

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTES

Date, Time & Place:
May 3, 2017, 5:30-7:30
MIT building E25, room 117

Attendance

Committee Members

John Attanucci, Devin Chausse, Karen Dumaine, Charlie Fineman, Jim Gascoigne, Katherine Rafferty, Robert Ricchi, Arthur Strang, and Alex Taylor

City of Cambridge

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

Presenters, official entities, and members of the public

Susan Sloan-Rossiter (VHB), Selma Mandzo (VHB), Sarah Wetmore (VHB), Reid Joseph (Westbrook Partners), Shawna Marino (EF Education First), and Richard McKinnon (The McKinnon Company) were present. Phil Groth (MBTA) was present. Two members of the public were present.

Committee Introductions, Administrative Business, and Updates

The April notes were approved unanimously later in the meeting. Tegin Bennett thanked committee members and prospective committee members for applying for the next round of membership and told them she would provide updates soon.

Public Comment

There were no comments at this time.

EFII Development Project

Shawna Marino presented an overview of the proposed project, which is scheduled to break ground this fall and be completed by spring 2019. The project will be located at the DCR maintenance facility property on North Point Boulevard between the Gilmore Bridge and MWRA site. The approximately 300,000 SF project proposes student dorm rooms (about 500 beds), academic space, office space, student services, and a fitness facility that will be open to the public. Currently, about 75% of faculty and staff walk, bike, or take transit to work, and SOV rates are low for students as well since there is a large international population.

Susan Sloan-Rossiter discussed the transit analysis conducted as part of the Traffic Impact Study for the project. She reviewed existing transit services and noted EF currently runs a shuttle service. She presented existing mode shares. 47% of Hult (the business school associated with EF) staff and students and 42% of Office Employees currently use transit, with the largest percentage 41-45% using the Orange Line, followed by Bus (25-30%) and Green Line (27%). An estimated 70-150 new transit trips per direction per peak will be generated. On the Orange Line, the inbound peak during the AM peak hour and the outbound peak during the PM peak hour are currently under the planning (service delivery) policy for the peak hour but over the planning (service capacity for the Peak of the peak condition. Both conditions are under the Crush Capacity. She also discussed the PTDM measures EF provides.

The project has not yet officially submitted an application to the city. Staff will keep the Transit Committee updated. The project's first Planning Board meeting will likely be on June 6.

Discussion:

- Committee members asked for clarification: this is a privately-owned company paying full taxes to the city.
- There was discussion of the Brian P. Murphy Memorial Staircase, which provides access to Gilmore Bridge. It was discussed how useful and convenient it is. It was noted it has an elevator too.
- There was a discussion about the methodology used for peak-of-the-peak and on time performance measurements used. Susan Sloan-Rossiter confirmed that it is based on actual trains per hour and not schedule. It was acknowledged that the MBTA service policy has recently changed. The methodology for the TIS included trains per hour (in this case it was 10).
- Adam Shulman asked about findings from the PTDM survey. There was a positive response to the Hubway bike installation. The bike room at EFII is over capacity. Probably about 400 employees take advantage of the pretax MBTA pass program.

- There was discussion about the Charles River TMA. Shawna stated that EF plans to become a member. There was also discussions about the CRTMA's EZ Ride service and potential coordination between the EF shuttle and EZ Ride service.
- Transit benefits to students and staff were discussed. Transit packets are provided to new students. Staff receive a pre-tax transit benefit and subsidized Hubway membership. Almost all staff taking advantage of a transit pass use a link pass. Very few staff have a Commuter Rail pass. It was suggested that EF provide a transit subsidy to help encourage staff not to drive.
- The project is proposing the minimum number of parking spaces required by zoning. Shawna indicated about 115 spaces but final number was still being determined by the project architects for the size of the parking garage. EF has a campus-wide parking strategy and charges \$155 per month for parking spaces.

55 Wheeler Development Project

Reid Joseph, Westbrook Partners, presented information about the 55 Wheeler Street project to committee members. The site is located at the end of Wheeler Street and will consist of about 525 housing units in three buildings with underground parking. The project plans to have 20% affordable units with family sized units available. A new street connecting Wheeler Street to Fawcett Street will be created (as a public street) and the project will be donating land to the City for any future Alewife bicycle/pedestrian bridge landing. The project is taking into consideration resiliency and storm surge levels.

Susan Sloan-Rossiter presented that about 47% of the trips added by the project are expected to be transit trips. This is about 120-180 peak hour transit trips, with about 75% on the Red Line and 25% on bus routes. This number of trips does not have a large impact on the volume-to-capacity ratios for the Red Line or Buses. She also presented the transportation demand management measures being considered for the project, such as real-time transit display screens and a contribution toward the Alewife bicycle/pedestrian bridge.

Discussion:

- It was clarified that the units are envisioned to be rental units.
- Pedestrian and roadway connections in the area were discussed.
- Currently, the project is expected to provide .80-.90 parking spaces per unit, and the committee wondered whether fewer parking spaces could be provided since 20% of the units will be affordable. Additional on-street parking spaces will also be created (about 30 spaces).
- There was discussion about the destination(s) of transit users from this project (e.g., Kendall Square?). The Red Line is closer to capacity near Kendall Square, so additional Red Line trips contribute to congestion further in. It was noted that the project will likely be completed after the new Red Line trains arrive.
- There are other large development projects in progress in the area to take into consideration. Growth and density in the area has also been a focus of the Envision Cambridge process.
- The committee discussed the currently unpleasant walk from the project site to Alewife Station along Alewife Brook Parkway. Vehicle circulation on Wheeler Street and Fawcett Street, as well as the entrance and exit onto Concord Ave was also discussed.

Final Public Comment

There were no further comments.

Announcements, Events, and Updates

- Inman Square re-design: Adam distributed handouts regarding the various options that have been suggested and highlighting the preferred concept (the DPW's website being the source of the handouts). Tegin summarized the undertaking to date, pointing to the selected signalized concept which should be a hybrid of the previously proposed signalized options. There did not seem to be unanimity concerning this choice, but the Bicycle and Pedestrian committees as well as staff and the Fire Department preferred this approach over an unsignalized concept. The proposed concept includes "floating bus stops" (so that buses do not have to pull in and out of traffic and across bicycle lanes) and a short queue jump, potentially in the peak period only, eastbound on Cambridge Street. Traffic direction on Antrim Street is still under discussion.
- Adam reported that equipment to enable communications needed for Transit Signal Priority would be set up at 15 intersections (near City Hall; Prospect Street). A consultant has been hired to select software to control the system. The equipment at these intersections has been installed and the city hopes to have it active by the fall.

Adjourned at 7:30 pm