

Cambridge Pedestrian Safety Committee Meeting
April 29, 2021
Minutes

Attendance

Committee Members: Sean Peirce, Erik Tillman, Pam McLemore, Elka Kuhlman, Debby Galef, Ian Henneberger, Jenny Turner-Trauring, Erica Seidel, Wade Smith, Theresa Tobin, Magda McCormick, Robin Bonner, Sandy Goldberg

Staff: Greg Hanafin (CDD), Cara Seiderman (CDD), Brian McLane (DPW), Mark Melo (Electrical), Steve Lenkauskas (Electrical)

Guests: Alex Levering (CRA), Steve Engler (Sasaki), Rick Plenge (HDR)

Public: John Bowman

1) Cambridge Redevelopment Authority Update on Third/Broadway/Main Street

- Cambridge Streetscape Designs - underway
- Main Street – has an interim concept and longer-term concepts
- Discussion:
 - o Q: Broad Canal Way – missing a crosswalk on one of the legs to cross Third Street? What is the reason for not having it?
 - o A: The need for vehicles to turn left means it is harder to protect pedestrians so there is not a crosswalk there now.
 - o Q: Why aren't all crosswalks raised to the level of the sidewalk?
 - o A: Some will be raised (the ones with the little triangles in the drawings) and others will not if they are more major car thoroughfares with traffic signals, like at Galileo Way.
- You can view the map and provide feedback there directly:
www.cambridgeredevelopment.org/bmt-streetscape

2) Street Lighting Update from Mark Melo (City Electrician) and Steve Lenkauskas (Former City Electrician/Electrician Consultant)

- a. In 2010, there was a Cambridge Common project which updated a lot and has been applied to other areas of Cambridge since then.
- b. Discussion:
 - Q: How are decisions made about where streetlights are placed, lighting levels, etc? Is the priority the pedestrian? The cars? The houses?

- A: All are considered, based on the consultant report done in 2010 they implement that now. Can't add wooden poles to a side street where there are no overhead poles with street lights.
- Q: 2010 was before they started the increased use of LED lights which changed the perception of streetlights - there used to be a soft glow that lit the whole street, and with LED it is more pinpointed, and the light doesn't spread as much. Would a study now produce different results and recommendations?
- A: There were some LED lights in pilots in 2010 that were incorporated into the 2010 study but it was limited.
- Q: Are there objective measures to apply to when people say 'it feels dark here'? Readings of lumens? And/or is there a subjective perception component?
- A: They do have light meters but mostly it is subjective. Time of year makes a big difference – the tree cover in summer creates more of a heavy tree cover. And they got complaints of lights being too bright in the winter when there are no leaves.
- Q: On Mem Drive, there are seeclickfix submissions that are years old – for instance places where 4 lights out in a row on Mem Drive. Is there a way to encourage the DCR to take action?
- A: It is tough; the contact people change – Cambridge tries to keep on top of DCR. There are several entities around: privately managed side streets, MassDOT, DCR. Sometimes people call their elected Representatives (state legislators) to register complaints. Sometimes there is no power at the base of the pole and they can address it with Eversource but not with the Cambridge crew.
- Q: There are areas that are too dark for people walking. What process can people follow to propose enhancements? There are more crashes with people biking and walking in areas that are less well-lit.
- A: They can increase light but it would need to be looked at – need to have a good neighborhood process with it. Some people prefer darker lights in their neighborhoods. In Central Square, they would increase lights when clubs got out – increase it to 300% until 3 am and then shut it down; that was requested by the Police Dept and it worked well. Net: Don't take a one to one complaint or concern – have to see how widely shared the concern is. Can program the lighting on a street.
- Q: If on residential streets we feel the lighting is too low on streets for instance where there are bricks – it sounds like there is nothing to be done unless there is a pole with a light out?

- A: They can add lights to existing poles to improve lights; it is monitored every day on SeeClickFix. All lights start out at 70% capacity which lets them increase or decrease lights, and adds life to the LED. By design they were set up to light the streets adequately. If a side street was not well lit, and everyone thought so, the lighting can be boosted from 70% to 80-90%. Residential streets generally get darker at 10 pm. No one ever knew the lights dimmed at 10 pm – since you never notice.
- Comment: Look at locations where accidents are happening – they are correlated with low lighting levels. May need to wait for the next crash analyst to join the Police force. To study this.
- Q: Is there opp for more artistic applications of lighting? Plazas or special places?
- A: They have historically stuck to standards of the fixtures. Outside of that have supported the arts when part of the art is lighting – they are supportive of that. There is a budget from the arts commission to maintain that. In Palmer Street – there is some lighting – the lighted blocks have worked well. The challenge is space to put all the 'back of house' equipment.

3) [MUTCD: Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices](#)

- Sandy brought this to us. It is a national manual.
- Sandy went to an [America Walks webinar](#) last week – the MUTCD has not been reviewed in 20 years but now with Pete Buttigieg in place there is an opp for an overhaul.
- They are [taking comments until May 14](#). We as the Committee or we as individuals can comment.
- What's wrong with current manual:
 - o It is based on car safety. But car safety does not = pedestrian safety!
 - o The old manual was written when walking/biking were considered leisure activities, not as viable transportation methods.
 - o Can only examine a site once four people have been killed at a site. So cities have to discourage people from crossing the street to make it safe, so that they don't have a high pedestrian kill rate.
 - o Signal warrants remain circular – a catch 22 of waiting to see first if people are crossing a street before putting in a crosswalk, but of course if there is no crosswalk, people won't cross mostly.
 - o Sometimes people are trying to walk but the streets don't support walking – this is where crashes happen.
- Cambridge was not on the list of cities that signed onto the NACTO letter. Why?
 - o Cara – this proposal to make changes has been tackled by many. Some discussion on how it shouldn't be evolved piecemeal but rather overhauled.

- Cara has shared links to [America Walks](#) so we as individuals can make comments; they also have scripts that have been pre-written that you can use to get your voice heard.
- Sean – You can frame conversation – for instance biking is about equity or biking is about upper middle-class leisure. So maybe tie into equity.
- More info: <https://americawalks.org/>

4) City Updates from Brian McLane (DPW) – highlights:

- a. Construction season started in early April
 - i. Huron Ave (Concord to Garden) construction being completed; will get partial new bike lanes
 - ii. Will continue with Inman Square roadway realignment
 - iii. Brewster, Highland, some other streets are getting updates
 - iv. A lot of other projects coming out too – for instance Belmont Street, in conjunction with Watertown will be redone in early summertime- see dpw page – the construction tab
 - v. Chestnut Street, Elm, Park Ave, Walden from Garden to Sherman (by Patty's Pub), Cushing, Webster, Huron Ave around golf course – will have new bike facilities
 - vi. Gore Street project is moving along – doing utilities and will continue that throughout the year and also tackle sidewalks
 - vii. Willard St drainage improvements and streetscaping improvements
 - viii. Green Street - will be in design
 - ix. Other streets are slated for improvements next year and will have public meetings on the horizon
- b. Salt reduction: This was first year of using brining only – this reduced salt consumption by 60%.
- c. A member of the committee brought up the issue of drainage not working well in an area where big puddles subsequently form – on Irving between Bryant and Francis. Makes it a mosquito risk and also a walking hazard.
 - i. That would fall under 2 separate contracts – sewer as well as sidewalk area, and there's a big backlog for both – 2-3 yr waiting period. Brian will check.

- 5) **Ped Committee Summer Walk:** Cara is going to check since guidance on COVID-19 is changing. Think about where you would want to go, which areas to explore given the projects underway.