

Pedestrian and Bicycle Crossing of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Tracks

Public Meeting #1 - Thursday, June 21, 2023 - 5:30pm on Zoom

Chat Report | Some questions and comments have been edited to create a better experience for screen reading programs.

Note: Many chat questions were answered verbally during the meeting. A link to the video recording is available on the project website.

Name	Comment or Question
James Williamson	How soon will the deck be posted? Meeting recording, with chat, etc.?
City of Cambridge	The slide deck and recording should hopefully be posted mid-next week.
Gerry Byrne	The easement in Brickworks would follow the current traffic flow?
Gerry Byrne	Its a one way system.
Patty Nolan	here is the Camb Redevelopment Authority report on Rindge Connectivity https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51f173a6e4b04fc573b07c0c/t/609e94369a60393bf9487a55/1621005377996/GA_Rindge%2Bneighborhood_Interim%2BReport_10%2B22%2B2020_small3.pdf
Gerry Byrne	Who would maintain the right of way, easement, asphalt, snow removal, etc? Would this be the City?
Gerry Byrne	By the way the easement on Brickworks at the two corners is 40 inches wide.
Gerry Byrne	Hopefully we can expand on this part.
City of Cambridge	I believe the Brickworks easement follows the sidewalk through the property and crosses the driveway.
Patty Nolan	Why not have an angled underpass?
James Williamson	Have CHA already nixed any tunnel option? Would you please report on what they've said about options.
James Williamson	What about stairs - just for visibility and safety - in ADDITION to any ramp?
Bill Deignan	CHA has an approved plan for redeveloping Jefferson Park Federal and they do not want to redesign the project.
James Williamson	What does THAT mean?
Gerry Byrne	@JW second a stair addition
Eppa Rixey	Agree on stair + ramp option.
James Williamson	Won't there have to be fencing covering a bridge?
Suzanna Schell	Check out this beautiful crossing in Vancouver Washington that goes over a highway and a railroad track to connect the park on the Columbia River with a historic park. https://www.confluenceproject.org/river-site/vancouver-land-bridge/
City of Cambridge	We can look at what stairs might mean, if there is room or if its practical. We would also need to see if this would meet access requirements if stair and ramps start/end at different locations.
City of Cambridge	Yes, there would need to be fencing on a bridge.
James Williamson	JP would have visual impact concerns, too!
Fabiola Alikpokou	https://www.cambridgeredevelopment.org/rindgeconnectivity

Olesya Koenig	Overpass option 1 looks the best for us. We are at Brickworks. Underpasses seem to be not safe for the neighbors, they would attract more homeless people...
Asmait Tekle	Thank you.
Gerry Byrne	Agree Option 1 with a stair addition.
James Williamson	Your images of bridge options are showing fence covering, which is what I meant.
Sandy Durmaskin	All these housing developments now have to walk to Rindge in order to get to the areas - Danehy shopping etc. Is there a possibility that access could be from the back of more than one/all the housing communities? This would be equitable.
James Williamson	Are not showing...
Itamar Turner-Trauring	I missed some of the slides, would be helpful if they are posted on website so people can also weigh in if they can't make the meeting.
City of Cambridge	We are not showing any designs here, just images of other similar projects.
Sandy Durmaskin	What are the slopes and cross slopes of the ramps in over options?
Suzanna Schell	Will there be a public art component to this project?
Mike Nakagawa	shorter link is camb.MA/FitchburgCrossing
Gerry Byrne	Are there any width requirements for bike paths through abutting properties?
Claudia Hill	If the tunnel were recommended - how would the City prevent homeless from lodging in the underpass?
Y. Julia Wang	I am also a Brickworks resident, and I agree with Olesya and Claudia.
Derek E	Throwing in a vote for whatever scheme most closely ties to the future Rindge Neighborhood Connectivity path by the CRA. The options that end near Jefferson Park would be further away from this.
Heather MacLeish	As a woman and nurse who comes home from work at midnight, I would never use any of the underpass options as they are absolutely unsafe with all those turns.
Olesya Koenig	Exactly. It is not safe!
Olesya Koenig	There too many homeless people living around here and they will end up living in any tunnel.
Norman Daoust	Can you imagine bicyclists turning corners in an underpass, not to mention joggers and pedestrians?
Gerry Byrne	Sight lines above ground on easements are important also, around tight corners, need to consider this if SAFETY is one of our goals.
Patty Nolan	A few points: No unhoused people stay in the Yerxa Road underpass, which has been in place for years. Also, what about an "S" approach for the underpass- not a straight line, as is used in the underpass on Beacon Street in Somerville which also doesn't have a problem with unhoused people using it, as far as I have known.

Michael Whelan	From a transit standpoint, I'm really glad the city is taking into account the possibility of MBTA electrification. Thinking to the future, the City should also make sure this bridge does not preclude a future extension of the Green Line from Union Square to Porter and beyond along the Fitchburg Line. Of course, there are no current plans for this, but the city should be forward-thinking and safeguard for this possible transit improvement.
Eppa Rixey	Agree with the "s" underpass idea, I had a similar question about softening the turns to maintain visibility.
Max Heller	Could someone send info about the Beacon St underpass?
Donald Giller	I also don't know anything about the Beacon Street underpass in Somerville.
Amy Kipp	Yes, where is it?
City of Cambridge	Beacon Street underpass is located near Star Market. On Beacon St. See this google map area. https://www.google.com/maps/place/Star+Market/@42.383942,-71.112659,246m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m6!3m5!1s0x89e37739007b279d0x5169c823dd2c37d7!8m2!3d42.383607!4d-71.1117282!16s%2Fg%2F11b6ggnwzh?entry=ttu
Patty Nolan	The underpass I referenced is right next to the Beacon Street Star Market and next to the Miller St. artist studio building.
David Mankins	Is a grade-level crossing with signals considered too unsafe?
Heather MacLeish	An underpass without clear sight from start to finish isn't safe. I use Porter Square Commuter Rail during the day often and come across homeless people frequently who have been in need of medical care but unseen from the public. At porter commuter rail I have come across a homeless person undergoing withdrawal which can be life threatening without proper treatment. We don't want to create a project that hides homeless people away. This isn't just about potential crime or the safety of the housed, but the unhoused as well.
Patty Nolan	We are also hoping to add a commuter rail stop at Alewife.
Doug Brown	This is Doug brown. I would like to comment but can't see how to raise my hand. Please call on me.
City of Cambridge	Hi Doug. You're on deck after Scott.
Gerry Byrne	Can the bridge could have a ramp and a stairway?
Monir 364 Rindge Ave	I'm so excited see the new development plan to freshpond. Thanks so much.
Gerry Byrne	Is there a budget amount for the total project?
Lewis Weitzman	Agree with Doug and Eppa. Way too early in the process to rule out any options.
City of Cambridge	Hi Gerry. Yes, a stairway and ramp is a possibility but we're more focused on ramping at this point of the study. And, we'd have to move into some more advanced designs to generate a cost estimate.
Max Heller	What about prioritizing the alewife to porter path along the tracks for faster access to the Sherman and fresh pond parkway crossings? It's good to know it's a goal, but it'd be good to have sooner rather than being a long term goal.
Mike Nakagawa	https://alewife.org (Alewife Study Group working in conjunction with Fresh Pond Residents Alliance)

Olesya Koenig	Let's do the next meeting live at city hall!
Michael Whelan	I just want to second the idea that if you do go with a bridge, it should extend or spur to the top of the park, near where the track is. That way you only have to go up once!
Heather MacLeish	A literature review of completed projects including over and underpasses should be examined for pros and cons. There are numerous safety concerns related with both options and we should examine the mistakes and the accomplishments of similar projects around the country. Speaking with project leaders of successful and unsuccessful projects would be invaluable to make this project a success.
Mike Nakagawa	Could you at least ask Brickworks if the easement could be extended to allow a tunnel.
Gerry Byrne	Brickworks have 2 hairpin easement bends of 40 inches wide, unless you wipe out a building and deeded parking.
Olesya and Jerry Koenig	Mike: there is not enough property to do a tunnel at the Brickworks!
Gerry Byrne	ARPA is federal funding!
James Williamson	Thanks Gerry
Gerry Byrne	Thanks All! Appreciate all the hard work and great conversations.
Eppa Rixey	Thanks! Appreciate the city's continued work on this.
Norman Daoust	Thanks for the excellent presentation!
Olesya and Jerry Koenig	Thank you very much.
City of Cambridge	CambridgeMA.gov/FitchburgCrossing
James Williamson	Gerry, tompaine@hotmail.com
Claudia Hill	Appreciate this community discussion. Thank you.