

Pedestrian Committee

Meeting on January 30, 2025

Meeting Notes

Attendance

- Members in attendance: Alex Hallowell, Maryann Quinn, Sean Peirce, Robin Bonner, Jeannine Powers, Thomas Marsh, Janet Stein, Xander Mitchell, Jenine Turner-Trauring
- Members not in attendance: Debby Galef, Logan Read, Sandy Goldberg, Jesus Armenta, Michael McGowan, Kevin Leckey, Bernhard Nickel, Evan Killion, John Leo
- City staff: Nick Schmidt (CDD), Cara Seiderman (CDD), Andy Reker (CDD), Quinn Murphy (CDD), Moe Hammad (TPT), Andreas Wolfe (TPT), T.J. Shea (DPW), Brian McLane (DPW), Melissa Miguel (DPW)
- Visitors: Nahid Chowdhury

Announcements

- Nick Schmidt is the new Transportation Program Manager for Pedestrian and Bicycle Mobility in the Community Development Department (CDD) (nschmidt@cambridgema.gov)
 - Started January 7, 2025
 - Taking over for Cara Seiderman, who has retired
 - 18 years in transportation planning and design in the public sector (City of Boston) and private sector (WSP and Toole Design Group)
 - Co-author and/or project manager of progressive, multimodal planning and design guidance and neighborhood plans, including:
 - Guidelines: Boston's Bike Parking Guidelines, Newton's Street Design Guide,
 - FHWA's 2016 Achieving Multimodal Networks Guide, MassDOT's Separated Bike Lane Planning & Design Guide
 - Plans: The MA Bicycle Transportation Plan, PLAN: East Boston, and PLAN: Mattapan
- Mohamed (Moe) Hammad will represent Traffic, Parking, & Transportation (TPT), replacing Andreas Wolfe. Moe previously worked in California before moving here. He was working in various roles in the Department of Transportation before joining the City as a Traffic Engineer. Welcome!
- Quinn Murphy is the new CDD Sustainable Transportation Planning Intern. She's been here for a week. She is a master's student in planning at Tufts. Her area of focus is pedestrian and active transportation. Welcome!

Linear Park Redesign: Pedestrian Detour (Charlie Creagh, CDD)

Linear Park will be closed for reconstruction and he's working on a plan for alternative walking and bicycling routes during the construction. The closure will be from Russell Field across Mass Ave to the Cambridge/Somerville line all within 2025. City staff hope to be out to bid in February. The cost estimate is \$7.2 million but final costs will depend on the bids.

The proposed pedestrian detour follows Dudley Street to Mass Ave and then along Shea Road, Kingston Street, and Thorndike Street (in Somerville). The route guides people to cross Mass Ave at the existing crosswalk and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon at Dudley Road. Staff will post wayfinding along the route and in the vicinity.

The proposed bicycle detour is more complex because it relies on one-way streets. They will be working to reopen the Cameron Ave to Somerville line as soon as possible to make the bicycle re-route simpler. This can't be confirmed until they have selected the contractor.

City staff will host an open-house-style public meeting for folks to ask questions about this project on February 13, between 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. at St. John's the Evangelist (2270 Mass Ave).

Questions from the Pedestrian Committee:

- Sean Peirce: When you're coming out of the Red Line station at Davis, will there be any indication ahead of the City line that if you want to continue through, you're going to hit a dead end and have to re-trace your steps.
 - Charlie Creagh: Yes, the plan will be to work through this with City of Somerville staff since it is their jurisdiction, but this is on the list of things to coordinate. They may use some cones and signage, but this will be worked out later.

City Snow Operations (T.J. Shea, Superintendent of Streets, DPW, and Brian McLane, Assistant Superintendent of Streets and Sewer Maintenance, DPW)

Presentation from T.J. and Brian:

- Snowfall:
 - The City has weather forecasters who provide an outlook in October. Prediction is lower than average snow. Last year snow was limited: 10" of snow (usually 47") with only 9 salting and 2 plow events. Discussed the history of snowfall, salt tonnage, and parking bans since 2009.
- Coordination:
 - During a storm they coordinate with many of Cambridge's departments. Made the point that DPW does not make school cancellation call. That, instead, comes from the school superintendent. Discussed the different departments that provide material support to ensure emergency service response and public safety.
- Parking ban:
 - DPW prefers to leave the cars in place because it means the space is shoveled out as soon as the vehicle moves. DPW makes these calls later than many other municipalities. There are six garages throughout the city with agreements in place so residents can park at the garages during a storm emergency.
- Pedestrian operations:
 - 30 miles of City-cleared sidewalks
 - Residential exemption provided by the Department of Human Service Programs (DHSP) for elderly and others
 - Includes schools and public buildings
 - Cambridge clears sidewalks during storms rather than waiting as most others do
 - DPW partners with contractors to clear/haul snow across a series of facilities

- School/public safety access—they shovel out hydrants, ensure buses can pass
- Bike lanes:
 - Cambridge has an extensive bike network that grows every year. DPW will plow and salt throughout a storm, it occurs at the same time as the city streets. They have special equipment that can fit within the bike facilities, which requires special care and attention to deployment and operations. In some cases, private entities may clear bike lanes where an agreement with the City exists. DPW maintains a map demonstrating who is responsible for clearing which bike facility.
- Snow hauling:
 - Typically, DPW will need to haul snow if the event exceeds 6". They dump collected snow at one of two facilities, but they are losing their "snow farm" locations over time as these places get redeveloped (e.g., the former Binney Street snow farm is now a Grand Junction park).
- Compliance:
 - DPW advises the public to use SeeClickFix to report uncleared sidewalks. Big thing is education, making sure property owners know that clearing adjacent sidewalks and curb ramps is required. About half of SeeClickFix reports result in tickets. The fine is \$50/day and compliance officers will visit to see if it's been addressed.
- Challenges:
 - The work to clear snow after an event takes a lot of effort and is complicated by dead-end and one-way streets. The City does not clear handicap parking spaces unless adjacent to City properties; they rely on neighbors to assist due to resource constraints. Space savers are not allowed. If used, DPW will collect the items and will dispose of them within 30 days if not claimed. Approximately, 9 out of 10 items remain unclaimed and are disposed.
- Anti-icing with brine:
 - DPW applies brine in advance of storms. Its use helps with approximately 1" of snow removal and also helps with de-icing. They also use a carbohydrate solution for similar purposes, which is anti-corrosive.
- Communications:
 - DPW uses three ways to notify people of operations: Code RED, X (formerly Twitter), and Facebook
 - DPW asks that people wait until the snow event is over before submitting requests/complaints. Crews are deployed and actively clearing according to their planned routes during the event and so being responsive is challenging.

Questions from the Pedestrian Committee:

- Maryann Quinn: How do you keep salt out of the drinking water?
 - T.J./Brian: Drinking water sources are not within the City's limits. Areas surrounding those sources are "low salt areas" and are generally surrounded by less developed, more wooded areas. Locally within Cambridge, DPW calibrates equipment each season to minimize the amount of salt they're applying.

- Nick: We will post this presentation for folks to revisit since it is so full of information.
- Nick Schmidt: How do you prioritize where to go?
 - T.J./Brian: We have a series of maps that help us triage the work. What sets us apart is that we take care of the sidewalks and bike lanes as well as the roads DURING a storm. Use SeeClickFix so we know who we need to speak with regarding snow clearance on sidewalks that we don't maintain.

Project Updates

- From Andreas Wolfe on behalf of the **Traffic, Parking & Transportation (TPT) Department:**
 - Excited to have Moe join the team and it will be a great resource for the Pedestrian Committee! Andreas will join, as needed, but Moe is now assigned as the Committee representative for TPT.
 - [Broadway Safety Improvement Project](#) (Quincy Street to Portland Street)
 - Focusing on Section A: Columbia Street to Portland Street. [Please view draft plans here.](#)
 - This is a quick-build project, which means it will not include major sidewalk work. Sidewalks, including new crossings and curb extensions, were completed within the last 10-15 years. TPT will continue to coordinate with DPW, as design advances.
 - 2/4 and 2/6: In-person open houses
 - Slides, recording, and transcript from the 1/28 virtual public meeting are posted to the project website.
 - [Aberdeen Avenue Safety Improvement Project](#) (Huron Avenue to Mt. Auburn Street)
 - Design and outreach complete
 - Project installation beginning spring 2025
 - [Cambridge Street Safety Improvement Project](#) (Inman Square to Second Street)
 - Focusing on Section A: Oak Street to Willow Street
 - 1/31: [Design feedback](#) survey closes
 - Moving to final design process and future meetings will be announced
 - [Main Street Safety Improvement project](#) (Lafayette Square/Mass Ave to Portland Street)
 - Plan is to alternative parking from side to side, as needed
 - Final design in spring 2025 and installation in summer 2025
- From Melissa Miguel on behalf of the **Department of Public Works (DPW):**
 - DPW oversees sidewalk construction, among other projects
 - The winter construction moratorium is in place and so temperature-sensitive work, like repaving and pouring concrete, can't start back up until it is lifted, which likely will not be until the end of March.
 - Melissa walked through a list of ongoing projects, which are listed in the slides.
 - The [Port Infrastructure Improvements Project](#) will resume in 2025.
 - The [River Street Reconstruction](#) Project will continue as weather permits.

- The [Harvard Square Kiosk and Plaza Project](#) will move to next phase on the plaza (phase 7 of 8). The contract will continue through November 2026. The kiosk will open this spring.
- The City's [Chapter 90](#) projects include street planting, traffic calming, bump outs, etc.
 - Contract 24: Chestnut Street, Dodge Street, and Elm Street will be finished this year.
 - Contract 25: Drainage work on Maple Avenue will continue through next week and Montgomery Street is likely starting next week.
 - Contract 26: Anticipated for summer 2025 bid.
- From Nick Schmidt on behalf of the **Community Development Department (CDD)**:
 - [Linear Park Redesign](#):
 - 2/13: In-person open house meeting at 5:30 - 7:00 p.m. at St. John's the Evangelist (2270 Mass Ave).
 - [Net Zero Transportation Plan](#) is pivoting from engagement to the final report.

Public Comment

- None