

Cambridge Bicycle Committee minutes October 5 2016

Present: Mike Proscia, Amy Flax, Matt Nelson (CPD), Randy Stern, Steven Bercu, Ruthann Rudel (note taker), Anne Marie Biernacki, Cara Seiderman (CDD), Jonathan Adams, Peter Stokes, Mechthild von Konbelsdorff, Caroline Jaffe

Guests/Visitors: Patrick Baxter (TP&T), Brian Corr (Peace Commission), Mark Boswell

We started by acknowledging the stress, sadness and anger many were feeling in light of the cyclist fatality this morning in Porter Square. Brian Corr of the Cambridge Peace Commission and Matt Nelson of Community Policing offered their support and provided materials related to responding to trauma.

City staff explained that this new crash and the June crash in Inman Sq were especially difficult for city staff because street design in both squares has been under active review to improve safety for cyclists and others.

Porter Square: Patrick Baxter from the city transportation department then reviewed plans for modifying the Porter Square intersection. The plans are available [here](#), and involve removing the median island where Somerville Ave joins Mass Ave, removing the current Mall exit that provides a left turn onto Mass Ave, and permitting a left turn onto Mass Ave from Somerville Ave. A “jughandle” bike facility on the southbound side of Mass Ave currently provides a safer left turn option for cyclists seeking to make a left onto Somerville Ave, and this will be repainted and signed so it is more noticeable.

Cara noted that the entire plan for Mass Ave is being reconsidered as part of the EnVision Cambridge process and additional ideas that committee members or the public has for Porter Sq, for example reducing travel lanes for cars in order to install protected bicycle lanes, should be considered in this context. The transportation and mobility subcommittee for Envision Cambridge will be formed this winter and this will provide a forum for discussing Mass Ave redesign. Some committee members suggested that while the Mass Ave redesign was being discussed and planned – a process that will take years-- the city could choose to repurpose travel and/or parking lanes into protected bike lanes in order to provide safe passage for people bicycling. A committee member noted that this would be a decision that would require support from City Council. The Committee discussed that it may be a worthwhile effort to install temporary bike lanes on a trial basis to help people understand what the benefits and costs will be, and we agreed a future meeting will include compiling a list of best locations for these trials.

The Committee discussed problems with double parked cars and trucks blocking bike lanes and discussed various ideas for addressing this, since it poses a significant danger to people riding bicycles. Currently, the maximum ticket for this violation is \$35 and state law would need to be changed to increase penalty and provide a stronger deterrent.

Since the Porter Square crash involved a very large truck, the Committee discussed options for restricting truck size or passage on Cambridge streets. City staff noted that Federal requirements and

state laws provide that all roads must be able to accommodate trucks of a certain size, and that any trucks in that size range must be allowed to deliver to any address, although roads can restrict through truck traffic. They also noted that the City was investigating what options there may be for modifying state law to better control truck traffic.

The Committee discussed approaches for communicating more intensively with cyclists on how to stay safe, for example how to make decisions about approaches to cycling around large vehicles like trucks and buses. Cara mentioned some new graphical illustrations for staying safe that she thinks are effective and could be deployed at public locations (e.g., on Hubway kiosks), and she offered to bring the graphics to show at a future committee meeting. A committee member suggested renting billboard space for safety messages to people driving vehicles and bicycles, and city staff indicated that was not in the budget and also had been difficult in the past.

Matt Nelson (Community Policing) noted that the city staff who had to respond to the crash were also deeply affected by it and that they had done a professional and difficult job and deserved our thanks.

Garden Street design: City staff presented a plan for Garden Street as a bicycle priority street – as it is identified in the Bike Plan Vision, and agreed to through the community process for the Concord Ave area sewer separation process - and a safer less stressful alternative to Concord Ave, which has many more trucks and buses. The proposed street layout can be found [here](#). The plan—which was shared with the committee and the public at previous meetings-- is different in different sections of Garden depending on the street width. All sections of Garden are proposed for at least one side of parking and two vehicle travel lanes (one in each direction). Bicycles would be accommodated on this bicycle priority street by painting sharrows on the street and indicating with signs that cyclists could take the lane. One section appears wide enough for a bike lane in one direction. Another section has parking on two sides and if the parking remains, would also have sharrows.

The Committee discussed various design options and conditions for cyclists. There was general agreement to request that the city modify the proposed plan to provide bicycle lanes in both directions from at least Linnean (Huron if possible) to Concord Ave. This improvement would make a nice connection with the contra-flow lane on “little Concord Ave” and the Common, taking riders all the way to Harvard Square. The Committee acknowledged this would require converting two-side parking to one-side parking for a short stretch of Linnean that has few homes. City staff noted they would bring a revised plan back to a community meeting and to the Bike Committee for discussion. For the remainder of Garden St, the city staff presented images of options for pavement markings and signage. Committee recommended green bike lane markings down the middle of both travel lanes and a reduced speed limit (15 mph? 20 mph?).

Some committee members suggested more bicycle-friendly designs were appropriate for this bicycle priority street, and that the plan was not very ambitious, visionary, or bicycle friendly. Alternative plans were discussed, such as making western-most and narrow sections of Garden one way for vehicle travel and building a two way cycle track. City Staff noted that discussions about the basic design took place 4-5 years ago, and that proposals for cycle tracks were not deemed feasible for various reasons. They

noted that since the curbs are already installed, design changes must be within the basic structure of what is in place now. Some members suggested that more bicycle friendly designs could be made within the existing curb lines by using paint or other approaches.

City Staff shows proposed designs for Irving and Scott Streets with a bicycle priority lane marking, as was done on Lakeview Avenue. An assessment of how that is working is underway. Also city staff shared the decision not to install a raised crosswalk across Lakeview between Huron and Brattle to slow traffic speeds because only about 50% of residents on the street expressed support for the crosswalk in a survey.

Cambridge Street in front of the new King Open/CSUS/library/school administration building: City Staff presented the proposed design for this section of Cambridge Street (<http://www.cambridgema.gov/CityManager/KingOpenandCommunityComplexProject>). They noted that the plan had not yet been shared with the community. Features of the new plan include underground parking at the school, a protected bike lane across the street from the school that will run on the passenger side of the row of parked cars, and a bike lane on the school side that is slightly raised (3 inches) above road surface. Buses would pull across the bike lane to pick up and drop off students. Possibly parking could be permitted in those areas after school hours.

Committee members were generally very enthusiastic about the plan for Cambridge Street in front of the school. City Staff noted there might be concern among abutters about reduced parking. A Committee member asked whether the underground parking could be available to residents during non-school hours, and city staff indicated that was complicated by security issues. The community meeting will be Oct 20, info here:

<http://www.cambridgema.gov/CityManager/KingOpenandCommunityComplexProject> . Committee members also expressed concerns about traffic signals in this section of Cambridge Street, saying some signals were not needed, and some intersections that needed signals did not have them. The Traffic Department is evaluating these as well.

Participatory budgeting projects: Projects that were approved in past years include add intersection bicycle markings; Inman square is complete, and upcoming will be Central Square and North Mass Ave. A consultant is being retained to support this effort. The proposed designs will be presented at a future bicycle committee meeting.

The committee agreed on a December joint meeting with transit and pedestrian committees for brainstorming on ways to improve active transportation in Cambridge and for some social time.

The Committee acknowledged the success of Parking Day and the Bow Tie Ride and thanked committee members who worked to make those events happen.