

**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
DRAFT MEETING NOTES**

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**Date, Time & Place:** November 6, 2013, 5:30-7:30 PM  
4<sup>th</sup> floor atrium, 50 Church Street, Harvard Square

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Attendance - City of Cambridge

Adam Shulman (Traffic, Parking and Transportation); Susanne Rasmussen, Jeff Rosenblum, Cleo Stoughton (Community Development Department)

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**Welcome** by Jeff Rosenblum

**Review of notes from last committee meeting**

Announcement: Thanks to Denise Jillson and the Harvard Square Business Association for hosting. The next meeting will be December 4<sup>th</sup> at the regular meeting spot at the Cambridge Senior Center.

General comments and questions:

- The mayoral election was yesterday. Are we better off today than yesterday? [Jeff] We'll certainly be addressing this at later meetings.
- Repaving efforts in the city have been helpful. Bus routing for closures (due to construction) could have been more clear. Detours really add time.
- It would be nice to have a suggestion box at these meetings.
- Other departments should have a presence at these meetings (e.g. Cambridge redevelopment authority).

**Presentation: Triple Bottom Line Sustainability - what does that mean?**

*Susanne Rasmussen, Director, Environmental & Transportation Planning Division*

As part of the transit strategic planning process, the benefits of transit and rationale for why we need to focus on transit is placed within the triple bottom line sustainability context (Economic, Environmental, Livability). Susanne briefly presented how all of the work within the Community Development Department is being considered in this triple bottom line sustainability context.

**Presentation: Transit Strategic Planning Process**

Jeff reviewed the timeline for the strategic planning process, and reviewed where we have come in the process and where we are going. The committee schedule for the next year was discussed. We have synthesized 7 draft goals out of the input sessions from the committee and internal city working group. We would like to discuss these with the committee.

*Handout: 7 draft goals*

Comments and discussion by the committee:

- Need to emphasize that this is partly about a more efficient use of a limited resource – space. It's not just about movement, but about storage too. Where is equipment when it's not being used?
- Triple bottom line is a helpful education tool for the public. We need to consider social and environmental aspects in relation to development.
- The elephant in the room is dependability. We don't have it. It is important that we can depend on transit. The problem is our government does not prioritize transit.
- The triple bottom line concept is too abstract. What does the average resident care about the framework?
- Triple bottom line is abstract, but it's important to think about how economic vitality is not antithetical to usability and environmental preservation.
- The economic piece of this is the most important, everyone knows the rest already. It's an economy killer if we don't expand transit. Some businesses do understand this.

- This language is important. Perception of transit is that it's for poor people, and "no one wants to help poor people." Better transit doesn't just help some populations, it helps everyone. [Jeff] When MBTA started allowing free transfers from T to buses, T users were introduced to the bus system.
- There is a disjuncture in the community between transit, growth, cars, parking, etc. The elderly community doesn't realize that driving is a short term option. People say, "Transit doesn't work. We need more parking." Eliminating need for parking brings back open space. People don't see the connection to the community.
- Bullet points in document are very planning-oriented. Need to add more for businesses and the public. Transit means a reduction in commuting time, expanded employee pool, reduced parking counts and less development costs, and increased development means higher tax revenue. Right now, full buses have to wait behind SOVs.
- Protecting diversity is important.
- Transit is vital to Harvard Square, yet it always seems like it is in need of repair. If we're trying to get funding, we better figure it out.
- Statewide perspective: other parts of the state don't see diversity, for example.
- Other goals: marketing about what exists. Organizing and outreach. Drawing on connections we make to one another.
- The perception of transit is negative. We need to get people to value it more.
- Not sure if all business owners understand how transit affects their business. We need awareness campaigns and a convergence of perception with reality.
- "Mode shift" is jargony—make it more accessible to the public.
- Dependability should be a goal.
- Accountability should also be a goal. Broadcast updates when off schedule, and try and get back on schedule as quickly as possible. Face the reality that transit is not always going to be reliable. This is directly related to communication—we need efficient communication and transparency.
- *Transit: some people use it. Everyone needs it.*
- Once we know we'll have a better system, we can come to an agreement about funding.
- Equitability should be a goal—addressed by each stakeholder group.
- Safety should be a goal.
- Tourists make up a large percentage of potential users—make sure we reach out to them.
- Goal 3—"efficiency"—should encompass all aspects of current operations.
- Important goal (goal 5 "accessibility"): usability/ease of use.
- Transit stations should be welcoming, there should be people present. MBTA responded quickly to complaints about the public toilet in the Harvard Square station, but it was hard to find a phone number, for instance, to call with the complaint.
- Need the document to focus more on empowerment. Public campaigns can be very powerful. (See Boston Transportation Planning Review in 1969.) The political leadership worries about imposing taxes.
- Outputs of analyses done at the city need to be made public, on the website.
- Idea for goal 8: better communication/transparency.
- The city needs to take credit for infrastructure improvements.

#### **Public comment period:**

- Triple bottom line approach is good.
- Need to invite additional diverse groups to meetings.
- Affordability needs to be highlighted.
- We can't forget about Cambridge when thinking about the region as a whole.
- For some, efficiency isn't the most important goal.
- Need to think more about cross-accessibility (e.g., public use of the M2 shuttles).
- Emphasize communication with public and invite public to participate.
- Don't get lost in economic development argument.
- Need to better collaborate with other municipalities and agencies, and across local/state/federal levels. Consider home rule petitions when appropriate.

**Adjourned at 7:30pm**