

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTES

Date, Time & Place:
May 4, 2016, 5:30-7:30
MIT building 32, Room 144, Vassar Street

Attendance

Committee Members

John Attanucci, Devin Chausse, Karen Dumaine, Charlie Fineman, Jim Gascoigne, Joseph Maguire, Jeremy Mendelson, Katherine Rafferty, Robert Ricchi, Simon Shapiro, Arthur Strang, 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

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

Committee Introductions, Administrative Business, and Updates

March and April notes were approved. The Committee voted to cancel the July 2016 meeting and instead City staff will attempt to organize a tour of MBTA facilities.

Public Comment

There were no public comments at this time.

MBTA Late-Night Service Proposal

Committee member Jeremy Mendelson shared a proposal for replacing the recently eliminated late-night service at the MBTA. The proposal, put forth by Mendelson, Ari Ofsevit, and James Aloisi, was featured in [CommonWealth Magazine](#).

Information and discussion:

- The proposal focuses on getting low-income workers to work and includes late-night and early morning trips to meet this goal.
- The key to the proposal is a coordinated meetup of buses at Copley Square or another central point (called a pulse system in transit). Most routes are less than one hour round trip, so that riders can expect a less than one hour commute time, even with transfers. A couple proposed routes are currently longer than a one hour round trip and may be shortened.
- Mendelson and the MBTA are working to come up with an accurate cost estimate. The current cost estimate is approximately \$1.5 million. The original cost estimate was lower, but there are additional costs, such as providing THE RIDE service. There may be options for privatization of service, and for coordination with Massport, since the airport is a destination for many users.
- If approved, Mendelson said that the service could be implemented in December. A public comment period will take place prior to that.
- The Committee discussed the importance of appropriately marketing this service, including to those currently using other means (e.g., driving) to get to work. It was suggested the service notices be translated into Spanish (and other languages).
- The Committee also discussed gathering more data (e.g., through a survey) to better understand needs of users, including desired destinations and arrival/departure times.

MassDOT Capital Investment Plan

MassDOT has released for public review a [draft Five-Year Capital Investment Plan](#), which the Committee discussed. Individuals are also encouraged to provide feedback at a public meeting or in writing.

Information and discussion:

- Overall, City staff and the Committee discussed the importance of transparency in this kind of process. While this version of the CIP improves transparency in some ways, it still didn't provide as much information as people wanted on evaluating and prioritizing projects.
- It was noted that none of the projects within Cambridge in the universe made it into the draft CIP.

- The Committee discussed and raised questions about the transit-related portions of the CIP, including projects to overhaul vehicles, upgrade signals, etc. The Committee and staff discussed that the CIP doesn't contain enough detail on what certain investment packages include.
- The Committee discussed the CIP's focus on reliability, and the need to increase capacity on the system, especially the Red Line.
- The Committee also discussed the importance of service planning and coming up with a comprehensive vision to improve service.

Committee Role and Transit Strategic Plan Implementation

The Committee discussed its continuing role in transit planning, policy, and operations in Cambridge and the region. As part of this discussion, the Committee reviewed a list of the most feasible short-term projects from the Transit Strategic Plan and more recent planning efforts.

Information and discussion

- Tegin Bennett outlined previous discussions between City staff and Committee leadership. The Committee was designed to be a coalition of stakeholders who could come together to provide input on transit improvements at the local and regional level, and staff agree that this function remains important. At the same time, the Committee is interested in devoting its time and effort toward local projects and some members question the Committee's ability to impact regional issues. Above all, City staff remind the Committee that City resources are limited and so all initiatives must be prioritized.
- There was interest in the Committee participating on some level in MBTA service planning. For example, the Committee could continue fleshing out ideas generated during the mini bus routing charrette at the March 2016 meeting. The Committee could work to devise a new service plan for an area (e.g., all or part of Cambridge) and present it to the MBTA. This could become a "transit gaps and needs" study, and could tie in well with other ongoing processes like Envision Cambridge.
- The Committee is also interested in increasing coordination with the Cambridge Bicycle and Pedestrian Committees.
- Better marketing of transit was also discussed. Demonstration projects can be used to show the public how concepts work in practice, and can be used to generate support for future projects. The first demonstration project of its kind will be difficult (e.g., because of pushback from the public) but hopefully worthwhile.
- Committee members and staff agreed that the prioritization needs to be discussed in greater detail, and should be the primary topic of the next meeting.

Announcements, Events, and Updates

- *Kendall Square Mobility Task Force*: Currently on hold. The Committee discussed sending comments to MassDOT regarding concerns about the project.
- *Green Line Extension*: The MPO heard presentations about the current state of the project. The MPO could vote to move \$152 million from GLX2 to GLX1. If the MPO moved these funds, MassDOT commits to completing the next stage (ENF) of GLX2. The gap between the funding currently available (\$2 billion) and the most up-to-date cost estimation remains larger than the total of the smaller sources of funding recently pledged.
- *Cambridgepark Drive*: Committee member Arthur Strang described a recent meeting about traffic congestion on Cambridgepark Drive and the need to prioritize transit in the Alewife area.

Final Public Comment

There were no additional public comments.

Adjourned at 7:30 pm