

**CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTES**

Date, Time & Place: March 5, 2014, 5:30-7:30 PM
Cambridge Citywide Senior Center

Attendance - City of Cambridge

Adam Shulman (Traffic, Parking and Transportation); Jeff Rosenblum and Cleo Stoughton (Community Development Department)

Committee Updates

Handout: Current committee schedule

- The city is working with the governor's office to help make successful the late night (until 3 A.M.) T service being piloted in the spring on the red and green lines as well as four bus routes. Ideas are welcome.
- Green line funding
- The city is putting together an RFP for a Central Square bus circulation study. A draft RFP will be sent to the committee for comments and suggestions.
- This summer, wayfinding and "next bus" information will be coming to Central Square.
- A story about the Transit Strategic Plan will be appearing in the Cambridge Chronicle in the near future.
- Still no word from the MBTA on green line extension mitigation efforts.

General Comments

- Tonight, the bus tunnel under Harvard Square was shut down. MBTA staff were doing an adequate job of managing the situation.
- Committee member Simon Shapiro just returned from a trip to Houston, a city which, despite a well-functioning transit system that runs through the Central Business District, is completely empty at night.
- Kelley Brown and others have been advocating for a signal change on the red line.
- There was a question of whether the old Lechmere station would be shut down for a long period of time (up to 2 years) while the new Lechmere station was built. City staff haven't heard of such a timeline and will investigate and respond to the committee and city council. Similar construction at North Station took 3-4 months.
- President Obama's budget, released this week, recommends \$100 million in federal funding in Fiscal Year 2015 to support the Green Line Extension.
- The new Yawkey station is open and looks great.
- Opposition to new construction at 75 New St. exists in part because of the lack of adequate transit-related infrastructure. Stakeholders want better connections to Alewife.
- The area around Alewife has a lot of congestion. [Jeff] the city is working on piloting bus priority lanes in this area.
- Low emission diesel buses are very noisy. The EPA would have to give permission for a study looking into this.
- The person at MassDOT who was in charge of the green line extension has left. Who is in charge of the project now? Jeff will look into this.

Presentation: "Public Transit and Youth in the MBTA"

Committee member Zach Spitz gave a brief summary of a meeting he attended last week with youth leaders from the Youth Affordability Coalition working on a universal "Youth Pass" campaign. The proposed Youth Pass would replace the monthly pass and would be available to children and young adults between the ages of 12 and 21, regardless of enrollment in school or college. The pass would be \$10 per month, year round. It would be paired with a university pass through participating colleges.

Discussion: The Future of Transit and Development

Handouts:

- *“Hub and Spoke: Core Transit Congestion and the Future of Transit and Development in Greater Boston”*
- *“Surging MBTA ridership could overwhelm system, report warns” Boston Globe*

Comments:

- This report highlights the need for crosstown connections like the existing 47, CT2 and EZ Ride routes, as well as the proposed urban ring. [Jeff] the MBTA has some ideas for improving service on the 47.
- This is primarily a subway study that does not account for buses.
- Cities and towns should work more closely with the MBTA, instead of shouldering all transit-related responsibilities on the MBTA. Bus parking is one situation in which cities could volunteer resources (e.g., space for parking idle buses) in exchange for improved service.
- A number of T employees drive to work, in part because there is no T service to get them to work.
- The signaling system on the green line dates to the 1920s. The T is working to overhaul it, but funding is tight.
- There is a disconnect between transit, development, and government involvement. Transit should be a key component of plans for development.
- The city needs to do everything in its power to prioritize access to transit (for instance, shoveling promptly after snow storms).
- There are many different entities that run transit. If they could share resources, they could be more efficient. [Jeff] A first step here is getting MBTA fare boxes onto non-MBTA shuttles (e.g., EZ Ride, MASCO)

Workshop: Developing planning objectives for Goal 1: Mobility

Mobility trends:

- Recent/future significant disruptions to transit (e.g., Government Center shutdown, Longfellow Bridge closure) and how to make the system more flexible.
- Congestion of transit system; aging system
- Major housing and business developments, which assume access to transit and mode shifts to biking and walking.
- Aging population
- How do the transportation needs of the community vary throughout the year (e.g., during February vacation)?
- In general, people who have lived in Cambridge for less than 20 years are here because of transit, walking and biking culture. People who have lived here longer tend to drive more and own more cars.
- Developers develop without looking at transit.
- People living in urban areas but working in the suburbs.
- Parking requirements are being challenged.
- 20 years ago, most traffic was pass-through. These days, it is less convenient to pass through Cambridge.
- Development exactions that improve transit.
- Biking and bike parking are increasing.
- Red line ridership is increasing.
- Although the number of jobs in Kendall is increasing, traffic congestion is decreasing.
- Alewife traffic and bus gridlock is increasing.
- Business associations are interested in attracting customers.
- The city is pushing for more transit.
- Never enough funds to maintain existing transit system, let alone expand it.

Mobility objectives:

- Better estimate recent/past/current/future population growth, employment growth, and car ownership information by neighborhood.
- Look more closely at origin/destination patterns of transit users using new, automated data sources.
- How to better manage trips during weekend shutdowns of the red line. Shift existing shuttles to route 1?

- Would adding buses to MASCO/CRTMA routes (as opposed to MBTA routes) be more feasible and help relieve congestion?
- Use signage that better reflects the information people are looking for.
- Improve pedestrian access to Porter Square station.
- Dedicated bus lanes or queue jump lanes on Mass Ave. north of Harvard Square.
- Improve Alewife Station to Alewife Greenway connection (e.g., pave a south side Route 16 path).
- Improve resilience – more ability to re-route trains, parallel bus routes.
- City funding for an EZ Ride extension (without limiting to city limits and with public fare capacity) to allow a Lechmere-Kendall-Cambridgeport-BU-LMA connection.
- First street and Albany bus lane
- Better understand the region's transportation needs.
- Better understand who the underserved communities are.
- Make buses better equipped for passengers with carriages.
- Look at opportunities for sharing of resources and public/private partnerships.

Adjourned at 7:30pm
