

WORKING GROUP MEETING

Tuesday, October 1, 2019

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Cambridge Public Health Department

119 Windsor Street

Working Group Members	City Staff
Christopher Cassa	Tegin Teich – CDD
Amy Flax	Andrew Reker – CDD
Ambar Johnson	Jerry Friedman - DPW
Caroline Lowenthal	Susanne Rasmussen - CDD
Bill McAvinney	Bill Deignan - CDD
Miguel Perez-Luna	Erik Thorkildsen –CDD
Jose Luis Rojas	Lillian Hsu –Arts Council
	Adi Philson
Not here:	
Joseph Aiello	Consultants
Jason Alves	Joseph Maliawco
Rebecca Bowie	James Turnbull
Nicholas Dard	Christi Apicella
Tom Evans	Jonathan Church
Kathryn Brown	Jesse Boudart
Michelle Lower	Kaki Martin
Sarabrent McCoy	
Brad Pillen	Public
Diana Prideaux-Brune	Jacob Rubens
Robert Ricchi	Amanda Sindel-Keswick
Dalila Salcedo	Gabriela Zayas del Rio
John Sanzone	Jirah Hladi (sp?)
Katrina Sousa	James Williamson
Florence Toussaint	Paul Lyons
Samantha Tracey	

Key:

CDD = Community Development Department

TP&T = Traffic Parking & Transportation

The following is a meeting summary of the Working Group Meeting #3 for the City of Cambridge's Grand Junction Multi-Use Path and Conceptual Transit Design Project. For more information see <https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/Projects/Transportation/GrandJunctionPathway>

Introductions and Welcome

The meeting was initiated by Tegin Teich, Transportation Planner for the City of Cambridge. Tegin noted that this was her last meeting as she is leaving the City of Cambridge to become the Executive Director of CTPS. She thanked the Working Group members for being involved with the project. Tegin then introduced Susanne Rasmussen, Bill Deignan, Andy Reker and Jerry Friedman and Erik Thorkildsen of the City team, as well as consultants. They will be taking over the project in her absence.

Tegin then reviewed the agenda items with the Working Group members. She then provided a refresher of the purpose of the Working Group and reviewed the ground rules of the Working Group meetings.

Recap of Meetings Held to Date

Andy Reker, Assistant Transportation Planner for the City of Cambridge, provided an overview of the recent project meetings and outreach.

- Public Events and Outreach Activities included the Volpe Block Party at Sennot Park (9/8/19); Central Square Park(ing) Day (9/20/19) and Port Pride Day in the Port neighborhood (9/21/19). Emerging themes included the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path project is new to many in the Cambridge community and that people's interest in the path included recreation, commuting and an excellent neighborhood amenity.
- Advocacy Groups such as the *Friends of the Grand Junction Path* and *Friends of the Community Path* have applied for grants to study feasibility of connections north from the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path, such as to the Community Path Extension (part of the MBTA's Green Line Extension project) and to the Mystic River and Northern Strand Trails via Sullivan Square. Other organizations continue to advocate for the southern connection in the area of the BU Bridge at the Allston Interchange/I-90 Turnpike project
- Agency Meetings: There are multiple on-going efforts that the City is coordinating with agencies and institutions, including MassDOT, the MBTA, the CRA and MIT. Other efforts include reconfirming design standards and basic project assumptions, confirming details of interim northern connection on Gore Street and discussing initiatives outside the project scope, such as cross-river bicycle and pedestrian connections at the BU bridge and transit considerations with the Allston Interchange/I-90 Turnpike project.

Working Group Homework Summary/Recap

Andy discussed the results of the Working Group's homework assignment since the last meeting. Working group member Amy Flax sent in a number of photos and was thanked for this effort. Emerging themes from the homework assignment included what members saw at the existing locations that they visited:

- At street crossings – many people, drive or walk, some bike, transit is important
- Nearby destinations: King Open School, Twin City Plaza, Lechmere, Gold Star Mothers' Park, Kendall Square-area offices, MIT, One Kendall Square, cafes and restaurants
- Concerns: safety, especially at night, fewer "eyes on the street" between street crossings

Working Group members were also asked what they do you hope to see as part of the design for the path, which included:

- Separation from traffic – dislike noise and pollution, likes – trees
- Separation from rail with fence/barrier at minimum, trees and berms (like Grand Junction Park)

Working group members hoped to see amenities such as Adirondack chairs like at Grand Junction Park, water fountains, trash bins, seating, bicycle parking/BlueBikes stations, public art, trees, plantings (flower beds) and renewed and integrated park/open spaces. Transportation features Working Group members hoped to see included separating directions of travel and separation of pedestrians from bicyclists where possible and signaled pedestrian crossings, particularly at Cambridge Street and Binney Street.

Andy thanked everyone for going out and doing the homework. He acknowledged that it wasn't an easy and the responses received showed deep consideration by Working Group members of what the path should look like and what it could be.

Emerging themes brought up by the Working Group members included (Tegin noted lots of "air knocks" in agreement to these themes):

- Concerns about pedestrian crossings at Main Street and the distance of the Grand Junction path to MIT
- Varied availability of right-of-way space to build a path. In Grand Junction Park, it felt like there was a lot of room there, but the multi-use path was narrow and could be wider. Seems like there is an opportunity to make the path as wide in as many places as possible and keep cars and cyclists separated due to potential volume of commuters in the future.
- At Cambridge Street crossing, there are city parks and landmarks that could be integrated into the parkland and multi-use path, that would be good (e.g. Fort Washington Park). How can we open up adjacent fence areas to access these locations and combine with other public property.

Andy then reviewed the Demand Estimates for the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path compiled by MAPC. He stressed that these estimates were for bicyclists only. The average AM and PM rush hour combined estimates showed 468 cyclists using the path north of Main Street and 558 cyclists using the

path south of Main Street. These estimates are almost double the current use of other multi-use path facilities in other parts of Cambridge such as Linear Park, Fresh Pond Path and various sections of the Paul Dudley White Path, but were close to the number of users of the Minuteman Bike Path.

Questions by Working Group members:

- Do these estimates take into account current or future building construction along Mass Ave? Andy answered that these estimates are for a fully-completed GJ path
- What time of year were the estimates assumed? Andy stated the estimates were assumed to be in September/October and is just cyclists.
- How do these estimates compare to the counts at the Kendall Square Marriott? Bill Deignan answered that there were over 2,200 cyclists yesterday, however the average ranges between 800-900 cyclists in winter and 1,500-2,000 in better weather

Tegin noted that the City is trying to design a path that is similar in scale and use as the Minuteman Bikeway. Differences between the Minuteman Bikeway and the proposed Grand Junction Multi-Use Path are the number of intersections from Binney Street to Mass Ave, four of which are expected to create major queueing and “mixing zones” for pedestrians and cyclists. Also, the Minuteman Bikeway’s width is 9’ to 10’, which is narrower than what is proposed for design of the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path.

Design Challenges

Tegin stated that the group will not be looking at designs today but are looking at challenge areas for the design. There are two main challenge areas: street crossings and limited rights-of-way. Tegin provided an overview that the project is being designed for people movement, not modes of transportation. People in the City of Cambridge often have choices in modes and are not restricted to one mode. Many choose multiple modes to travel throughout the community. As a policy, the City must strive to make walking, biking, and taking public transit as comfortable and convenient as possible, challenge is how best to offer a robust sustainable transportation system that makes walking, biking and public transit feasible, competitive, and safe to get around in constrained right of ways.

Grand Junction Multi-Use Path, the focus will be to design it for the average use, not just cyclists. Focus on elders and younger people, not experienced cyclists. Tegin reviewed a sampling of pedestrian crossings and safety features that could be incorporated into the design. When thinking about bicycle safety, we should think about how people bike and connectivity and convenience to bike to places. The City of Cambridge Bicycle Plan is undergoing an update. Data collection is underway to figure out where cyclists are riding and what design solutions for streets will accommodate amongst the other modes. It is known that on Mass Ave and Cambridge Street are high bicycle use corridors, and that the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path will cross both roadways.

Tegin also noted that it’s important to understand where the “crash rate” is rather than just straight bicycle counts. Crash rates are determined by per million bicycle miles travelled. Tegin also reviewed tools to analyze transit delay and reliability, and how the path design will need to make sure that there

are no negative effects on transit operations. Tegin also explained vehicle capacity analysis tools and how Level of Service (LOS), which measures delay, and Volume to Capacity (V/C) ratios factor into the analysis

Street Crossings

Tegin highlighted that there are four intersections that will be focused for design: Mass Ave, Main St/Vassar St/Galileo Galilei Way, "Little" Binney Street and Cambridge Street. Broadway is not included in this project as it is being designed under other project/work.

Mass Ave

Within the last year, safety improvements to install bicycle lanes that are parking protected and a bus lane were completed. Other sections of Mass Ave for improved safety improvements are works in progress. Signal coordination with Vassar and Albany Streets have also been made. Tegin noted that this area is heavily impacted by construction and constantly changing. She also pointed out that the "donuts" show existing counts by mode and noted that the number of pedestrians using Mass Ave in the P.M. Peak period are comparable to automobiles in terms of numbers. Similarly, bicycling and transit show a similar correlation.

Questions/Comments from Working Group Members

- Changes on Mass Ave and Vassar St intersection has improved crossing comfort level with children
- In the Mass Ave corridor, is there potential to include path with redevelopment of adjacent parcels? Tegin responded that the City cannot force a private property owner to build a path, but potential negotiations could occur.
- When factoring bus stops at railroad crossings, could a bus lane help so that buses don't create their own queues? Tegin stated the City is exploring a number of items to design less impact on transit.

Main Street @ Vassar Street

Tegin noted that this intersection is heavily pedestrianized and the proposed path is offset from the street intersection. The path would also transition from the west side of the railroad tracks to the east and enter Grand Junction Park. The question of how best to provide a separated connection from the path to the park is a design challenge. Also, how best to integrate signalized crossings with Main and Vassar St is also challenging.

Questions/Comments from Working Group Members

- A large number of delivery trucks stop on the southbound bicycle lane of Galileo Galilei Way. How best can we integrate that with an improved traffic design?
- There is a similar angled intersection near Linear Path in North Cambridge – could be a case study to follow closely on how to separate cyclists and pedestrians.

Tegin also briefly reviewed the separate project for Broadway and Galileo Galilei Way project and its relation to Grand Junction Multi-Use Path. Currently, the Broadway project is at 10% design and introduces raised “cycle tracks” as part of its design.

“Little” Binney

Of all the intersections, “Little” Binney may provide the least challenges for design. Mode distribution is different and proportionate and the majority of people using Little Binney Street are auto drivers. Binney Street Park to be constructed and include the Multi-Use Path segment, which will transition from the east side to the west side of the tracks here.

Comments from Working Group members:

- There are lots of pedestrians crossing just west of Grand Junction right-of-way to the parking area in Kendall Square.

Cambridge Street

Like “Little” Binney Street, there are not a large number of cyclists, however the crash rate for cyclists is high. There are a number of safety concerns for bicycling at this intersection as Cambridge Street is vehicle dominated. The challenge will be to design Cambridge Street to work better for all modes and the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path as the path transitions from the west side back to the east side of the corridor. Mid-block pedestrian crossing treatments will likely require Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs). Bus prioritization of the corridor and traffic recirculation of intersecting streets should be considered.

Comments from Working Group members and the public:

- There are no good bike lanes on the numbered (intersecting) streets and the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path could attract lots of people living in those neighborhoods to commute via bike.
- Because of the traffic congestion on Cambridge Street, there is a lot of tension and friction between people and cars that is happening. Not a comfortable place to bike. Solar glare and visibility is a problem here.
- Good opportunity to place art along this length of the corridor. Also, the Main Street segment is a good location as well.
- Solar glare is also a problem on Broadway, particularly heading eastbound in the afternoons

Limited Right of Way

Tegin discussed how the limited right-of-way is a challenge for the design. She highlighted the cross-section on Slide 30 as the basis for the design and that it would not preclude two track transit for the future. Tegin also showed that there is a limited cross-section example to accommodate smaller right-of-way widths. Examples of sections with limited right-of-way include the MassDOT-owned section near the Pacific Street crossing and the MIT-owned corridor looking west. Another section that is “pinched” is the MassDOT-owned section north of Binney Street.

Questions from Working Group Members:

- Can we fit a path down the side here at Binney Street?
- What is MassDOT's rationale for two track transit and is that negotiable? Tegin wouldn't get into it and there is a strong desire to maintain flexibility for future high frequency transit
- What is the relationship of this project to Vision Zero? Tegin stated that the strategies of Vision Zero are integrated into all aspects of transportation planning done by the City.

Public Art Vision/Overview

Lillian Hsu and Kaki Martin presented an overview of the potential public art vision that could occur along the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path. The City's Art Program is based on a 1979 City ordinance that requires that one percent of construction funds goes towards public art. The question is how to use the available funding (\$85,000) to create art that responds to a two-mile site – not just the physicality of site but also the cultural and political aspects of it.

Because the path passes through five different neighborhoods, among which exist both harmonies and dissonances, it could serve as a cultural connector between the neighborhoods. The history of rivers and railroads around the world includes the effect they have of cross-cultural communication. The public could make visible the potential for more connections.

There is a long history of street and graffiti artists painting on train cars and along railroad tracks. With that theme in mind, we are exploring ways to provide opportunities for muralists. Graffiti Alley is a wonderful destination space, a social space, and a changing art gallery. Could we create another Graffiti Alley or "free wall" along the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path? Free walls allow a sanctioned space for artists' experimentation. There are several locations along the corridor that would be good locations for either a free wall or a commissioned mural

Lillian reviewed examples of "lenticular" murals as an option. Motion as a theme could be explored as well. Free wall examples in Toronto's Graffiti Alley and Beverly, MA were also shown to the Working Group.

Lillian mentioned that the MIT public art curator is enthusiastic about partnering. Lillian has also reached out to Sarah Gallop in the Office of Government and Community Relations.

Questions from Working Group Members:

- Wall under the McGovern – isn't that flat and could be used?
- How can we obtain more than the \$85,000 for the public art piece of the project? Two funding ideas – Participatory Budgeting or a National Endowment for the Arts grant
- Could we create similar "ground art" (e.g. Somerville) – graffiti on the path? Lillian responded that special paints, like basketball court paint are designed to reduce slipping, however she recommended not doing them because of the maintenance required.

- When you think of Kennedy Greenway or High Line in NYC – could be an opportunity for installations (non-permanent art structures) that change every so often.
- How about small periodic objects along the length of the path
- Would neighborhood business associations or neighborhood groups want to take ownership of art installations or works
- What would we want for art works on the GJ?
- What about a branding of RR theme in addition to neighborhood theme?
- How can lighting be incorporated into the art works and for safety aspects along the path

Public Comment

Tegin then opened the meeting up to any additional questions by Working Group members or the public:

- For very restricted areas (right-of-way) – add industrial trellis and plant along it to fill in with greenery (knock of agreement) – concerned about noise pollution with more frequent transit and could buffer sound and provide greenery
- A resident expressed gratitude for the City to do this project. As a resident, and as the facts of the website point out, there is not a good way to connect East Cambridge to Cambridgeport.
- Multiple members asked that the City “push” the engineering consultants to be bold and consider design alternatives with grade separation for the corridor and provide “cut through points” over path at multiple locations

Wrap-up/Next steps

Tegin closed the meeting. The next Working Group meeting is tentatively set for early December 2019. The meeting ended at 7:55pm.