

WORKING GROUP MEETING #6

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Zoom Virtual Meeting

Working Group Members	City Staff	Public
Robert Ricchi	Bill Deignan, CDD	Robert J. La Trémouille
Kathryn Brown	Andrew Reker, CDD	Alan Moore
Miguel Perez-Luna	Jerry Friedman, DPW	Luis Mejias
Rebecca Bowie	Patrick Baxter, TPT	Lynn Weissman
Tom Evans	Susanne Rasmussen, CDD	John McLachlan
Michelle Lower	Hilary Zelson, Cambridge Arts	Ron Hoffmann
Katrina Sousa		Joseph Poirier
Jason Alves	Consultants	Petru Sofio
Bill McAvinney	Christi Apicella, McMahon	Jim Gray
Nicolas Dard	Natalie Raffol, McMahon	Simon Torracinta
Ambar Johnson	Brendan Linard, McMahon	Brian Conway
Christopher Cassa	Brian Montejunas, Kleinfelder	Rachel Burckardt
Amy Flax	Kaki Martin, KMDG	Debby Sommer
Caroline Lowenthal	Michelle Danila, Toole	Amber Christoffersen
Nicolas Dard	Sharon Komarow, KMDG	Devin Mackoff
	Kate Ackerson, Kleinfelder	Richard Sutton
Not present:		Raymond Hayhurst
Sarabrent McCoy	Public	Shawn Bonneau
Brad Pillen	Mark Schneider	Karen Molloy
Diana Prideaux-Brune	Wig Zamore	Eitan Normand
Jose Luis Rojas	Kit Seelye	Lynn Weissman
Miguel Perez-Luna	Julia Murdza	Amanda Sindel-Keswick
Dalila Salcedo	Mike Gerhardt	Kirsten Solberg
Florence Toussaint	Wendy Landman	Christine Thomas
	John Bihn	John Bowman
	Karl Alexander	Alan Greene
	Piotr Szamel	Ron Creamer
	Tyner Lawrence	Nathan Ives

(Table continued on next page)

Key: CDD = Community Development Department; TP&T = Traffic Parking & Transportation;
DPW = Public Works; CAC = Cambridge Arts Commission

Public		
Bill Byrn	Tim Russell	Steven Miller
George Schneeloch	Catherine Zusy	Monica Sawhney
Jason Stockmann	Tien-Tien Chan	Viola Augustin
Felix	Gavin Lund	Dylan Russell
Brian Cafferelli	Alan Sherr	Jeff Petrucelly
Ian McKinnon	Bruce Kulik	Christian Cole
Kevin Coughlin	Robb Johnson	Rick Corsi

The following is a meeting summary of the Working Group Meeting #6 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 Andy Reker, Transit Planner, City of Cambridge, who opened by reviewing the virtual platform, the purpose of the meeting, and the ground rules of the meeting. The ground rules described were that Working Group members would periodically be given an opportunity for ask questions and comment throughout the presentation, while members of the public were asked to submit questions in writing or wait until the public comment period at the end of the meeting. Bill Deignan, Transportation Program Manager, City of Cambridge, then introduced city staff and consultant design team members, before reviewing the agenda for the meeting.

Project Updates

Bill continued by giving updates on the current status and next steps of the project. As he described, the design team has been looking at the feedback from the virtual open house, for which comments were accepted from December 4, 2020 until January 4, 2021, as well as reviewing further details related to design. Bill also gave updates on collaboration with MassDOT and the MBTA – the feedback from these stakeholders has been largely positive. MIT has also given initial feedback, while further coordination with Alexandria Real Estate is needed.

Following this, Bill reviewed the project schedule, indicating that final design is anticipated for the Fall of 2021 into the Summer of 2022. He indicated that another working group and another public meeting are expected to be held, and additionally, there will likely be a project update meeting closer to when construction is set to begin.

Virtual Open House Feedback

Christi Apicella, McMahon Associates, reviewed the feedback from the virtual open house. Over 1,300 people participated in the open house and over 175 comments were made. Much of this feedback was positive. Christi then reviewed the key themes of the feedback, which included:

- Comfortable and intuitive street crossings
- The potential for separation between people walking and people biking
- Path connections to other regional walking and biking facilities
- Mixed opinions on where and how neighborhood connections should be made
- A desire for path amenities such as lighting, art and landscaping

Brian Montejunas, Kleinfelder, took over to review the first three themes of the feedback.

1. Comfortable and intuitive street crossings

- Massachusetts Avenue: The design team is working on providing protected bicycle facilities along Mass. Ave. through the crossing. This may involve relocating the existing bus stop at Mass. Ave. and Albany Street from the east side to the west side of the intersection. Signal timings would also need to be reviewed and synchronized between pedestrian and vehicular signals. Finally, Brian mentioned that they are looking to coordinate with MIT to develop a pocket park at the crossing.
- Main Street: Brian stressed the separated crossing for bicycles and pedestrians, as well as the need to tie the design into other improvements occurring on the east side of the intersection. He then showed a future rendering of Galileo Galilei Way, speaking to the design considerations in that location and how they will tie into the proposed Main Street crossing design. He reinforced that the Grand Junction Path along this stretch would be provided in addition to the separated bike lanes being installed along the Galileo Galilei Way.
- Cambridge Street: Brian continued by briefly reviewing the Binney Street crossing before discussing the Cambridge Street crossing. At Cambridge Street, he pointed out the potential pocket park, as well as the challenge posed by the need for the path to cross the railroad tracks. He also pointed out the flare in the path on the southern side, which exists to accommodate the retention of an existing street tree.

2. Separation between people walking and biking

Feedback reflected a desire for separation when feasible between people walking and people biking. Brian illustrated some of the challenges and opportunities regarding separation by reviewing a rendering for the mixing zone at Main Street, south of which path users are separated by direction of travel.

3. Regional path connections

On the southern path end, Brian noted that a direct connection from the path through to Memorial Drive along the Grand Junction right-of-way is not possible. Another

opportunity for a connection from the path to Memorial Drive is using the existing crossing at Fort Washington Park. From there, people could walk or bike along Vassar to Amesbury and from Amesbury across Memorial Drive to the Charles River paths. Bill added that they are looking into the potential to add wayfinding along this route to aid path users.

Bill then noted, in response to comments that were submitted through the Q&A function, that the presentation is intended simply to look at broad themes of feedback and not to be an exhaustive tour of the path.

Brian then continued presenting path connections, reviewing the northern path end at Gore Street. He explained that a separate project would bring future improvements to Gore Street, and demonstrated how these would tie into the Grand Junction Multi-use Path. He also noted that while there is not currently a plan for a direct connection to Cambridge Crossing, it is something that the City could look at in the future.

Bill added that the connection to Cambridge Crossing, as well as other northern connections, would potentially be included in a future phase of the project.

4. Neighborhood connections

The feedback from the open house regarding the Linden Park neighborhood connections was mixed. Many commenters supported the new connections, while many others were wary of the foot and bike traffic it might generate through the neighborhood.

Bill reviewed connections to the Linden Park neighborhood, showing how people coming from Linden Park or Wellington-Harrington would access the path either with or without these new connections. The new connections would provide a more direct route.

Brian then paused to take questions from Working Group members:

Amy Flax asked about the connection from Amesbury Street to the river and if it would be a two-way route. Bill clarified that it would indeed be two-way.

- Bill McAvinney had two questions:
 - The first was whether there would be a traffic signal or a crosswalk to cross at Waverly Street, as currently there is no sidewalk on the southern side of the street. Bill Deignan replied that a crosswalk is planned, but not a Rapid Rectangular Flashing Beacon (RRFB) or other options, and that it was something they can bring back up and discuss.

- He also asked whether there had been coordination with MIT at the Fort Washington Park Crossing, as the school is building a new dormitory at that location. Bill Deignan responded that they were coordinating with MIT and mentioned that the school is providing a plaza at the location with a connection between two buildings to the path.
- Rebecca Bowie commented that at Waverly Street and at the BU Rotary there is a mess of traffic during rush hour. She asked whether there are plans to make this an easier place to travel during this time of day. Bill responded that they are talking to the DCR, which had a plan for Memorial Drive that has been broken into different pieces. DCR has put an RFP out for a new design team to handle that reconfiguration, of which the redesign of the BU Rotary would be a piece. It is unclear, though, when this would occur.
- Caroline Lowenthal commented that she was appreciative that they are keeping the street tree at the Cambridge Street crossing. She also voiced support for the Linden Park connection – one or both of them.
- Jason Alves asked whether there was the possibility of a path crossing at the site of the planned Linden Park connections. Bill acknowledged that this has been brought up in the past and that it is not an easy thing to create a new crossing of a railroad. He mentioned that the future of the parcel on the opposite side of the path is up in the air – ARE is trying to purchase it to turn it over to the City. Bill said that until that happens, they are not looking at the crossing. He reiterated that if they did look into it, it would be very difficult to obtain approval for a new at-grade crossing.
- Jason added another comment regarding Cambridge Street – he had general confusion as to the operations of that intersection. Bill replied that the StoryMap gave more detail and that he could send out more detailed designs to anyone who was interested.
- Chris Cassa made several comments:
 - First, he said that users of the Cambridge Street crossing might not follow what is intended at this location. He asked whether there is a plan to change the direction of any streets in the area. He indicated that Lambert Street is difficult to navigate and could benefit from a reversal of direction, complemented by having Warren Street one-way in the opposite direction. Bill responded that these operational traffic changes would have to be a bigger discussion than they are tackling with this project.
 - He also indicated support of looking into a path crossing between the Binney Street and Cambridge Street crossings.

- Finally, he mentioned that at Little Binney, there may be a new curb cut for the Metropolitan Pipe Site, which may create some visibility challenges. Bill replied that they do have an RRFB planned for this location.

- Tom Evans asked whether there were plans to do anything more with the Amesbury crossing and along the street. Bill replied they had not been thinking of that – if they did, it would likely be limited to signage. Anything more in depth would be a new project, as this is just intended to be an alternate route to the planned Waverly route. Tom also then echoed support for the connections at Linden Park and potential future crossing there.

Pocket Parks

Kaki Martin, Klopfer Martin Design Group, spoke about the pocket park opportunities along the path. The pocket parks are being thought of both as individual park opportunities and as a connected system along the path.

1. Waverly Path End

This location is the closest to the river and may need to accommodate a future path extension. Thus, connectivity is important. Kaki described it as an opportunity for robust planting, speaking to the proximity to the river, as well as a place that could provide a meeting space for people setting out on the path. Additionally, it provides an opportunity for stormwater management.

Kaki mentioned that the designs would expand the Waverly Street sidewalk where possible to 8 feet wide. She then elaborated on potential designs. The northern end could host an “upland” landscape with a land form, while the southern end would be better suited for low-lying bioswale or riparian plantings. Trees would intentionally not be planted in parts of the southern end in order to accommodate future path extension. The center part of the park, the narrowest area, would have a long community bench.

2. Fort Washington Park

As it is a historic site, the design needs to account for that context. The two options presented both renovate Reardon Street in a similar fashion to the recent changes made on Talbot Street, including the installation of brick sidewalks and street trees. The first option also looks at Anglim Street as a connection, with street trees leading up to Albany Street. It also has a plaza at the connection of Reardon and Anglim, connecting to the path. The second option does not have this plaza, but retains a pedestrian path.

Bill mentioned that the City does own the Anglim Street connection, however MIT owns the abutting parcels and the geometry of this area may adjust in future development scenarios. Anglim is beginning considered as a medium-term connection with a different way to make the connection in the future, possibly more focused on Reardon Street.

Bill then requested feedback from Working Group members:

- Bill McAvinney said he loves the Anglim Street connection, as it would connects fairly directly into the Waverly Path. He added that, in regards to the proposed connecting route along Vassar and Amesbury Street between Fort Washington Park and Memorial Drive, Audrey Street might be a better choice as Amesbury has a lot of in and out traffic from the Hyatt.
- Ambar Johnson asked whether Reardon Street would be considered for bicycle parking and where bicycle parking might be provided. Bill replied that bicycle parking is not a design detail they've gotten to yet. He said he thinks there is some limited parking in Fort Washington Park already, but it would be a good area for more, as well as for a bicycle maintenance station.
- Ambar also asked whether access would be provided to the slides from the presentation and if they would have a window to provide feedback. Bill mentioned that the slides would be posted on the project website and that Working Group members could provide feedback using the forms or e-mail addresses provided there.
- Tom commented that he also likes the Anglim Street connection. He asked whether there would be a transition zone at the confluence of the path and the sidewalk at Waverly, as Waverly is a high-speed road and the turn off of the path would be tight for bicyclists.
- Rebecca asked what the potential is for adding many trees along Anglim Street. She asked where and how many trees would be added. Kaki replied that there is a tension between the desire for trees and the need for future flexibility. It is something the design team is aware of and as they get further it will impact species choice, quantity, and other decisions. Bill added that there have been no conclusions reached regarding trees, and that the intent is to provide shade trees wherever possible. There is not yet a complete landscape plan, so everything as yet remains at the concept planning level.

3. Cambridge Street

A key point in the design for a pocket park at Cambridge Street is balancing making it a gathering point with the desire to increase the tree canopy. The potential designs also include a free wall – building upon the network of murals and mural artists in Cambridge.

Kaki described two different thoughts the design team had for the park. The “art gallery” scheme adds trees and seating as well as two perforated walls in the interior of the pocket park that would be free mural walls. There may also be an opportunity for stormwater management through permeable paving. The plan also shows a 16-dock BlueBike station.

The second “green alley” scheme includes a planted zone on the western edge of the pocket park adjacent to the church and perforated walls in the geometry of the previous building including the southern edge of the park. This scheme also includes shade trees, seating, and permeable paving.

Several working group members had comments regarding this pocket park opportunity:

- Chris Cassa commented that he doesn’t think the public art fits in with the neighborhood, which is changing quite a bit. He also mentioned that the existing park across the street is very different, and there’s a church next door. Finally, he doesn’t like the contrast between this park and the plans for the pocket park in Cambridgeport.
- Robert Ricchi echoed Chris’s opinion of the wall. He said Cambridge Street in this area is fairly urban and cut up. He thinks smaller is better and making it greener would be better. As the building that was on the location was a vacant eyesore for so long, adding something structural in its place does not seem right.
- Caroline also commented that she would much rather see green space in the Cambridge Street location and she does not like the free wall. She later clarified that she does not mind continuing the wall from the church property around the perimeter of the park; she simply does not like the art wall inside the space.
- Chris asked whether a wall is required around the property – if so, he would like to keep it low.

Next Steps

Bill then went over the next steps for the project, which include additional outreach around the free art wall, an additional working group meeting, and a public meeting at the 100% design stage. There would also be a public meeting prior to construction. Finally, he opened up the meeting for public comment.

Public Comment

Andy provided a summary of comments submitted through the Q&A panel. Themes included:

- Support for grad-separated protected bicycle lanes throughout Cambridge
- Concerns about some segments of two-way bike facilities, including how they would fit at Main Street and whether cyclists would use them.
- Confusion regarding Amesbury Street connections. Bill had addressed these earlier, clarifying that there would be wayfinding, but that it would not necessarily be part of the Grand Junction design project
- Questions about Gore Street connections, which had also been addressed earlier by Brian
- Questions about the Charles River Crossing and the Transportation Bond Bill
- Comments regarding the neighborhood connections – there was some support, including for a track crossing at Thorndike Street
- Questions about when the protected intersections on Mass Ave and Vassar would be finished

Andy then took some live questions and comments from the public:

- Jim Gray commented that he was happy to hear that plans are not finalized. He mentioned that there are strong feelings on the topic of the Linden Park connections. He stated that while it is easy to see the upside of the connections, there are always unanticipated consequences and it would be a big change for the neighborhood. While he likes the connections, and thinks that Cardinal Medeiros is not a good connector street to the path, he does not know if it's best for the connections to go through Linden Park. He said his organization is looking into alternate connections that would still be an improvement over using the Binney Street and Cambridge Street crossings. He is excited for the chance for everyone to work together to create a good plan.
- Luis Mejias commented that it is important to work together and he also stressed the issues on Cardinal Medeiros. He lives across the street from Linden Park and is very much in favor of the connections to the path. East Cambridge is hard to get to and he would use the path connection frequently.

- Devin Mackoff commented that, as someone who lives on Cardinal Medeiros, he appreciates that it is unique as a pocket of the neighborhood. He mentioned that next to Cornelius there is property that ARE owns; he wondered whether it could be used as a connection. He is said that he hopes that they can come to a compromise. He believes that increasing the traffic through Linden Park would change the neighborhood too much.

Conclusion

Bill concluded the meeting by reminding everyone that they could submit comments by e-mail to Andy. He also mentioned that the presentation would be posted on the project website.