

**City of Cambridge
2022 Parking
Engagement Study
Final Report**

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Overview

“The City of Cambridge conducted a study about how people use car parking.¹ The purpose was to evaluate how well parking policies and regulations for cars support both community needs and City goals. The policies that currently regulate parking and that we recommend changing, include the following:

- Zoning Ordinance
- Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinance (PTDM)
- Commercial Parking Ordinance (parking available to the public for a fee)
- Resident Parking Permit Program
- Traffic Regulations

Why Look at Parking Policy?

Parking policy impacts how easy or difficult it is to find parking. This can impact how people experience life in the city and how they choose to get around. It can invite more driving, which creates traffic and air pollution, or it can encourage people to take a bus or bike, which helps us meet our climate and quality-of-life goals. It can cause people to park on the street instead of using the garage in their building.

How Is This Study Different?

Over the past 50 years, City staff, elected officials, and appointed boards developed our parking policies for on-street parking, off-street accessory parking, and general public parking by using consultant and staff expertise, and national best practices. We don't know the exact mix of identities and life experiences of the people we heard from when we collected community feedback in the past, but it is highly likely that they were primarily white, English-speaking, able-bodied homeowners with moderate or high incomes. This would not have represented the overall Cambridge population and likely left many in the community, namely people of color and certain linguistic communities, excluded and unheard. In general, the City is now rethinking how we engage with people who live, work, and visit Cambridge to include members of our whole community in our planning. For this study, we tried something different—we actively sought feedback from more diverse groups and then developed actions in response to the community experiences we heard.

We listened to the needs and transportation experiences of more than 2,830 people from fall 2021 through 2022. The community engagement process included one-to-one personal connections, two surveys, tabling, pop-up conversations, emails, and interviews with residents, property owners, business owners, and employees.

¹ This parking study addresses car parking and does not address parking for bicycles or micromobility devices, such as scooters.

City staff concentrated time and resources on reaching people who have barriers to participating in planning processes and whose needs and opinions may not have been heard in past discussions about parking policy. We conducted eight focus groups with a total of 90 participants. Five of the focus groups were in languages other than English and one was done with the American-born Black community. The Department of Human Service Programs' Community Engagement Team hosted focus groups with the American-born Black community, Bangla-speaking community, Haitian-Creole-speaking community, Arabic-speaking community, Spanish-speaking community, and the Amharic-speaking community. Staff also met with the Board of the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities. Then we followed up by sending a summary of comments back to the focus group participants to reflect back what we heard, invited corrections, and posted it on the project website.

We shared information with more than 1,400 people through email blasts to a Cambridge parking interest group, the City daily update, newsletters put out by the Community Development Department, neighborhood association listservs, community-based organizations serving Cambridge residents, and the Parking Study web page.

At least two points of outreach took place in languages other than English (a survey translated into four languages so CET outreach workers could support community members to answer the survey and the CET focus groups). The engagement effort included 122 in-depth conversations and 2,690 survey responses.

What We Heard in the Parking Study

Before proposing any changes, we needed to understand how changes might impact people. During the Parking Study, we heard a variety of opinions ranging from "We need more parking" to "My life would improve if I had safer bike lanes" to "How could you expect me to rely on the bus when I never know when it will show up?"

Despite differences of opinion, we heard these shared values again and again throughout our discussions with community members:

Community: I need to be able to easily receive friends and family in my home. I want to feel closer to my community.

Trust: I want to be involved in decisions the City makes, even if it's a difficult conversation, and even if we disagree.

Respect: I want people to treat me kindly, even if I choose to use different transportation options than they do.

(Note: Many car drivers, bicyclists, and bus riders expressed a feeling that they don't feel respected for their transportation choices, even as they judged other people's choices. While everyone shares a desire to feel good about the choices they make, there was a general sense of dissatisfaction towards others.)

Accountability: I want everybody to be held accountable for their behavior on our streets.

Safety: I need to feel safe from personal violence and traffic violence, no matter how I get around.

Predictability: I need to know that I can easily and predictably get around to participate in all areas of life.

We have included a sample of quotes we heard in conversations below, and you can see detailed comments from all the focus groups on the [Parking Study web page](#).

Selected Quotes from Community Engagement

"How do we do this [transportation planning] in a cohesive manner so that we can see progress and we have a voice, a part of it? We're not going to all agree, definitely, but how do we reach middle ground so that **we can all live cohesively in the City?**" —American Born Black Community focus group

"I prefer to walk or take a bus or train, depending on how fast it's coming. Because **it's easier to walk around and get errands done or when you are with kids who want to explore the city**. I also walk around for health reasons and for the environment. Cambridge has good signals and respectful people so it's comfortable to walk around. There is also very low crime so you don't have to be scared walking." —Spanish-speaking focus group

"Can you do something **about restaurant outdoor dining?** They take too many parking spaces." —Haitian-Creole-speaking Focus Group

"Parking is always challenging here. But Covid made it worse. **I lost 2 or 3 employees this year, because they got tickets on their cars**. They live far away, especially at nighttime, they finish at 11 pm and must take two or three buses or bus+train to get home. Much harder to keep employees in winter than nicer weather." —Owner of a sit-down restaurant

"My biggest use of parking is when we need loading for deliveries of prepared food. Almost none of my customers in Harvard and Kendall Square drive to get lunch. A surprising number of the employees take Uber and Lyft. Almost none of them drive to work. A good number have an hour-long transit trip. **To help employees, I would like to see improved bus service or free bus service for part-time wage workers**. Fast, frequent transit service is more important than lower transit fares." —Owner of a casual lunch restaurant with 4 locations in Cambridge.

"**I have not ridden a bike outside the parks in a while, because it scares me a little** and I don't have a proper bike. But in summer we always go outside to ride bikes in nice weather in the park with kids." —Spanish-Speaking focus group

"I go with my elderly parents to hospital appointments. **It is very difficult to find permit parking near Mt Auburn Hospital.**" —Bangla-speaking focus group

"I drive and it's awesome. What would be better is if we got rid of them bike lanes because it's so difficult to navigate around them. If there was more accountability put on bikers. They get all this space in street. They should get pulled over if they don't stop at a red light. **The city is so geared just to biking**. That's great and eco-friendly, but not all of us can just, like, ride bikes. Some of us have children, have other things you need to do, you need to go farther distances and **it's just not a vehicle friendly city.**" —American Born Black Community focus group

"To be honest, bus and train, we have a lot of stuff going on ... **my comfort zone is my car and safe because protect myself from any harm and danger** ... every day I'm not safe, but suddenly you sit down in the bus, two people fighting, and then reckless stuff happens. So that makes me worry ... So the car is very important for me. City of Cambridge has to really, really consider our need." —Amharic-speaking focus group

"In general, **I like the way, in my area, they're encouraging biking, go green,** and they offer some bike for people to get to the train. And I like the way in Cambridge when they put the [lanes] specially for biking, for our kids' safety. What my concern about the bus [lane]—sometimes it is no buses, only one [lane] for cars and one [lane] for bus. People start driving there, sometimes I drive too, I use that [lane], but at the same time I'm feeling guilty. Am I supposed to drive that time or am I supposed to stick only with that other [lane], and the other one is empty? **There is no sign to allow us to use it or leave it empty for bus, even if there is no bus.**" –Arabic-speaking focus group

"**I'm so glad I don't have to think about parking because I don't have a car.**" —Tabling at Main Library

"**I don't drive and don't need parking.**" I take the bus and walk everywhere. I need safe crosswalks because cars don't see me crossing, even in the day. They drive too fast and almost hit me. Worst areas are in front of Starbucks across Broadway from Main Library, and at Skendarian pharmacy across Cambridge St. —Tabling at Main Library

"**Parking is hard, but I will never leave Cambridge.** I am addicted to the city. I will never leave, I love it too much. " –Danehy Park Day '21

Planning Goals

As city planners, our job is to think about what people need today and what people will need in 30 years. We recommend policies that improve the health, happiness, and opportunities of Cambridge residents, visitors, and workers. The [Envision Cambridge](#) citywide plan includes these mobility and climate goals:

- **Equity and Accessibility:** Ensure a diverse set of travel options that meet the access and mobility needs of people of all ages, abilities, and incomes.
- **Reliability and Efficiency:** Ensure people and goods can reliably move within Cambridge and around the region, and encourage space-efficient transportation choices like walking, biking, public transit, and carpooling.
- **Safe and Active Transportation:** Eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries while encouraging active living and improving comfort for people of all ages and abilities.
- **Connectedness and User-Friendliness:** Create an easy-to-understand, integrated, continuous, and comfortable transportation network for all people.
- **Community Character and Vitality:** Ensure that the city's transportation system supports shared community spaces and enhances neighborhood streets.
- **Climate Action:** Achieve carbon neutrality, including a carbon-neutral transportation system.
- **Climate Change Preparedness:** Protect the lives and livelihoods of the Cambridge community from the impacts of climate change.
- **Environmental Justice:** Ensure that all Cambridge residents are protected from environmental impacts and benefit equitably from environmental resources.

The City has described these goals for many years, in policies and plans that support people taking the bus and train, and walking, biking, and carpooling. In particular, these goals are reflected in our [Vehicle Trip Reduction Ordinance](#), [Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinance](#), [Vision Zero Policy](#), [Complete Streets Policy](#), [Transit Strategic Plan](#), [Bicycle Plan](#), [Cycling Safety Ordinance](#), [School Wellness Policy](#), [The Climate Action Plan](#), [Resilient Cambridge](#), [The Net Zero Transportation Plan](#) (in development now).

For the foreseeable future, cars will be part of the mix in our transportation system. But cars use the most space, fuel, and energy to transport the fewest people, and they cause the most serious crashes. [Studies show that the presence of parking causes people to drive.](#)

Ultimately, we are trying to create a city where there is less need for driving and parking. To achieve this, we want to make it easier and more convenient for people to get around without cars. For example, [bus lanes give people on buses more reliable and faster trips](#), and separated bike lanes make it safer and more comfortable to get around on bicycle. These changes will help people rely less on driving and parking, but will mean removing some on-street parking spaces. Removing spaces lets us improve transportation options, and we are hoping to make this transition as painless as possible. To do this, we want to make it easier for people to find the parking spaces that are still available.

Our Community's Challenge: Balancing Everyone's Needs

Transportation choices are highly personal.

The City can influence people's choices through transportation policies and investments, but cannot and should not dictate what people do. No single option will be right for everyone. The City can improve transportation options available to people by giving equitable access to parking to those who need it, and to other convenient and affordable options for getting around so they can also make the choice not to drive.

People choose how to travel based on their personal circumstances, but not everyone starts with the same set of choices. For example, some people depend on their cars to do their job, while other people do not. For many people it is difficult to own and drive a car because the cost is too high or they might have a disability that prevents them from being able to drive a car. For other people, it can be difficult to not own and drive a car because they live far from work, have a disability, or feel unsafe traveling another way.

People with more economic privilege might choose to drive if they can afford the costs of the vehicle, insurance, gas, and parking and they think other transportation options are not convenient. Others might choose not to drive because they live close enough to their destination, want exercise, or want to read on the train. But while choices may be based on individual needs and resources, some choices have a greater impact on other people.

In addition, there are some issues that won't be solved by parking policy alone and will need to be addressed in a larger effort. For example, housing affordability and MBTA service quality are two enormous challenges that affect people's transportation choices, and solving them depends on a regional approach working with the State and our neighboring cities and towns.

Parking will always be a limited resource, with impacts on equity.

There is only so much space for parking on Cambridge streets. Many of our neighborhoods were built before cars existed and evolved without much off-street parking. Many Cambridge residents live in apartments without driveways or off-street parking and rely on resident street parking.

People with fewer choices feel the effects of limited parking more than people with greater choices. High parking costs affect people who must rely on a car to get around. People with lower incomes who have to drive will either spend a larger share of their income on parking or will need to hunt for cheaper, but more heavily used, street parking, and they might need to park farther away.

At the same time, people who can't, or don't, have a car end up paying indirectly for parking they don't use. Public space that is used for parking doesn't benefit them and means less is available for open space. The price of parking is often included in rents and the prices people pay for goods when they shop in the city. They pay those higher prices regardless of whether they use parking. They also live with problems caused by traffic (air pollution, slower buses, etc.).

We can't guarantee that everyone will find a parking spot exactly where and when they want it, at the price they want to pay. But we can help make the availability of parking more equitable for those who need it.

Parking serves different and changing needs.

Many current policies focus on storing private vehicles of residents, employees, and retail customers. Based on what we heard in the focus groups, we also need to improve parking policies for other kinds of people:

- **Visitors to residences**—large gatherings with family and friends, home healthcare worker visits, electricians and others who service homes, etc.
- **Self-employed Cambridge residents**—people with commercial vehicles, ride-hail drivers, delivery drivers
- **Cambridge residents who use ride hailing services and receive deliveries**—people who need very short-term parking for pick-up/drop-off
- People who start using other trip types that might emerge in the future

Parking policies affect Cambridge's future, not just its present.

The choices people make today aren't necessarily the choices that they will make in the future. Policies that focus only on today's transportation system—or on trying to return to the ways of the past—might result in fewer choices available to future generations.

The more parking spaces there are, the more traffic we'll have. The City created the plans and policies mentioned above in order to support people getting around with sustainable transportation, like walking, biking, and taking buses and trains. If we decide to change our policies to make a lot of new parking available, that could result in a huge amount of new traffic, which would impact people in terms of congestion, air quality, noise, and traffic crashes. This is especially true when many people are traveling at the same time. These impacts will increase over time as our city and region grow, and if people become more dependent on cars as their main form of transportation.

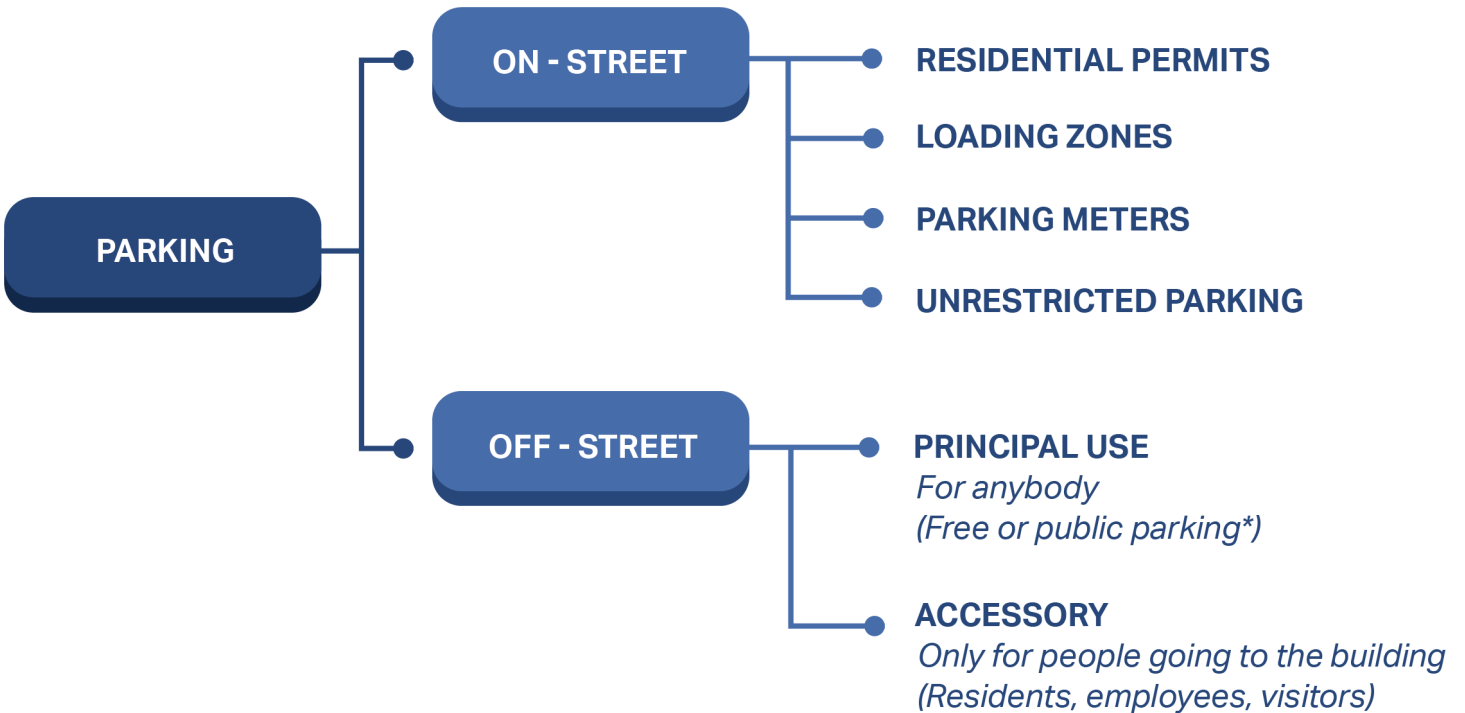
New parking lots and garages can be created, but it is very expensive and can reduce the amount of open space, housing, and other things that people want in the city. When a large amount of parking is created, it can change the feel of an area from being a place for people to go about their lives into being a place for cars. Even if it were possible to create free and plentiful parking wherever and whenever someone might need it, it would transform Cambridge into a very different place.

We need to work together to find the right solutions.

We ask for your patience and understanding as we work together to find a complete set of solutions—it is difficult to balance many competing needs and hope that you will see that we are trying our best to make changes that benefit the **most** people in a way that prioritizes the needs of the community members who **need them the most**.

What we know about parking in Cambridge

Here are the different types of parking in the city.



* Parking available to the public for a fee is called "Commercial parking" in Cambridge.

Definitions

Parking policy—A way to approach creating rules and regulations for parking.

On-street parking—Parking spaces that are located on the street, and can be next to sidewalks, bike lanes, or travel lanes.

Off-street parking—A parking lot or parking garage that is either on private property or owned by the City of Cambridge.

Pedestrian ramp—Ramps that are for disability access to pass from the sidewalk to the road (like at a crosswalk).

Curb cut—A ramp built into a curb or sidewalk to allow for private vehicles to pass across the sidewalk to access a private driveway. Curb cuts require City Council approval to create or remove one.

"City" vs "city"—We capitalize the word City when we are talking about the City of Cambridge government. When city has a lower case "c," we are talking about Cambridge overall. Here is what we know about roughly how many parking spaces are in the city. We will continue to develop more parking data sources when needed for future planning efforts.

Type of Parking	Number of Spaces	Source	What Rules Govern this Type of Parking
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On-Street Parking

Resident permit spaces	Currently unknown	We haven't counted the exact number of resident parking permit spaces yet, but we are working to get there. The City recently completed an asset inventory, which will help us get to the next step (creating a digital tool to manage all curb uses, in addition to parking). This will eventually tell us how many of which kind of spaces we have.	Chapter 10.12, Municipal Code and Traffic Regulations
Parking meters	3,100	https://www.cambridgema.gov/iwantto/parkacarincambridge/map	Traffic Regulations
Disability Spaces	150	https://www.cambridgema.gov/iwantto/parkacarincambridge/map	Traffic Regulations, Americans With Disabilities Act, MA Architectural Access Board
Loading zones	Currently unknown	We don't know the exact number of loading zone spaces yet, but we are working to get there.	Traffic Regulations

Off-Street Parking: Principle Use Parking

Commercial Spaces	16,400	This number includes approximately 1,700 parking spaces in municipal parking lots or garages, 2,700 in the MBTA Alewife garage, and 12,000 registered privately owned Commercial Parking spaces. Most commercial parking spaces may be used by any type of public user (i.e., employee, customer, institution, residential, etc.) for a fee.	Chapter 10.16, Municipal Code
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Off-Street Parking: Accessory Parking

Resident spaces	Currently unknown	We don't know the exact number of parking spaces in residential garages, lots, and driveways yet. As of October 2022, we know we had at least 17,500 parking spaces in large multi-family buildings.	Zoning Ordinance (Article 6.000)
Employee spaces	35,600	Registered parking spaces	Zoning Ordinance (Article 6.000) and Chapter 10.18, Municipal Code
Customer or visitor spaces	8,000	Registered parking spaces	Zoning Ordinance (Article 6.000) and Chapter 10.18, Municipal Code
University spaces	9,100	Harvard conducted a parking inventory in 2017, MIT in 2020, and Lesley in 2019. To be updated in 2023.	Zoning Ordinance (Article 6.000) and Chapter 10.18, Municipal Code
Electric Vehicle Chargers (open to the public)	15 stations with 27 ports	We expect to install 7 more stations with a total of 14 charging ports in 2023, and another 3 stations with 6 charging ports in the future on River Street. That will bring us to 25 stations with 47 charging ports. https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/communitydevelopment/evchargingstations	Traffic Regulations (coming soon)
Carshare spaces	130 spaces	Carshare spaces reported by Zipcar in 2022. These spaces are located in accessory and principal use parking spaces around the city.	Zoning Ordinance (6.24)

Policies that will be Changed

Policies for Off-Street Parking

Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) Ordinance (Chapter 10.18, Municipal Code)

The Cambridge PTDM Ordinance promotes walking, bicycling, public transit, and other sustainable modes in order to improve mobility and access, reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, and increase safety. The ordinance was adopted in 1998 and became a program that regulates 26,000 parking spaces, 33 million square feet of development, and 48,000 employees, or a third of all employees in Cambridge.

When an owner of new or existing non-residential property proposes to add parking on their site, they come into the program. In exchange for adding new parking, they have to take steps to make it easier for employees, customers, and visitors to not drive (we call these “TDM Programs”). Examples include:

- Giving free or low-price MBTA passes or Bluebikes memberships.
- Letting people pay for parking only when they need it, rather than having a monthly permit.
- Reserving parking spaces for carpooling.
- Giving people information about sustainable transportation options.

Read details here: https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodetid=TIT10VETR_CH10.18PATRDEMAPLPASPRE

Zoning Ordinance (Article 6.000)

Zoning is a legal tool that sets standards for how land in a city can be used. It’s called “zoning” because it divides the city into zones that are called “zoning districts.”

The Zoning Ordinance is the document that sets the zoning rules in Cambridge. It regulates off-street parking in a couple of ways:

- It sets maximum requirements for “accessory parking.” ([The City Council recently voted to eliminate minimum parking requirements for new buildings.](#))
- It says where “principal use parking” is allowed.

Zoning does not regulate on-street parking.

Read details here: https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/zoning_ordinance?nodetid=ZONING_ORDINANCE_ART6.000OFSTPALORENICULACOTHTR

Commercial Parking Space Permits (Chapter 10.16, Municipal Code) and “Commercial Parking Freeze”

The City created the Commercial Parking Freeze in 1975 under rules set by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency ([40 CFR 52.1135](#)). The purpose of the freeze was to reduce air pollution caused by cars.

The freeze limits the total number of commercial off-street parking spaces in Cambridge. We

are allowed to have about 13,000 commercial parking spaces, and we have issued permits for about 12,000 spaces. We have about 1,000 commercial parking permits left that we can issue. Commercial parking is a parking space available for use by the public for a fee.

Read details here: https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodet=TIT10VETR_CH10.16COPASPPE

Policies for On-Street Parking

Resident Parking (Chapter 10.12, Municipal Code)

Residents need a permit to park on the street in areas designated "Parking by Permit Only." Residents may apply for Resident Parking Permits (RPP), for passenger vehicles and motorcycles. Each household is also eligible to receive one Visitor Parking Permit. Massachusetts Laws state that we cannot issue Resident Parking Permits unless the vehicle is registered in your name at your address in Cambridge. However, if you are borrowing a vehicle from a family member and you intend to register the vehicle in your name, you may purchase a Temporary Parking Permit which will give you time to register the vehicle in your name.

Read details here: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/iwantto/applyforaparkingpermit>

Cambridge Traffic Regulations (Chapter 10.04, Municipal Code)

The 1961 special act of the Massachusetts State Legislature that created the Traffic and Parking Department, also authorizes the Director of Traffic, Parking, and Transportation to create, amend, or delete the Cambridge Traffic Regulations. These Traffic Regulations describe rules for the use of Cambridge streets, including regulation of parking and curb space, installation of traffic control devices (traffic signals, signs, and markings), and creation of traffic restrictions (one-way streets and local speed limits). The Traffic Regulations are the main way that various types of parking in Cambridge are established and managed.

Read details here: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/traffic/aboutus/trafficregulations>

Parking Meters

See [Traffic Regulations](#).

Final Recommended Strategies and Actions

The final recommendations contain 5 Strategies with 32 Actions. To arrive at the recommended actions in the appendix below, we reflected on the following questions:

- What do members of our community need?
- Who is impacted when those needs are not met?
- What policy changes can help meet those needs?
- And what other benefits can those changes bring beyond addressing the original need?

Priorities

City staff have prioritized the following actions in response to themes we heard during the community engagement process. These priorities⁵ are:

Use existing parking better

1. Develop detailed zoning amendment recommendations to allow and encourage the use of existing underused accessory and principal use parking spaces where a loss of metered on-street spaces is anticipated.
2. Create more parking for short stops of 30 minutes to 2 hours. Example: Convert some spaces to pickup and drop-off.

Provide clear information to residents, business owners, and property owners

3. Improve access to and ease of use of resources to answer common transportation questions, including:
 - Decisions that led to today's transportation system
 - What's next
 - How to get around in new street infrastructure
 - Parking available to the public
 - Courtesy when getting around in all modes
 - How our parking rules work together
 - How do I use the parking meter payment app
 - Who should clear snow in different areas

Increase equity through parking and transportation policy changes

4. Increase efforts to help connect people with existing programs that discount mobility options: income-eligible Bluebikes and MBTA discounts.

Improve the experience of driving, parking, walking, biking, taking a bus and train, scooting, sharing a ride, and sharing a car

5. Install bus priority projects on important bus routes (signal priority, queue jumps, or bus lanes).

⁵ These priorities are based on our best understanding of community goals and staff workplans over the next decade. New and emerging priorities of the City Council and the community could modify timeframes or change the way we are able to complete the actions. **High priority actions signaled through red text and High Priority marking.**

Appendix - City of Cambridge 2022 Parking Study - Final Recommended Actions

Note: These priorities are based on our best understanding of community goals and staff workplans over the next decade. New and emerging priorities of the City Council and the community could modify timeframes or change the way we are able to complete the actions. **High priority actions in bold text.** Once we complete the initial high-priority actions, we will re-prioritize the medium priority actions.

Action #	Recommended Action	How the Action Responds to Community Engagement	Current City Rule or Process	Possible Impacts	Priority
Strategy 1: Use existing parking better					
Action 1	Seek Federal EPA approval to eliminate the Commercial Parking Freeze to allow people to rent parking to the public for a fee.	People have asked for more parking to be available to use in Cambridge. The Commercial Parking Freeze is one law that limits how parking is used.	Cambridge has a Parking Freeze (under Federal law) that limits the total number of parking spaces that are available to the public for a fee. That makes it illegal to rent out parking spaces to the public without a Commercial Parking Permit issued by the Commercial Parking Control Committee (CPC). The CPC currently has about 1,700 parking spaces left that it can permit property owners to rent out.	Allowing new groups of people to use existing spaces would increase traffic. It's also possible that allowing people to rent out parking spaces they aren't using might allow the City to add bus and bike lanes that remove parking, but without actually making it harder to park. In addition, if we eliminate the Freeze, Cambridge might be legally required by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency to take other actions to reduce driving. The City would also need to evaluate changes to the PTDM Ordinance to eliminate other barriers to creating this type of parking.	Medium
Action 2	Develop detailed zoning amendment recommendations to allow and encourage the use of existing underused accessory and principal use parking spaces where a loss of metered on-street spaces is anticipated. (This zoning change is related to Strategy 4/Action 13.)	People have told us that it's frustrating when accessory parking sits empty because only people in a specific building can use it. If those spaces were available to more people, they would have more parking options.	Accessory parking is a type of off-street parking can only be legally used by people going to a specific building (like residents, employees, customers, or visitors). Principal use parking can be used by more people than accessory parking can. But there isn't very much of this type of parking in Cambridge. There are rules for how big a parking space must be and how close it can be to a wall or other cars.	This action would allow more groups of people to use existing parking. For example, restaurant customers would be able to use parking near an office building at night. Creating some more flexibility in the rules for what counts as "acceptable" parking could allow for more creative parking arrangements and potentially increase the number of spaces available. To prevent this action from leading to an increase in driving, this it should be done in combination with City projects that reduce on-street parking to make room for bus lanes and protected bike lanes. While adding bus and bike lanes helps people rely less on driving and parking, and improve other transportation options, we are hoping to make this transition as painless as possible. The purpose of this action is to make it easier for people to find the parking spaces that already exist.	High
Action 3	Allow people to temporarily turn their private off-street parking into recreational areas, storage, bike parking, or another use.	People think they should be able to use their private parking for things besides parking a car.	Parking spaces are not allowed to be used for anything except parking a car.	This would allow space to be used flexibly if people don't need it for cars, without getting rid of the parking spaces permanently. The challenge is that people might still own cars but choose to park them on the street.	Low
Action 4	Create more parking for short stops of 30 minutes to 2 hours. Example: Convert some spaces to pickup and drop-off.	Business owners and residents asked for more loading zones.	When looking at Cycling Safety Ordinance corridors, development review, and new infrastructure projects, we update the parking regulations in each area to make sure it is the best use of the space.	There is an increasing need for quick stopping opportunities at local businesses, and for ride-hail services, The Ride paratransit service, and food and package deliveries. This action would increase parking availability without building new spaces. This supports local businesses and people who work as food delivery drivers. In addition, providing space for loading zones can reduce conflicts between people driving cars and riding bikes, which has gotten worse as people use more delivery vehicles and ridehail vehicles. However, converting existing parking to short-term uses could reduce how much resident and meter parking is available.	High

Action #	Recommended Action	How the Action Responds to Community Engagement	Current City Rule or Process	Possible Impacts	Priority
Action 5	Study ways to encourage property owners to charge the right price for private parking to reduce the chance of people parking on the street instead.	Focus group participants have noticed unused parking in residential buildings that charge a fee for parking. They say that residential permit parking is cheap while private parking is expensive. Private parking owners need guidance for getting the price right.	Some residents are parking in on-street residential permit spaces even though there is off-street parking in their building.	This action could lead to lower parking fees at private buildings, which could encourage residents to park in private lots/garages instead of in residential permit parking on the street. It could also encourage more people to own cars.	Low
Action 6	Do more enforcement of parking regulations.	Residents asked for more parking enforcement.	See Traffic Regulations: https://www.cambridgema.gov/traffic/aboutus/trafficregulations The current process tracks visitor pass usage three times per week and checks resident stickers. The City prioritizes safety-related parking violations and meter enforcement to support businesses. New compliance officer will be hired in the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department, and their job will include increasing enforcement.	Some people might receive more parking violation tickets.	In Progress
Action 7	Make progress on plans for using technology to manage parking, deliveries, and other activities at the curb.	People want to use the curb in many different ways, but we have limited space in Cambridge. Businesses need space for trucks to unload their goods, buses need to unload passengers; drivers need parking; ride-hail cars need to begin or end their rides, delivery drivers need to pick up and drop off their orders. We also need space for EV charging, outdoor dining, and Bluebikes stations. In order to manage the curb using better technology, there are some things that need to happen first--data collection, determination of needs, community engagement, and policy development.	There are different rules for different parts of the curb throughout the City, but they don't change by hour, day, or month. Curb rules stay the same, even if needs change over time.	Using technology to manage the curb could reduce traffic and lower carbon emissions. It could help the City do more with less space by allowing people to more easily find parking, pick up a passenger, or drop something off. It also helps the City manage curb pricing, improve enforcement, and operate safer and more efficient pick-up/drop-off at curbs across the city. However, different groups of people (like residents, employees, and customers) want priority at the curb, and our community will need to discuss how we decide who gets to use it and when.	Medium
Strategy 2: Create new parking					
Action 1	Consider building new City-owned parking to replace public spaces that are lost when new buildings are built on public property.	Community members are wondering if the City can build underground or garage parking on existing City parking lots. This can be in combination with other uses on a lot.	The City currently has 3,100 parking meters and 1,700 parking spaces in City lots and garages. This was considered as part of the upcoming Central Square study.	Garage and underground parking costs \$100,000 to \$150,000 per space to build. We need to discuss what people think is the best use of public funding and scarce land. There are many different desires for City property (both above and below ground) in addition to parking, such as affordable housing, open space, and green infrastructure for stormwater or sanitary storage to reduce flooding and improve water quality. Demand for land in Cambridge is so high and there are so many valuable uses, that it is challenging to identify a location to add public parking. Making better use of existing parking could accomplish similar goals as building new parking at a lower cost.	Low
Action 2	Include space for temporary parking when designing public space projects, where possible.	Focus group participants said they need different amounts of parking at different times of year.	The majority of parking in the city is permanent.	Parking needs change throughout the year. Temporarily increasing parking could fill this parking need occasionally, but allow the space to be used in other ways when the parking isn't needed. In our compact city, it is challenging to find space in a project that property owners want to use for occasional parking.	Low

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Strategy 3: Provide clear information to residents, business owners, and property owners					
Action 1	Provide mobility support to small businesses: --Create new guidance for small businesses to help customers and employees come by all transportation options. --Give earlier notice to businesses about major upcoming changes to public parking (temporary or permanent). Include information about where there is other parking nearby.	Small business owners requested this action.	Transportation demand management (TDM) programs make it easier for employees, customers, and visitors to use all transportation options. The City has a Parking and TDM program that applies to 26,000 parking spaces, and 48,000 employees, or a third of all employees in Cambridge. There is also a limited City TDM program for small businesses that provides information about employees' commuting options. The City provides varying levels of advance notice to businesses about changes to parking.	Sharing transportation information with more people beyond the current group of employees and residents who receive it would support them in taking sustainable transportation. Informs businesses who can educate their customers, and reduces traffic/pollution/ frustration due to circling looking for a spot.	Medium
Action 2	Improve access to and ease of use of resources to answer common transportation questions, including: --decisions that led to today's transportation system and what's next --how to get around in new street infrastructure --parking available to the public --courtesy when getting around in all modes --how our parking rules work together --how to use the parking meter payment app --who clears snow in different areas	People asked many questions about parking and transportation during the focus groups, interviews, and in surveys. There was a general desire to understand more about how to more easily get around Cambridge and how the City makes transportation decisions. Focus groups with the Community Engagement Team highlighted the need to share plans and ensure that underheard, underserved, and historically excluded communities learn about Cambridge's transportation planning.	The City answers questions related to specific projects or topics, but has not yet begun a general effort to answer frequently asked questions about transportation in general. The City website contains policies and plans for transportation in Cambridge. But there are many pieces in different places and some of it is described in complicated, inaccessible language. Cambridge regulates parking through zoning, PTDM, commercial parking permits, and public on-street and off-street parking policies. It is not always clear how these regulations work together.	More people would understand the transportation planning process, how the parking rules all work together, and how to use the available transportation apps. City staff would have a clear understanding of how to change the way we communicate with members of the public.	High
Action 3	Connect more private afterschool activity options with Find It Cambridge. Clarify how kids can take a Cambridge public school bus to the private afterschool activity.	Residents want more afterschool options they don't have to drive to and private afterschool providers expressed confusion about how to be included in Find It Cambridge.	Find It Cambridge lists private afterschool activity options.	Expanding information about different afterschool activities could help people find more options for their kids. It will be important to seek options that are affordable to people with low to moderate incomes.	Low
Strategy 4: Increase equity through parking and transportation policy changes					
Action 1	The Commission for People with Disabilities will invite its Police Department liaison to discuss disability parking enforcement at one of its monthly Board meetings.	People with disabilities suggested these actions in interviews: a) Add more disability spaces to side streets in commercial areas b) Increase or strengthen enforcement of placard fraud c) Design separated bike lanes with disability spaces in mind, against the curb and start after the parking space or make it safe to cross the lane if away from curb	See Traffic Regulations: https://www.cambridgema.gov/traffic/aboutus/trafficregulations a) The City does this action when we evaluate a Cycling Safety Ordinance corridor or street redesign. b) The City designates disability parking spaces, and the State issues disability placards. If Traffic and Parking receives a complaint of placard fraud, they inform people how to submit a complaint to the RMV. Cambridge Police also do some enforcement. c) This action is the current practice among City engineers.	To improve awareness, people with disabilities will be able to share their experiences and perceptions about parking and the police liaison will share the department approach to disability parking enforcement. Expanding the current practice of referring complaints to the RMV may be preferable to increasing the role of police in parking and traffic enforcement.	Low

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Action 2	Study how many disability parking spaces are needed compared to non-disability parking spaces.	People in interviews told us that it is getting harder for people with mobility difficulties to find parking. They said: As City policy reduces the number of parking spaces, disability spaces are reducing too, but the need for disability parking is not reducing.	The number of disability parking spaces is a proportion of the total number of spaces.	City staff will better understand the needs of people with disabilities and set policies so that they are not inequitably affected by parking reductions. In the future, the City could provide an equitable number of disability spaces instead of a proportion of total spaces.	Medium
Action 3	Create a large-print map that shows the locations of all bus stops in the city.	During interviews, residents requested that the City provide assistance and information to people who need help navigating mobility options.	The City provides some materials in large print format, but navigation can still be difficult for people with disabilities.	The City will make its transportation materials accessible to more people.	Medium
Action 4	Work with Cambridge Public Schools to meet students in person to show where bus stops are.	During interviews, residents requested that the City provide assistance and information to students who need help navigating mobility options.	The City provides some materials in large print format, but navigation can still be difficult for people with disabilities.	This will help students better navigate the bus system to/from school. It will also build a culture of supporting sustainable transportation in the schools.	Medium
Action 5	Increase efforts to help connect people with existing programs that discount mobility options: income-eligible Bluebikes and MBTA discounts.	People said they need help paying for a variety of mobility options. Some focus group members were not aware of the discounted Bluebikes membership and MBTA discounts.	Bluebikes memberships are currently available at a discount through an income-eligible program. The MBTA offers discounts for children, people with disabilities, seniors, some students, and some youth. https://www.mbta.com/fares/reduced	Current discounted MBTA and Bluebikes programs are limited to certain groups of people. They do not cover all the people with low to moderate incomes who need help accessing bikes (kids younger than 16 years old) and transit (people who don't qualify for discounts as youth, students, seniors, or people with disabilities).	High
Action 6	Investigate ways to expand eligibility for the Door2Door Transportation service.	Staff suggested this action based on their understanding of mobility needs experienced by Cambridge residents.	There is currently a Door2Door shuttle available for seniors and people with disabilities, which they can book in advance for grocery shopping and medical appointments. The City has applied for a State grant jointly with Door2Door (with the support of the other four communities) to increase service hours and expand eligible trip types.	Expanding the amount and time of service that Door2Door provides would allow a greater range of appointments to be served throughout the day. By serving additional kinds of trips such as haircuts or social trips, would recognize that people have additional needs to be able to age in place and live a full life as seniors. The cost of running a shuttle can be very high, so we will need to determine how many people would use the service and for what purpose.	In Progress
Action 7	Investigate options for providing transit subsidies to low-income households.	Many people in focus groups asked for lower priced public transportation.	The PTDM Ordinance and Special Permit conditions require some property owners to provide free T passes to some employees. The MBTA is considering several fare change proposals that aim to improve equity, increase ridership, and simplify fare rules, including the introduction of a reduced fare program for riders with low income, which would provide 50% off to riders who are aged 26-64, non-disabled, and have low incomes. There is a state law that limits the legal ability of the City to provide private aid directly to residents (Anti-Aid Amendment).	Current discounted MBTA programs are limited to certain groups of people. They do not cover all the people with low-incomes who need help accessing transit (people who don't qualify for discounts as youth, students, seniors, or people with disabilities).	In Progress

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Action 8	Provide residents with bicycles, helmets, lights and other accessories and lessons on how to ride and fix a bike. Investigate options for providing rebates for the purchase of e-bikes. Investigate options for subsidizing pedal bike purchases for children and youth under the age of 16.	Focus group members expressed a desire for more people to have access to bicycles.	The City currently offers free helmets and bike workshops. People have two choices for riding a bicycle in Cambridge: rent a Bluebikes bike or use a private bike. The Massachusetts Anti-Aid Amendment prevents the City from using public funds to give direct assistance to private people. The City is using Federal covid relief grant funding to do this in 2024, or could work in the future with a community based organization to operate a program to provide residents with bikes.	While expanding the Bluebikes system is a good option for giving more people access to bikes, this action could focus on making e-bikes more affordable and providing bicycles to youth under age 16, who cannot ride Bluebikes yet.	In Progress
Action 9	Further study options for a program that gives certain groups of people to discounted and/or priority public parking. Could depend on income, ability, or other criteria the community identifies.	Interviews revealed a desire for parking priority to be given to some groups of people, for example, people who are staying in domestic violence shelters or residents who live in the City's affordable housing units.	People have the same access to public parking, whether or not they experience differences in life circumstances. Residents in affordable housing units in market rate buildings receive a discounted parking space for one car. They pay full price to park additional cars. Buildings charge varying amounts for visitor parking.	Parking costs the same for everyone but not everyone who needs parking has the same ability to afford it (except placards). This is a legally complicated question that will take some time to figure out. It is important to think through all the City's priorities and how they relate to each other. As we support mobility for marginalized people who feel compelled to own a car as their only viable option, we have to weigh these efforts with actions that would improve other non-driving transportation options.	Low
Action 10	Change zoning requirements to eliminate parking minimums.	Residents supported eliminating minimum parking requirements because accessory parking serves only people in a particular building, not the larger community need.	One type of off-street parking can only be legally used by people going to a specific building (like residents, employees, or visitors). This is called "accessory" parking. City Council made amended zoning in October 2022 to eliminate minimum parking requirements. https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/zoninganddevelopment/Zoning/Amendments/adoptedzoningamendments	Creating more parking than is needed forces people to pay hidden costs for parking that they don't use. In the past, this has been done by requiring a minimum number of spaces for every land use. When Council eliminated minimum requirements, it removed one of the rules that prevents existing parking spaces from being used flexibly by more people. This could make housing, retail, and other prices more affordable because developers will not be required to build more parking than they need. This could result in fewer new parking spaces being built over a long period of time, but the change will not be felt for many years.	Complete
Action 11	Propose maximum allowed parking in zoning, based on studies of how much traffic the community thinks is acceptable. (This change is related to Strategy 1/ Action 3.)	City Council has requested that staff propose maximum parking requirements citywide.	Parking maximums in special zoning districts currently limit the number of parking spaces based on how many people we estimate will want come to a site. The Parking Freeze limits the number of public parking spaces in the city based on how many spaces we wanted to allow in the 1970s.	Putting limits on the amount of new parking that can be created limits the amount of traffic coming to new developments. This reduces the impact of traffic on people who cannot or do not drive. Limiting parking allows land to be used for more housing, open space, and other uses desired by community members. This action will need to be paired with policies that allow flexible use of existing parking and policies that manage demand for resident permit parking and meter parking. This could result in fewer new parking spaces being built over a long period of time, but the change will not be felt for many years.	High/Medium

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Action 12	Evaluate the PTDM Ordinance for changes, including how to provide TDM strategies to Cambridge residents and workers who are not covered by the PTDM Ordinance.	<p>People want to be able to find parking more easily.</p> <p>TDM policies and programs that help shift people out of private cars and into biking, walking, taking the bus/subway, and carpooling, create less competition for spaces. Many things in transportation have changed since the City passed the PTDM Ordinance in 1998, and staff think the Ordinance should reflect that. Considerations include looking at how ridehail options, like Uber/Lyft, reduce the need for parking but still increase traffic in the City.</p>	<p>The City's Parking and TDM program applies to 26,000 parking spaces, and covers 48,000 employees, or about a third of all employees in Cambridge.</p> <p>There is program for small businesses that provides information about employees' commuting options.</p>	<p>Transportation demand management programs make it easier for employees, customers, and visitors to drive less.</p> <p>Expanding these programs would provide sustainable transportation support to people beyond the current group of employees and residents who receive it.</p> <p>We also need to make sure that the PTDM program doesn't create unintended inequities.</p>	High/medium
Strategy 5: Improve the experience of driving, parking, walking, biking, taking a bus and train, scooting, sharing a ride, and sharing a car					
Action 1	Evaluate whether to make the payment process the same for both public and private parking, to make it easier to understand parking fees across the city.	<p>People want it to be easier to find and pay for public parking, and they aren't concerned whether it's owned by the City or a private parking operator. They don't understand why some parking costs much more than other parking.</p>	<p>People pay for parking at City meters and lots with cash, the meter payment app, or at a pay station. Private garages and lots have their own payment system, which varies from place to place. There is no consistent system throughout the city.</p>	<p>Standardized payment across all parking available to the public for a fee could take some stress out of finding public parking.</p> <p>This is also a possible way to regulate commercial parking under a City ordinance.</p>	Low
Action 2	<p>Make changes to resident and visitor parking permit program.</p> <p>Considerations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Education about visitor options for large gatherings. --Preventing people from using more than their fair share of the permit parking. --Restructuring cost, including an equity program that would provide discounts for people who are less able to pay. 	<p>People are frustrated that it is difficult to find residential parking in some areas, even if they have a permit. Some people limit the number of times they leave their homes because they worry about finding a parking space when they return.</p> <p>Some people are also feeling socially isolated because it's difficult for a full range of friends and family to come visit them with one visitor.</p> <p>This action aims to address how parking fits into people's whole lives and not just their commute needs.</p>	<p>All residents can get one resident parking permit per car and one visitor permit per household. But having a residential parking permit does not guarantee that people will be able to find a space to park.</p> <p>Residents can request that the City not enforce parking rules during gatherings, so that multiple visitors can attend.</p>	<p>People will become aware of visitor parking options and how to apply for them.</p> <p>A new residential permit system might make it easier for people to find resident permit parking in some neighborhoods.</p> <p>Some people might pay more for a residential permit, while other people might pay less.</p>	Medium
Action 3	Allow carsharing in private parking spaces in all residential zoning districts.	<p>People said that having convenient carsharing vehicles available helps them live in Cambridge without owning a private car.</p> <p>The number of carsharing vehicles located in Cambridge has been declining since ride-hail became popular.</p>	<p>Commercial carshare spaces (like Zipcar) are currently limited to 25% of parking spaces in residential areas. Driveways of single-family residential homes may not be used as a carsharing vehicle space.</p> <p>City Council recently approved the "Craig Kelley et. al." zoning amendment to allow peer-to-peer carsharing (like Turo) in all zoning districts.</p> <p>https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/zoninganddevelopment/Zoning/Amendments/adoptedzoningamendments</p>	<p>This action could increase the number of carsharing vehicles in residential areas.</p> <p>Increasing access to carshare reduces the need to own a private car. Equitable distribution is important.</p>	Medium
Action 4	Install bus priority projects on important bus routes (signal priority, queue jumps, or bus lanes).	<p>People want MBTA buses to be more reliable and not get stuck in traffic.</p>	<p>The City focuses on places with high bus delay or high unreliability to identify locations that will benefit from various bus priority changes.</p>	<p>Signal priority, queue jumps, and dedicated bus lanes make bus trips more reliable and quicker.</p> <p>Some things like signal priority don't take any additional space on the street but change the timing at traffic signals. Some things like more dedicated bus lanes could result in removing some on-street parking or changing traffic patterns.</p>	High

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Action 5	Expand Bluebikes network to meet the City goal of one station every 2.5-minute walk.	Focus group members wanted to be able to take Bluebikes to more places, and retail businesses ask that stations be located closer to them. They reported having a difficult time attracting and retaining workers who live outside Cambridge. (Note: Business owners also requested a small business parking permit to use flexibly among employees, allowing employees to park at a meter or residential space during their shift. But on July 29, 2019, the City Solicitor issued a legal opinion stating the reason this program cannot happen. https://cambridgema.iqm2.com/Citizens/FileOpen.aspx?Type=4&ID=6912)	We place Bluebikes stations where there is demand, development funding, and where we can find space for them. Space is limited and funding for new stations is primarily tied to development projects, so expanding beyond Squares is difficult.	Bluebikes would become more convenient for people to use for more trips. More stations would support restaurant employees and low-wage workers getting to work by Bluebikes. The City has more to learn about transportation needs of people who work in restaurants and other low-wage workers to determine best way to support them (for example, specific locations people need to get to, and needs related to shuttles, improved transit, carpool-matching, etc.).	In Progress
Action 6	Expand transportation education program to encourage good behavior no matter what mode you take. Include etiquette for driving, cycling, walking, and scooting, in addition to safety education.	Many people in focus groups and interviews wanted people driving, walking, and biking to be more aware of other road users and move in a way that is safe for everyone.	The City offers bicycle education workshops throughout the year, free for people who work or live in Cambridge. The "Street Code: Rules and Etiquette for Getting There Together" booklet attempts to encourage safe behavior in all people, and all City bike education emphasizes safe and proper riding.	Etiquette education could encourage more positive interactions on our streets. Cambridge has new incoming residents every year, which can create an ongoing need for education.	Medium
Action 7	Use existing community engagement efforts to better understand why/when/where people feel unsafe in the transportation system in order to identify actions that would improve feelings of personal safety.	People said feelings of personal safety affect their transportation choices.	The City has a strong understanding of traffic safety from its work with local and national data and research. We have more to learn about peoples' personal safety needs.	Staff could gain a fuller understanding of how people's experiences affect transportation habits and work across departments to on common goals to improve residents lives.	Medium
Action 8	Revise City programs and policies to support strengthening social ties.	The study revealed a deep need to increase community connections in order to be able to engage in difficult transportation conversations.	Cambridge encourages social interaction through its community cookouts, Dance Party, Block Party permit program, the Public Space Lab, and other programs.	Research shows that when trust increases in neighborhoods, perceptions of violence decrease. Expansion of social ties and reduction in the concerns around neighborhood violence can move people to walk, bike, shop and explore their communities more. Director of Equity, Resilience and Preparedness at the Cambridge Public Health Department, Nancy Porter, has noted that in communities where social ties are strong, residents are better able to handle adversity, such as damaging storms or illness. When neighbors become friendly with each other in good times, they can be there for each other when the pipes burst or there's a major emergency. Lastly, a 2023 US Surgeon General Advisory encourages local governments to "Utilize a 'Connection-in-All-Policies' approach," including transportation, to advance social connection and address Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation (https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/surgeon-general-social-connection-advisory.pdf).	Medium

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/CommunityDevelopment/ParkingStudy>

For information about this project, please email Stephanie Groll sgroll@cambridgema.gov or call 617-349-4673.