

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTES

Date, Time & Place:
November 4, 2015, 5:30-7:30
MIT building E25, Room 117, Carleton Street

Attendance

Committee Members

John Attanucci, Devin Chausse, Charles Fineman, Robert Fitzgerald, Jim Gascoigne, Marcus Goodwin, Denise Jillson, Joseph Maguire, Jeremy Mendelson, Susan Pacheco, Katherine Rafferty, Rob Ricchi, Simon Shapiro, Saul Tannenbaum, Alexander Taylor

City of Cambridge

Tegin Bennett and Cleo Stoughton (Community Development), Adam Shulman (Traffic, Parking and Transportation)

Presenters, official entities, and members of the public

Three members of the public were present. Philip Groth (MBTA) was present.

Committee Introductions and Administrative Business

The Committee voted unanimously to approve the October minutes.

Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Work Plan

The Committee reviewed and discussed the Work Plan from the 2015 Transit Strategic Plan. The Work Plan will be updated with current tasks and used as a living document to track progress towards achieving the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan. First, Tegin Bennett gave an overview of the Work Plan spreadsheet structure and items listed in the Work Plan and answered questions about individual items. Then, Committee members then listed items they thought should be prioritized (in terms of City staff time and attention, for example).

Discussion:

- It was noted this is a good time to be prioritizing items as the City starts setting priorities for its fiscal year 2017 budget.
- MassDOT Capital Improvement Plan process: the City is submitting a letter listing priorities for capital spending. At the Committee's request, Tegin Bennett summarized the projects supported in the letter. The City noted that Committee members and the public should also submit their priorities to MassDOT. The City and Committee clarified that bus priority treatments should be a priority for both the City and MassDOT.
- MBTA Program for Mass Transportation: the City will be meeting with Scott Hamwey (MassDOT) next week, and Hamwey may also be available to speak with the Committee at the December meeting. Tegin Bennett noted she hopes the Committee can be involved in the PMT process early on.
- The City meets with Philip Groth (MBTA) monthly, and the Committee is encouraged to suggest topics of discussion if desired.
- The Committee discussed issues related to safety and opportunities for increased coordination between Community Development, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation, and Cambridge and MBTA police. Safety-related topics include: transit safety in general, perceived public safety issues in Central Square, and reducing transportation-related injuries and fatalities ("Vision Zero" strategies). Data about crashes are available on the [City website](#).
- A Committee member asked whether different styles of bus shelters could be used. Tegin Bennett noted that resources are limited and there are benefits to partnering with Cemusa. Ideas for new designs could be submitted as Participatory Budgeting ideas.
- Real-time transit information: The display in Central Square has been installed but is not yet functional. The solar powered signs in Inman Square were proposed during last year's Participatory Budgeting process and did not win, but the City is looking into installing them using funds set aside for bus stop improvements.
- Station condition surveys: A Committee member noted that lack of staffing at MBTA stations means that there are issues with fare evasion and resulting lack of personal safety and comfort. Another Committee member suggested that the City's iReport system be expanded to collect feedback from the public about MBTA service.
- A Committee member noted the importance of gathering together resources from developers for transportation improvements and described existing efforts in the Alewife area.
- Green Line Extension (GLX): The Committee, City, and Phil Groth (MBTA) discussed uncertainty about the timeline for the project, as well as past and future mitigation for GLX delay.
- The Committee discussed the feasibility of expanding features of the Western Avenue reconstruction project to other streets in the city (e.g., using separated bike lanes to increase safety for people biking).

- The Committee and City discussed plans to pilot transit signal priority (TSP) in the city. Funding sources, technical details, and opportunities to pilot TSP on EZRide shuttles (instead of or in addition to MBTA buses) were discussed.
- A Committee member brought to the Committee's attention a zoning petition that incentivizes more parking between Harvard Square and Porter Square that the Committee should discuss at some point soon.

Suggested priority items and related discussion:

- Item B – Coordinating with the MBTA
- Item C – Coordinating with local and regional organizations
- Item D – Improving bus stop amenities
- Item E – Working with developers to obtain support for transit improvements
- Item G – Real-time transit information displays
- Item I – Conducting station condition surveys
 - Denise Jillson described successful coordination with the MBTA on behalf of Harvard Square Business Association to make urgently needed repairs (i.e., stabilize an artistic sculpture in disrepair, fix the toilet) in the Harvard Square station.
 - The Committee discussed the need for the business community to be invested in station improvements as well as MBTA system improvements in general. Strengths and limitations of business improvement districts (BIDs) as tools for gathering together financial support for transit improvements were discussed.
- Item K – Coordinating on winter maintenance at bus stops and subway stations. With the winter approaching, Tegin Bennett urged Committee members to bring to the City's attention any concerns or suggestions regarding winter maintenance.
- Item N – Coordinating on Green Line Extension. Committee members noted they should continue to advocate for completion of the project but also focus on projects where they can have more of an impact.
- Item P – Completing a transit service gaps and needs study. It was suggested that the study include the whole region/MBTA system.
- Item R – Implementing new bus stop design and bus priority treatments
 - Committee members advocated for piloting various treatments (e.g., transit signal priority, bus only lanes) and discussed how to balance the prioritization of transit with other roadway needs.
 - The Committee and City agreed that the Committee should be involved in street redesign processes (e.g., by reviewing plans) early on, so as to have the chance to advocate for significant transit improvements. Complete Streets designs that improve the experience of taking the bus should be used for all reconstruction projects. Attention was called to San Francisco's "Transit First" policy.
 - Committee members supported Tegin Bennett's coordination with NACTO as they create a Transit Street Design Guide.
 - The Department of Public Works 5-year plan can be used to see which streets will be reconstructed in the near future, and someone from DPW may be available to talk with the Committee in the coming months.
 - A Committee member suggested implementing bus priority treatments during the planned Lechmere station shutdown.
 - A Committee member suggested piloting a bus only lane during the morning rush hour between Porter Square and Harvard Square.
- Item S – Availability of transit passes. Susan Pacheco described past discussions about making passes available at the Senior Center.
- Item T – Improve wayfinding and reduce obstacles on sidewalks, not only in Central Square but city wide.
- The Committee advocated for trying out new ideas (e.g., queue jump lanes), even if temporarily, so that the public can get a sense for how they would work. The Committee also discussed the role they play more generally in advocating for transit improvements.

Announcements, Events, and Updates

Staff provided regular updates over email and Committee members had opportunity to highlight topics to discuss at the meeting. The Committee briefly discussed the agenda for the next meeting.

Final Public Comment

There were no comments from the public.

Adjourned at 7:30pm