



## WORKING GROUP MEETING #8

Wednesday, June 22, 2021

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Zoom Virtual Meeting

Working Group Members	City Staff	Public	Public
Kathryn Lachelt Brown	Bill Deignan, CDD	Luis Mejias	Robert La Tremouille
Michelle Lower	Charlie Creagh, CDD	April Luna	Gavin Lund
Amy Flax	Jerry Friedman, DPW	John Goodman	Carol Adler
Jason Alves	Patrick Baxter, TPT	Amanda Sindel-Keswick	Joseph Poirier
Bill McAvinney	Drew Kane, CDD	Devin Chausse	Brian Conway
Christopher Cassa	Kevin Beuttell, Supervising Landscape Architect, Cambridge DPW	Chris Herlich	Jason Stockman
Jose Luis Rojas	Andy Reker, CDD	Cecelia Cobb	Ron Creamer
Michelle Lower	Miguel Perez-Luna	Bill Byrn	Matthew Bae
Ambar Johnson	<b>Consultants</b>	Olivia Poston	Andrew Godfrey
	Kaki Martin, KMDG	Rachel Burckardt	Christa Nehs
	Michelle Danila, Toole	Lynn Weissman	Sara James Mnookin
	Chris Balerna, Kleinfelder	Daniel Fava	Devin Mackoff
	Maggie Cameron, Kleinfelder	Alan Moore	Jack Wofford
	Christi Apicella, McMahon	Zuki Mahmuljin	Paul Barringer
	Natalie Raffol, McMahon	Mary Annon	Ilda Thompson
	Conor Murphy, McMahon	Thomas Miller	Paul Lyons
	Jason Bobowski, Hatch	Nathan Klima	P Michael
		Kevin Coughlin	Lev McCarthy
		Sergio Coronado	George Schneeloch
		Lan Zhang	Kirsten Solberg
		Julia McClellan	Hilary Zelson
		John Murphy	

Key:

**CDD = Community Development Department**

**TP&T = Traffic Parking & Transportation**

**DPW = Public Works**

The following is a meeting summary of the Working Group Meeting #8 for the City of Cambridge's Grand Junction Multi-Use Path. For more information see

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/Projects/Transportation/GrandJunctionPathway>

### **Introductions and Welcome**

The meeting was initiated by Bill Deignan, Transportation Program Manager, City of Cambridge, who opened by introducing City staff and consultant design team members. Charlie Creagh, Transportation Planner, City of Cambridge, continued by reviewing the virtual meeting platform and participation opportunities.

### **Project Schedule & Updates**

Bill provided an overview of the meeting agenda and project schedule. During the past Spring season important milestones for the project were hit, including the completion of the 75% design. The City is reviewing designs internally and with outside stakeholders with the hope of having a public meeting in late fall 2022 to show more advanced designs. If there are additional design details to discuss there also may be another working group meeting. Final design documents and construction are planned for 2023, pending permitting from MassDOT.

### **Design Updates**

Design updates were provided by several members of the consultant design team.

- **Landscape and Planting Plan**

Jason Bobowski, Hatch Engineering, reviewed landscape considerations for the corridor. A primary consideration is that this is a trail with rail corridor and very narrow in some sections. There are also areas where ownership changes and so planting opportunities must be coordinated with abutters. Overall, the plan aims to maximize shade to meet the goals of the urban forest master plan and create a landscape that is maintainable by the City. The plan will maximize ecosystem function by using native species, prioritizing pollinator species, support green infrastructure, create a recognizable character, and maintain vegetation management.

Jason reviewed several sections of the corridor, identifying trees that the team plans to keep and areas where there is opportunity to add shrubs and new trees. For example, the section from the Waverly Street pocket park to Fort Washington Park has opportunity to add shade trees and the following section after Fort Washington Park is the best opportunity for planting along the whole corridor. A bio-retention basin, additional shrub massings, and plantings are all proposed. The section from Little Binney to St. Anthony's church is narrow and the area with the most limited opportunity to expand landscape.

- **Cambridge Street Pocket Park**

Kaki Martin, KMDG, reviewed previously presented ideas on the design concept goals for the park and the newer design direction received from the City and Working Group. The existing vacant lot just conveyed to the City is 45' by 50' abutting church property. The team is working hard to save the existing elm tree in the back corner of the park.

Important features of the design of the park include planting, seating, and shade. The team proposes using a variety of planting types such as vines along the back wall, plus planters, bench seating, and a trellis for shade. The team particularly would like feedback on the incorporation of a mist element to provide additional heat mitigation.

Kaki showed a plan view of the proposal, which includes a pergola or trellis, bench elements, planting along the west edge extending the church garden into pocket park, a large planter at the corner of the path and Cambridge St. sidewalk, and seating along back of sidewalk. Kaki reviewed several 3D views to illustrate how it would feel to be in the space. These also showed the lenticular fence and lighting elements.

Details of the trellis, whether to include the mist station, paving materials, and amenities like trash, a drinking foundation, etc. are being determined as part of the continued design development.

Working Group Discussion:

- Amy Flax: This looks nice. I like design, native plantings, wall with vines; however, rabbits are big issue everywhere in Cambridge. Are there considerations so that what is planted will not be eaten by rabbits? Also, is there bike parking?
  - Bill: Bike parking is not on the list, but will be provided.
  - Kaki: We will work with Jason's team and DPW to fine tune a rabbit-proof plant list.
- Jose Luis Rojas: Regarding trellis, this is a good idea, as is anything included to mitigate heat, but there is also a tree there, so there may not be a need for a big trellis. Take advantage of tree. Are there lessons learned from the park across the street? I'm in favor of mist, but only if activated when people use it.
  - Bill: We are looking for a different feel for this park – it is not a dead end space, not as enclosed, and will be more welcoming.
  - Kaki: There are lessons learned from the other park and two key differences. There is the ability to move through park and address the sidewalk in clear way. The park will be connected to street, people like to watch people go by.
- Chris Cassa: Right now, there is a brown plastic fence and the park is used as a parking lot. I like that the proposed park is opened up. Is there a way to lower the barrier with vine area to see open space? There is not as much to see on the end with back side of church. It is worth looking at what works and what doesn't at the park across the street.

There is police activity there at least once a week. I like bikeshare, but the King Open School has bike share a few blocks away. Is there enough density for more?

- Bill: We do try to put bike share stations near each other in case people can't find or dock a bike. We are finding locations in east Cambridge – one is likely going in at Twin City Plaza at Gore Street.
- Michelle Lower: Are there safety precautions for people who cut through the park to go west on Cambridge Street on bikes? If this is not the intention, it's something to think about. Also, water/mist features always break.
  - Bill: The City has many water features, particularly in parks. A mister is slightly different than water feature.
- **Linden Park Neighborhood Connections**

Kaki reviewed plans for connectivity to Linden Park, which include two options – a primary connection at Cornelius Way and a secondary connection at James Way. At Cornelius Way the new fence would slope down to not feel as tall when people are crossing through. There would also be new plantings, underplanting, and wayfinding signage, such as a post, to help orient path users. James Way would also have the new fence slope down and refreshed plantings, but would not have wayfinding signage.

- **Wayfinding Plan**

Michelle Danila, Toole Design, provided an overview of the wayfinding signage plan for the corridor. The focus will be on providing signage that is functional and marks the path as a gateway. Strategies include keeping it simple, consistent along trail, support placemaking, allow users to keep moving if they want to, and design for those that are inexperienced or unfamiliar with area.

Michelle showed examples of functional signage used to orient users, demonstrate points with route decisions, and allow users to confirm decisions. Signage may also include information on jurisdictional boundaries, path etiquette, and MIT blue boxes for emergencies. Michelle shared a diagram of how sign families work together, such as at intersection where signage can provide path users with information to either continue on the path or head to nearby destinations. Signs will also be used to indicate where the path changes sides of the tracks and use the T symbol as appropriate to providing wayfinding to MBTA stations. Materials reflective of the nature of the path, such as industrial materials, can be incorporated. Michelle shared a map indicating proposed locations for path access points. Signage could be used to create a consistent identity. Michelle asked for feedback and if there are missing locations.

Bill added that the City and design team still need to go into more detail about what signs will look like and what type of gateway markers will be used, but this provides a sense of where things are headed.

Working Group Discussion:

- Amy Flax: Why are there two connections in the Linden Park neighborhood? The connections seem narrow, especially for people traveling in both directions walking and biking. Why not have one larger entrance? It would make it easier for people on the path to not have some many points where others are coming in and out. How are two entry points safer? What is distance between two points?
  - Bill: We got comments that this is a closed off section between Binney St. and Cambridge St. Two entry points would allow people to use one or the other, spreading out foot traffic, and provide a more direct connection to the path for people on the other side of Cardinal Medeiros without going through the neighborhood. Two entry points is safer people as it gives people multiple ways to get off the path if needed. There is about 300-400 feet between the two entrances.
- Chris Cassa: I share the concern that connections should not be too close together. Does anywhere looking promising for full a connection across the tracks?
  - Bill: That is not something we are looking at right now as the MBTA does not want to look at this.
- Jose Luis Rojas: The existing wooden fence was maintained by the neighborhood association, but extends into two abutting houses. Who will maintain the new fence, particularly the portion along two abutting homes?

Does it matter that there is no sidewalk at the two path entrances? How will people transition from the road to the sidewalk? People tend to walk on the road not sidewalk in this area. I am in favor of the two entrances, but understand that some people are worried. Having two entrances make sense, but have you thought about how the City can manage the change in traffic with more pedestrians and cyclists?  
What is the reason for having gateway signs at Cornelius Way, but not James Way?

  - Bill: The entire fence would be replaced and become a City owned fence that the City would be responsible for. The road/sidewalk design has not been determined yet. The City is open to suggestions from the neighborhood in terms of signage and pavement markings. We are not expecting that there will be huge and consistent volumes of people accessing the trail that would cause traffic problems. We can think about this now, but will pay more attention when the path opens. The neighborhood association suggested having one entrance marked and one unmarked to emphasize one as the main access point over the other.
- Bill McAvinney: Have you considered having signage inviting people to the path at the intersection of Binney St., Galileo Galilei Way and Fulkerson St.? When the Volpe development is complete there will be more activity.
  - Bill: That is a great suggestion.
- Chris Cassa: I like the gateway markers on paths – having large ones would tell you intuitively where path continues, which is better.
  - Bill: Thank you, we will think about that.

- Jason Alves: Can you mark Cambridge St. businesses that can be visited along the path, like you propose for Mass Ave.?
  - Bill: We will talk more about how we can coordinate on this.
- Michelle Lower: I appreciate the need for wayfinding, but is there a way to work with the Arts Council and others to make it more artistic, colorful, add something?
  - Bill: We will look to see what we can do to add to the area once we have a designer looking more at the signage.

- **Mass Ave Path Crossing**

Bill reviewed updates to Mass Ave. path crossing, explaining how it made sense for the design team to look at whole area between Albany St. and Vassar St. as a coordinated intersection. The proposed plan reconstructs Mass Ave. between these intersections with raised separated bike lanes and a bus lane.

Conor Murphy, McMahon, reviewed the cross section of the plan, including a dedicated bus lane, travel lanes in each direction, and separated bike lanes, and explained how people would travel through this intersection at the path crossing. The signal to cross at the path will turn on at the same time as the Albany St. and Vassar St. pedestrian crossing signals. The location of the existing bus stop on corner of Mass Ave. and Albany St. is still being determined.

Bill noted that at the path crossing there will be a waiting area, in addition to a mixing zone for both pedestrians and bicyclists and will also include areas for landscaping and planting. He also noted that this presentation will be posted online for people to take a closer look.

Working Group Discussion:

- Jose Luis Rojas: Cardinal Medeiros is a fast road for Cambridge and not easy to cross. If you are encouraging people to cross there to access the park, think about traffic calming measures at the existing crosswalks along Cardinal Medeiros to access the path.
  - Bill: Ok, thanks.
- Chris Cassa: It may make sense to put a “Bike yield to Pedestrians” sign at the waiting area for the crossing and continue the bike marking through it. Both sides should be alerted, including warning cyclists who are going eastbound and westbound that they should yield to those coming down path. It is not clear if bikes yield based on the color of the plan.
  - Bill: Some warning is in order, but the idea is to keep this as a mixing zone, informing through cyclists that people will be coming up from the path. We will look at signage and pavement markings when going into final design.
- Bill McAvinney: Do you have plan to discourage vehicles from stopping on the crosswalk across Mass Ave.? I can easily see traffic backing up enough to block the crosswalk. I also see a lot of people in the area keeping left when they walk – are you thinking encouraging people keeping right?

- Bill: Yes, vehicles blocking the crosswalk is a concern and we are playing close attention to that in terms of signal timing. We are trying to be conservative and let vehicles out of the area so that there is not back up. We will think about having people keep right on the path. There will be a centerline so that people know the path is divided in half.
- Jerry Friedman, Cambridge DPW: On paths in Rhode Island, pedestrians are encouraged to walk on the left side, facing bike traffic.
- Jason Alves: Have you considered electronic signs with different messages? This would allow you to add more messages, change messages, advertise local businesses, or provide City messages.
  - Bill: We will think about that. The City typically uses Soofa signs for bus stop arrival. We will want to be consistent in how we use them. They will likely not be used for advertising, but maybe local messaging. There is also a maintenance fee to consider.
- Jose Luis Rojas: On McGrath, traffic signals are used at every crossing to minimize traffic back up over crosswalks. You might want to consider signals at every crossing.
  - Bill: There will be a traffic signal at the Mass. Ave path crossing. There would be a full red signal and stop bar at any intersection with people crossing.
  - Conor: All three signals in this segment will be coordinated and work together so that traffic will not back up in one place.

### **Overall Design Status and Schedule Update**

Bill explained that the 75% design plans have been completed and reviewed by the City internally. Plans are now being reviewed by MIT and MassDOT and comments are expected in the next month or two. At that point the team will proceed towards 100% design, finalizing details and construction plans, and addressing comments heard tonight, from MassDOT and from MIT. Once the 100% design is complete, there will likely be a public meeting in late fall. The construction package will be finalized in 2023, at which point the City will develop legal agreements with MassDOT and the MBTA and get final permits for construction. The main unknown in determining when construction will start is how long it will take to get permits from MassDOT.

### **Working Group Discussion**

- Kathryn Lachelt Brown: If MassDOT comments are late coming in, would your plan be to hold off on a public meeting in the fall until you get their comments?
  - Bill: Yes, we would wait until we get final comments from MassDOT to have a public meeting. We will have the public meeting once outstanding comments from everyone are addressed to show a nearly complete design.
- Chris Cassa: Do all intersections have something physical blocking cars from driving onto the path? This happens on the linear path.
  - Bill: There will be signage at intersections. We tend not to use bollards/blocking elements for maintenance and emergency response reasons. We have not had issues

- with cars going on the path. At Mass Ave., MIT will need vehicle access onto parts of the path for maintenance, so it cannot be physically blocked.
- Bill Alves: I see a suggestion of pinch point on the southern bike lane at Mass Ave. Might it be worth asking MIT if they would give a portion of the parking lot so that the bike lane can be a consistent width? I think there is currently a bus stop there, but not trees right at the bus stop.
    - Bill: This might be considered, but there is a row of trees on their property. We are trying to preserve trees wherever possible, but this is something we can consider.

### Public Comment

- Thanks for all the trees and greenery! At the Cambridge St pocket park, might it make sense to move the bikeshare to the wall of the park, and instead have this area (now bikes share) become part of the park? This can help avoid conflicts as share-bikes come in and out of the bike lanes.
  - Bill: We did not put bikeshare in the park to separate bike share users from park users. There is plenty of space behind bike share station. We made the decision not to have bikes have to go into the park space.
- In the Mass Ave. crossing, how wide is the sidewalk in the section by the bus stop? I'm concerned that an overly narrow sidewalk could result in people walking in the bike lane.
  - Bill: There is a pinch point there as a result of trying to keep and work around the existing trees. We can still get a bike facility around tree and will make sure there is adequate room for sidewalk.
- The "peds keep right (or left)" signage discussion is important. Where sidewalks are missing, peds have been trained to walk facing car traffic, so I can see where some would intuit that they should walk facing bike traffic too. But an equal number would come to a different conclusion. I do think City signage to provide guidance on this would be wise, but it should be consistent across the City (and ideally neighboring City and DCR paths too.)
  - Thanks for this comment. We'll explore "stay right" signage options along the path and make sure they are consistent with DCR or other area paths.
- I would like to voice including wayfinding gateway signs (or at minimum, destination decision signage) at the path's crossing of Main Street and at Broadway. Since this stretch of the path is already built and diverges from the railroad it is especially important to help guide users towards the next section. Thank you for the updates, it's looking great!
  - Bill: Yes, we will definitely have wayfinding signage.
- Has the crossing and intersection with bike lanes at Gore Street been designed? Any images or ideas about that?
  - Bill: That intersection is being designed as part of Gore Street project. There may be some things that make sense to do when adding the Grand Junction path in.
- Did you show any updates to Cambridge Street crossing?
  - Bill: The Cambridge St crossing was shown at last meeting. We are tweaking it, but did not have time to show it again. That design should be in the presentation from last meeting. We will make sure the latest design is shown.
- For the Cambridge St. pocket park, would the seating be spaced so that one could come off the path and have their bike next to them while they sit in the park?



- Can you add a marker sign at Binney?
- I like the corridor planting concepts. Good ideas, Jason!
- There is the equivalent of an existing gateway marker at Main St. on the short section of the trail between Main St. and Broadway. Perhaps that could be shown on the map.
- As a neighbor on Plymouth Street, I'm so happy with the proposed 2 connections. Cardinal Medeiros is dangerous with speeding drivers and it will be great to create as much access to the GJ path as possible. Thank you!

Bill added that there is a new park being constructed between Broadway and Binney St., which will include a portion of the Grand Junction path. The City has not yet discussed this, but design plans are online and can be sent out. This park will have a different feel from the more constrained sections of the path.

### **Next Steps**

Bill concluded the meeting by letting working group members and public attendees that they could email him ([bdeignan@cambridgema.gov](mailto:bdeignan@cambridgema.gov)) or Charlie ([ccreasegh@cambridgema.gov](mailto:ccreasegh@cambridgema.gov)) with questions or thoughts.