 which will be available to the aforementioned advisory committee, Final by 9/8ish)
 - i. Will include a presentation the City may use
 2. Advisory Committee Meetings (publicly accessible):
 - a. July 9th
 - b. August 6th
 - c. September 3rd
 3. Draft Goals & Objectives:
 - a. Provide a multi-use path to establish a link in a regional network, connecting between existing and future paths along or across the Charles River to the west, and East Cambridge and Somerville to the east.

- b. Integrate path with MIT's open space, circulation, etc.
 - i. We are in touch with Campus Planning on building plans around the track.
 - c. Discuss areas outside of immediate area of study
 - d. Provide a safe and secure environment for users
 - e. Minimize conflicts between MIT and GJP users
 - f. Preserve existing rail and future public transportation use of the corridor
 - i. MIT doesn't currently use the tracks themselves, but it does use utility systems (steam, chilled water and medium temp water lines, electro-telecom lines, and other pipes) immediately outside the tracks. MIT owns the air rights, but there is an easement of 20' x 22.5" vertically along the length of the track.
 - g. Particularly focus on the designs of the intersections with Mass Ave and Main Street.
- d. Drawings from the corridor via Don Kindsvatter
- i. The MIT study runs to Memorial Drive
 - ii. From the south MIT edge to Mass Ave there is a 40' easement, and from Mass Ave to Main Street, there is a 20' easement
 - iii. Gravel road along the North Side west of Mass Ave
 1. East of Mass Ave on both sides to Main Street
 2. Several loading docks and service uses along corridor to maintain Vassar Street and Albany Street
 - iv. The study is laying out a theoretical path and then checking out all the potential conflict points, and is just getting into the design phase.
 - v. There are several potential development sites, including a large building at the corner of Mass Ave going over the track and across the street. Other buildings may be rehabilitated, and the two parking garages along the corridor will likely be torn down and rebuilt in the coming decade.
 - vi. Utility replacements post-path construction are important to think about, as repair and replacement will take months
- e. Thoughts?
- i. From the pedestrian experience, this will have to be thought out to fine details, as opposed to the cycling experience which may be more utilitarian.
 1. Are there any areas to use the path to enhance the open space network of the community and the campus?
 - ii. Vassar Street has a very healthy cycle track already which is exactly parallel to the future GJP, but is missing a few connections and finer details.
 1. For example, Pacific Street crossing doesn't connect to cycle tracks on Vassar. And the crosstown bus parks in the bike path on another section.
 - iii. A finer grain of pedestrian network will help overall, particularly as populations and job opportunities increase through the corridor
 - iv. Offshoots along the pathway to connect with the street network and campus will be necessary

- v. Most of the development is low- and mid-rise which currently leaves air and sunlight
- vi. Train currently operates on the west track, and the circus train uses the east track and parks long-term on the rail
 - 1. Circus train waits for a full week, but leaves a gap for Pacific Street
- vii. How do barriers and train mitigations work? Separation may be important as DMUs come in at much higher speeds than the present 10mph rough maximum. Maybe use the barrier to create something attractive.
 - 1. A buffer is required for the MBTA that may be as great as 10 feet.
 - 2. How strong is the planning around a future DMU use?
 - 3. There aren't really examples of multi-use paths in closed corridors with active rail lines
- viii. Mass Ave and Main Street crossings?
 - 1. The intersections will likely have to be designed as single units from Albany Street to Vassar Street.
- ix. None of the loading activity crosses the rail line; all vehicles come in from aside.
 - 1. Some of these are relatively frequent (up to 6ish a day).
 - 2. Would it be possible to cross over more? Not particularly
 - 3. All of these deliveries are MIT deliveries, so there's a bit more control of delivery times
 - 4. In general, pedestrians can deal with disruptions as long as vehicles aren't going 30mph.
- f. Also working with Toole Design Group and McMann Associates for traffic engineering. They'll be looking at pedestrian crossings over rail facilities closely
- g. Bike Committee offered to have us sign a letter, but they wanted to maintain a general approach to details to encourage flexibility on MIT's part.
 - i. Debby reads the letter to the organization
 - 1. Perhaps add a section on keeping the path interesting and integrated with MIT's campus.
 - 2. Debby will write the amendment, send the final out, and sign it on behalf of the Pedestrian Committee.
 - a. Approved by unanimous consent.
 - ii. We should think of this as a relatively temporary (10-20 year) but beneficial project, instead of worrying about the likelihood of the MBTA's DMU services
- 3. Pedestrian Committee Event Recap
 - a. Very successful event, with more attendees than we expected from sources unknown and great engagement between attendees, city staff, and speakers at stop locations. We were flexible on the route towards the end of the trip, to stay within our time. Several attendees seemed interested in the ECKOS project meetings.
- 4. Development Projects
 - a. DPW Update
 - i. Bill Dwyer sent out notes, attached.
 - b. O'Brien Highway

- i. Our letter has been sent. No news so far!
 - c. Review of 180R Cambridge Park Drive
 - i. This is about the bridge connecting across the rail. There are multiple bridge landing options (with Option G looking to be the most feasible).
 - 1. We don't like most of the alternatives. Going through a parking garage is unpleasant, and going around the grade is a long trip.
 - 2. We think it's important to maintain the ability for a bridge to cross the tracks.
 - 3. Option F appears to be the better one of the group in our opinion, but let it be known that the building itself is not really pedestrian friendly given the number of parking spaces provided and the lack of other pedestrian facilities.
 - a. There are no sidewalks, no delineated crossing areas, no pedestrian lighting, and so on.
 - b. Debby will include a sentence to this effect in our letter to the Planning Board.
 - d. Open Space Planning - ECKOS
 - i. Meeting tonight! Several of our members are there.
 - e. Greenough Boulevard
 - i. Meeting July 10th
 - ii. Providing feedback and presenting the plan once again.
 - iii. They're still hoping to go ahead this summer, but there doesn't appear to be the additional funding necessary to complete the project.
- 5. Updates & Announcements
 - a. Work on the Cambridge Common is progressing.
 - b. July 24th Meeting
 - i. We will walk through Concord/Alewife, looking at the new park, the potential location of the bridge over the tracks, and Fawcett Street.
 - ii. Meet at the Alewife Kiss & Ride, at the wooden benches
 - c. August Meeting: We'll discuss a walking site over email