

DRAFT Pedestrian Committee Meeting Minutes
October 28, 2010

Members in attendance: Thayer Donham (MIT), Debby Galef, Alan Greene, Rona Gregory, Pete Kane, Thomson Kao, David Loutzenheiser, Sean Pierce, Helen Rose, Eran Segev, Amanda Trombley, Andrea Yoder

City staff in attendance: Rosalie Anders, Bill Dwyer, Cara Seiderman

Agenda:

Introductions, approval of September minutes

North Mass Ave report: next steps for committee?

Western Ave plan: update, possible committee action

The bridges: update, next steps

Kendall Square: future processes

Meeting with Disabilities Commission: possible items of discussion

Recruiting new Committee members

Grand Junction Rail line (last minute addition)

No changes to September minutes

North Mass Ave report: Public process about north Mass Ave (Beech Street through Arlington line), no major changes, just the streetscape, zoning regulations. Member Gregory reports that the public process has gone very well. Over the six months the committee has been meeting, a new public neighborhood group has been formed. At the most recent meeting this group lobbied for a zoning change that would require first floor retail in the project area. They engaged with a dialogue with the City over what that would mean and other strategies to create incentives; still under discussion. Bottom line: that the neighborhood not lose any retail that's there. If properties change hands, they would be required to maintain first floor retail. City has heard that the neighborhood wants a better streetscape along North Mass Ave. Meeting attendees advocate for slower traffic, better sidewalks, cycle lanes.

No street construction through this process: Sidewalks, tree plantings, etc, but no changes that would preclude bigger changes in the future.

City has not been engaged in creating identity for the area, but that seems to be changing with the neighborhood's help.

While neighborhood wants retail, nobody is clear why there are vacant retail slots right now. The group believes it's due to the current weak economy, and in theory it should rebound with the economy.

Rona Gregory got the feeling that the City is a little more pessimistic about the opportunities north of Trolley Square due to the lower density.

One City staff member at the neighborhood meeting made the point that property owners have a role to play in the project, but meeting attendees (who weren't property owners) did not seem sympathetic with that comment. There seemed to be very few property owners in attendance. Seiderman pointed out that to reach business owners, some meetings should probably occur during the day.

Rona said that North Cambridge residents perceive that their neighborhood has not seen the investment that other areas of Cambridge have.

Western Ave plan: Eran Segev wasn't in attendance (he arrived late), so Seiderman reported on the project. Full details online at: <http://www.box.net/shared/g4hl7zupht> and a corresponding survey is available at <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ZKWPFDW>.

The plan keeps two lanes of traffic and two lanes of parking. One lane of traffic from Mass Ave to Franklin. Bike facilities separated on the inside of the parked cars. Buffer between parked cars and cycle track. Curb extensions for busses. Whole road will be narrower. Lanes not as wide. Additional plantings, green area, storm water. Some crosswalks still diagonal on current plan, but this may not be representative of final outcome.

Public Meeting November 3 2010. Details in Cara's Pedestrian reports.

Sean offered to draft something for the committee to express more formal support for the project. We might have a focus meeting for more details as the design progresses.

Bill Dwyer/DPW: he brought a detailed handout. Prospect Street paved, pavement markings soon.

DPW started using some new product for sidewalk repair at Porter across from Upland Road, Elephant Walk restaurant, Dunkin Donuts on North Mass Ave, Central Sq/Temple St. Different color product. Should save inconvenience of residents, should reduce the frequency of sidewalk reconstructions. Used mostly for patching small areas. Bill asked if we observe things in the next few weeks to let him know what we think. Rona asked what DPW thought of rubber on Rindge Ave, but there seemed to be no clear consensus. Send feedback to wdwyer@cambridgema.gov

Porter Square redundant elevator installation. Somerville Ave side. Eventual service disruption for elevator usage. Plaza area to be used for construction staging.

More updates on city construction on city website.

David Loutzenheiser asked about striping at Broadway & Third. Bill will find out from Traffic.

Bridges: Craigie bridge going into construction November 6, and traffic will not be able

to get to Boston from Cambridge, although the other direction will be available. Alan Greene asked if the city planned to monitor traffic during Craigie construction. The state is responsible for that.

There is still no final marking plan for the cross section of Craigie. The state will come up with a "real" design and we will see if they stuck with what they originally promised.

Longfellow Bridge: Another task force meeting after public meeting. They plan to keep a couple of options floating for the environmental impact report. One option includes improved connections, two lanes into Boston, one to Cambridge, unclear about bike/ped bridge to Esplanade, separated bike facility towards Boston.

Outbound design consensus: one travel lane, wider bike facility, wider sidewalk.
Inbound: not likely to go less than two lanes. Need to consider future where there could be just one traffic lane and possible conversion to bicycle facility.

MassDOT pavement width: 24 feet minimum on each side of red line. Allows for two lanes of traffic in both directions where needed. Task force wants reduction to 21 feet. Any reduction would go to sidewalk width.

Comments should go through EIR process.

Sean pointed out that the plan is much better than what originally was offered years ago.

Consensus is the pedestrian bridge from the Longfellow to the Esplanade is a good idea. MassDOT eager to build and there is political will to make it happen.

The planning process looked more at traffic queueing rather than total number of users of the bridge by travel mode (cars, red line, pedestrians, cyclists).

Wednesday 11/3: Anderson Memorial Bridge meeting. Could be the next bridge under construction (could also be River/Western). Last meeting. Have cross section be three lanes with cycle lanes which would connect with JFK, which is four lanes and reduce to three. Prohibit left turn at Mem Drive & JFK Street.

City has been lobbying for signal at Hawthorn Street, which would allow for pedestrian crossing & left turn on Memorial Drive.

MITIMCo working with urban designers on a plan for MIT owned property, some of which is academic and some of which is commercial around Kendall Square. Why is square still in bad shape? Improve amenities, retail, food options.

Plans announced for a tall tower at 1 Broadway (by Broad Canal). City will probably have MIT hire urban designer to design what the city would like to see in Kendall Square. MIT will now not go for zoning change until February or March.

Fantastic idea to improve Kendall Square, devil is in the details.

Eran and Helen Rose interested in Kendall Square Advisory Committee. Seiderman will follow up with Kathy Watkins (DPW) on the process.

Grand Junction: State bought railroad, but not the whole corridor. Rights to operate over entire length of corridor. Lieutenant Governor proposed commuter rail service into North Station using the Grand Junction.

City has other ideas for what the corridor should be used for, including Urban Ring & multi-use path. If we add in revenue rail, that might be too much. City has not taken an official position on Grand Junction, but wants a large study to be done. State is doing that study to look at ridership, where people start and end journeys, before even looking at physical design.

City councillors have expressed their concern to make sure that the path is maintained.

One of the impetuses of the commuter rail is the theory of the idea of a reverse commute. Get to 128 without driving. City re-emphasized the idea of the urban ring. Also not much capacity at South Station.

Talking about making changes to road crossings right now. Full gates with hang-unders.

Meeting with Disabilities Commission: November meetings overlap due to holidays. This could be an opportunity. Commission very enthusiastic about the idea, talking about common issues. Sidewalk conditions, ramps, snow & ice, vegetation. We could hear what they are working on, and vice versa. Recycling bin issues, especially with the new toters. Audible signals.

Commission meets 5:30 - 7:30, we could choose to overlap for just an hour with Disabilities Commission, then have subcommittees afterwards.

Thayer mentioned a situation at Main/Vassar/Galileo where a blind person was stuck at the median trying to cross Galileo. This person thought they had reached the far side; there was no obvious way to know. Seiderman said some newer projects had a better way of handling this.

Recruiting new committee members: looking for 5-6 new people. Greenward posted it on their Facebook page. Solicit potential members. Anyone who enjoys walking. Pedestrians often don't self identify. Technically members must work in the city OR live in the city, but if there's a choice between a resident and non-resident, the resident will take the slot.

World Cafe: Pete Kane offered to represent the committee. Inviting 100 participants, including committee representative. Talking about ways to make Cambridge a better

place.

City parking permit fee increased to \$20, then \$25 in a few years. Residents said they were willing to pay more for the city to do more on green initiatives. Money must be used for purposes identified in the Vehicle Trip Reduction Ordinance, can't be used for general funds. There will be a checkbox for people who want to pay more.

Alan said it makes no sense that people who don't own cars pay the same amount as a car owner. One answer: car owners pay excise taxes on their cars (which car owners do not). Also, setting up a separate system would be administratively more complex; might happen eventually.

Next meeting: Thursday November 18, 2010