

Cambridge Pedestrian Committee

With Cambridge Bicycle Committee

Meeting Minutes: 23 June 2016

Attendees: Cara Seiderman (CDD), Debby Galef, Sean Pierce, Matt Nelson, Jodie Cohen-Tanugi, Andrea Yoder, Brian McLane (DPW), Michael Proscia, Anne Marie Biernacki, Helen Rose, Ingrid Schorr, Liza Cohen, Joe Rose, David Soares (TP&T), Caroline Jaffe, Patrick Baxter (TP&T), Magda McCormick
Guest: Heather Hoffmann

I. Agenda Review, Minutes April and May Meeting Minutes approved

II. Cambridge Intersections Study:

Patrick Baxter (TP&T) presented review of concerns for Porter Sq. and Inman Sq.

<http://www.cambridgema.gov/traffic/News/2016/06/inmansqtrafficstudyinformation.aspx>

III. KSURP Infill Development Concept Plan

Presentation by team (Boston Properties, Sasaki and others)

Residential, commercial and open space being developed. Masterplan considerations include: Enhancing bike and pedestrian experience, active use of park, street level activity, short and long term bike and car parking, analyzing existing landscaping (i.e. tree health). Particular focus on Sixth St. Connector (potential for separate bike lanes, enhanced lighting, connection to buildings, plantings) and Broadway Plaza (multi-use area, café, water feature, etc.).

IV. Review: MIT Central Utilities Plant

Straddles Grand Junction rail track. Environmental impact study has considerations relevant for access to open space and recreation. Discussion about proposed plant and mitigating impact on environment. Sean Pierce to submit letter to MEPA and Epsilon concurring with Bike Committee and adding recommendation to support Grand Junction rail/ trail to offset impact from environmental perspective.

(letter attached)

V. Pedestrian Committee Work

June 11 Walk: Group agreed the walk was interesting and informative even for long-time Cantabrigians. Liza Cohen drafted Guidelines for planning annual walk.

Annual Officer Elections:

The current officers were reelected:

Chair: Debby Galef

Vice Chair: Magda McCormick

Secretary: Sam Stern

Summer Walks:

July 28th Meeting: Fresh Pond Parkway/ Mt. Auburn area intersection
(Meet in front of Star Market at 6pm)

August 25th Meeting: Alewife area (meeting point tba)

Cambridge Pedestrian Committee
c/o Community Development Department
344 Broadway
Cambridge, MA 02139

June 24, 2016

Matthew A. Beaton, Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
Attn: MEPA Office
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston MA 02114

BY EMAIL

RE: MIT Central Utilities Plant Second Century Project

Dear Secretary Beaton:

The Cambridge Pedestrian Committee is the city's official advisory body for pedestrian issues and works to create a more comfortable, safe, and pleasant environment for walking in Cambridge. On behalf of the Committee, I am writing to offer comments from the Committee on the MIT Central Utilities Plant Second Century Project, and in particular on its potential impacts on the Grand Junction Community Path.

The Grand Junction Community Path has been the subject of a longstanding planning effort. It is not only an important link for non-motorized travel in the growing Kendall Square area, but also one step toward a larger network of bicycle and pedestrian paths that would connect to the Charles River and beyond, including multiple neighboring communities.

Having considered the issue at our June 23 meeting, the Committee feels strongly that it would be contrary to the public interest and common good for the proposed power plant project to impede, in any way, the ability to complete the Grand Junction Community Path at the full 32-foot width indicated by Massachusetts DOT planning studies. On the contrary, construction of this portion of the path seems to suggest itself as an appropriate environmental mitigation measure for the project.

Our colleagues from the Cambridge Bicycle Committee expressed similar sentiments in their June 20 letter to you. We support their comments and note that their letter presents a cogent, point-by-point rebuttal of the earlier arguments presented by the project proponent.

Existing planning studies for the path have acknowledged some of the design challenges and space limitations of this unique corridor. However, the intended width of the path in this section is around 32 feet as a minimum to ensure comfortable and safe operations for all users. Safety and comfort are key components of attracting walkers and cyclists to the path, and thus for contributing to a reduction in automobile emissions and greenhouse gases. While the project proponent has suggested that 24 feet may be minimally adequate, that suggestion is contrary to the Mass. DOT study, and in any event, we would suggest aiming for more than a bare minimum to ensure that the full benefits of the path are realized.

We would also note the Environmental Justice aspects of this project for the low-income and minority populations near the site. Nearly one in three Cambridge residents commutes on foot or by bicycle, and many others walk or bike to access public transportation. For many in our community, biking and walking are not merely recreation, but important forms of low-cost mobility that also happen to be nearly emissions-free.

The Grand Junction Community Path is an opportunity that many other cities would envy – a chance to enhance local quality of life through new open space and a valuable bicycle/pedestrian path, in an otherwise highly constrained urban area. The Grand Junction Community Path is also an important part of the city's overall goals of expanding non-motorized travel, managing transportation demand, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It would a sad irony, and seemingly a throwback to less enlightened times, if the Grand Junction could not be developed to its fullest potential because its presence would make it slightly more inconvenient to burn fossil fuels in a power plant.

Sincerely,

Sean Peirce
for the Cambridge Pedestrian Committee