

**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
WESTERN AVENUE RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT
ADVISORY COMMITTEE #3, April 15, 2010
MEETING NOTES**

Date, Time & Place: April 15, 2010, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM
Cambridge Senior Center

Present

Committee Members

Bill August	Martin Betts	Velmer Brooks	
Caitlin Gallagher	David Gibbs	Erin Gullage	
Marc Leuchner	Bob Nesson	Eran Segev	Anne Shuhler
Artis Spears	Rev. Lawrence Ward		

City of Cambridge

Susanne Rasmussen (CDD)	Jeff Rosenblum (CDD)	Bill Deignan (CDD)
Kelly Dunn (DPW)	Owen O'Riordan (DPW)	

*CDD = Community Development Department
TP&T = Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department
CHC = Cambridge Historical Commission
DPW = Department of Public Works*

Consultant Team:

Jay Carroll (HDR Engineering, Inc.)

Public (signed in)

*****SEE ALSO POWERPOINT SLIDES OF PRESENTATION*****

Note: Q=Question A=Answer C= Comment

1. WELCOME / GENERAL QUESTIONS (Susanne Rasmussen)

- Susanne welcomed the attendees; reviewed the agenda; and introduced City and Consultant staff.

2. SLIDESHOW PRESENTATION: PARKING STUDY AND CRASH DATA (Jeff Rosenblum)

- Jeff Rosenblum presented results of parking study:
 - Parking study showed more spaces available towards the middle of the corridor (between Putnam and Kinnaird), overall demand for parking is only about 50% of total capacity.
 - At ends of the corridor, demand for parking was about the same as total capacity.
- Jeff Rosenblum presented results of crash study
 - Crash rate is about 18 vehicle accidents per year and 1.6 bicycle crashes per year
 - Most of the vehicle crashes were property damage only.
 - The bicycle crashes were mostly caused by vehicles turning right onto Western Avenue from a side street, and crashing into a bicyclist traveling down Western Avenue.

Q: Are those crash rates seen as high or low compared to other areas?

A: The rate is low compared to other areas.

3. EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY (Jeff Rosenblum)

- Presented by Jeff Rosenblum with photos of Western Avenue:
 - Roadway and sidewalk in poor condition
 - Pedestrian safety a main concern
 - Significant transit/bus hub exists at Central Square
 - Lots of pedestrians, greater than 500 during the peak hour crossed streets in the Western/River Green Street intersections.
 - 1 cyclist per minute during peak hour rode down Western Ave, about 60 cyclists per hour
 - Afternoon peak is seen as the busiest time for vehicles with a travel time of 6-8 minutes (typical travel time is 3 min. without traffic)
 - Parking in upper and lower Western Ave have high resident parking demand but do not exceed supply; parking demand in the middle section of the street is about half of the demand
 - Some metered parking exists, is more needed?

4. COMMITTEE FEEDBACK and PUBLIC COMMENT (Attendees)

- Observation was made that crashes seem to build up as you get closer to Memorial Drive, possibly caused by increasing traffic volume as you go down the avenue.
- Regarding the traffic lights at the Western Ave Bridge, since DCR owns and operates those traffic lights how will this work. [A: Coordination with DCR will be needed to address the traffic light issues.]
- Intersections from Howard Street to Memorial Drive are consistently blocked during peak hour traffic making it difficult for pedestrians and cyclists to navigate through Western Ave.
- With regards to the rear-end collisions of the crash study, some of those may be due to solar glare.
- To address vehicles blocking intersections, a noticeable yellow square or hatching could be painted within the intersection and any vehicles within the painted area during red lights should be ticketed.
- Signage needs to be improved to prevent vehicles from traveling wrong way on one-way streets.
- Don't just focus on the peak hour to accommodate vehicles when designing the roadway. There is another twenty or so hours in the day that need to be accounted for.
- Make Western Ave into a two-way street.
- Promote flexible work hours to private and public companies to reduce peak hour congestion.
- Note that commercial vehicles have been seen traveling at illegal hours.
- More bike education needed and more bike signs

5. STREET DESIGN 101 (Jeff Rosenblum)

- Experience Objectives
 - Safe
 - Efficient
 - Pleasant
- Design Goals for Safety
 - Provide safe waiting areas for bus/transit riders
 - Provide safe crossings; make pedestrians more visible to drivers.
 - Prevent vehicles from blocking intersections and crosswalks
 - Provide safe passage for cyclists
- Design Goals for Efficient
 - Better coordination of traffic signals to move flow of traffic
 - Goal is to create a steady flow of traffic rather than the "hurry up and wait" mentality
 - Easily accessible bus stops for both rider and driver so as not to disrupt the flow of traffic
- Design Goals for Pleasant
 - Provide a community atmosphere
 - Encourage more pedestrians to walk and cycle
 - Provide more vegetation; trees and plantings
 - Discourage the mentality that Western Ave is just a through-way corridor for vehicles

- Toolbox (Ways to accomplish goals and objectives)
 - Shorten crosswalk crossing distances, such as by using curb extensions
 - Install chicanes
 - To slow the speed of traffic, narrow travel lanes or reduce the number of lanes
 - Widen sidewalks
 - Introduce bike lanes or cycle tracks
 - Improve signage, add more painted crosswalks
 - Use raised intersections and/or crosswalks, though this wouldn't be used on Western Ave itself
 - More greenery; trees, grass, plantings (increases the pleasant experience, but also aids in stormwater quantity/quality issues and heat island effect)

6. WORKING SESSION – SPLIT INTO GROUPS

This is the time to think big. These are ideas from the participants that will be used as input as the city moves forward with some conceptual designs to take to the committee

Group 1 Notes

- Street feels wide - how to address this?
- Remove one (1) lane, if not for entire stretch or only in part
- Gain space by relocating parking space; consider back in angle parking
- Chicane in middle section; alternate parking?
- Grid lock issues at intersections
- Return to the 2-way pair – the good old days; might feel totally different
- Raised devices desired, but acknowledge that might not work with high traffic volumes
- Howard – illegal stopping by the store is causing problems
- Need better signs along the corridor

Group 2 Notes

- Enterprise lot and islands across – need to be safer for pedestrians
- Howard Street – turn it back to being 1-way? Add curb extensions at corners of Howard Street.
- Relocate meters at health center (Health Center is now closed).
- Is the parking study accurate? Don't want the city to remove any parking at all on Western Avenue; want to see the impact curb extensions have on reduction in parking
- Possible elimination of some bus stop, re-allocate that space

Group 3 Notes

- Curb extension needed at Pleasant and Western
- Recommend a raised device at Kinnaird
- Install a cycle track (raised bicycle lane) along Western Avenue; will this impact parking? If can't do it on entire street, how about part of street?
- Make River/Western back into a two way pair – (would also be needed on the bridges)
- Crosswalk desired on South side of Memorial Drive
- Need much more greenery

Group 4 Notes

- Is adding off-site parking an option?
- Add more trees along sidewalk
- River/Western green space up by Central Square: make more usable, accessible to people
- Pleasant Street: Curb extension and plantings are needed
- Long diagonal crosswalk at Franklin needs to be addressed
- There are missing crosswalks in various locations
- Some of the two-way side streets are narrow; make one way? Restrict parking at the intersection?

- Memorial Drive crossings need to be improve
- Hoyt Field signage would be nice
- Need something to prevent people from “blocking the box” where side streets intersect with Western

7. **NEXT STEPS (Jeff Rosenblum)**

- Advisory Committee meeting #4: Tuesday, April 27 (6-8 PM).
- Neighborhood Walk – Monday April 26 (6 PM). Meet at Andala Café.