

City of Cambridge

Transit Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, April 4, 2018 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

Sullivan Chambers, Cambridge City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue

Attendance

Members (15): John Attanucci (Chair), Kelley Brown, Devin Chausse, Chantal Eide, Charles Fineman, Jim Gascoigne, Mark Jensen, Andrew McFarland, Katherine Rafferty, Robert Ricchi, Arthur Strang, Saul Tannenbaum, Alexander Taylor, Miles Taylor, Melissa Zampitella

City staff (3): Tegin Teich (CDD), Andrew Reker (CDD), Adam Schulman (TPT)

Others (3): Brian Francis (MBTA), 2 members of the public

Agenda & Discussion

Introductions, updates, and committee administration

Tegin Teich (TT) started the meeting by introducing Andrew Reker as new staff to the Community Development Department. TAC members briefly introduced themselves.

TAC moved to approve previous notes for February and March TAC meetings. Motion passed unanimously.

Public comment

Marc Ebuña (ME), representing Transit Matters, reported on recent developments with the Rail Vision study, which focuses on the use of the Commuter Rail infrastructure. TT noted that the MBTA is also interested in engaging the advisory committee for the bus service planning process. Saul Tannenbaum (ST) expressed concern about equity issues with respect to the order in which planning studies are being undertaken. TT noted that the Rail Vision study and bus service plan are being run by different groups—the Rail Vision with MassDOT and bus service plan with MBTA. ME noted that the Rail Vision study will be weighing up to 8 scenarios including one scenario with frequent service similar to rapid transit. This could be of interest to the TAC for the Alewife area to get more frequent rail service.

John Attanucci (JA), Chair expressed concern about the scope of the Rail Vision study. Kelley Brown (KB) expressed an interest in keeping up with the study using MassDOT's project website. ME stated that there is no current project website for the Rail Vision study and that it

may take some time before such a website exists. TT will follow-up with MassDOT planning staff to find potential future public engagement opportunities for the Rail Vision study.

[Final preparation for City Manager meeting to present TAC priorities](#)

TT reported that TAC meeting with the City Manager will be rescheduled. In addition, TT reported that the upcoming City Council Transportation and Public Utilities Committee meeting will focus on transit issues. Topics will include the latest on the MBTA's bus service planning process and pilot projects in development. TT also shared that the priorities that the TAC have defined will play a strong role in determining how the City responds to the MBTA's bus service planning process and outreach. Regarding the MBTA's bus service plan, TAC members discussed regional coordination and collaboration particularly with the towns of Arlington, Belmont, and Watertown, to the west of Cambridge. Regarding the upcoming City Council committee meeting, TAC members agreed that it would be useful for TAC members, and particularly Chair John Attanucci, to provide public comment.

Returning to the topic of the meeting with the City Manager, TT turned the floor over to JA to present a draft of a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the TAC's work thus far. JA identified four major areas of importance to the TAC: (1) input into MBTA planning and services; (2) the use of Cambridge specific funds, especially Kendall Square development funds; (3) redesigning streets to improve bus services; (4) issues with planning and policies with respect to TDM and discussion of ways to enhance the current Parking and Transportation Demand Management ordinance. TAC members discussed if policies that other municipalities in the region have enacted on parking and fees would be useful in the presentation to the city manager.

For the first area of importance, service planning, the presentation focused on several areas of advocacy that the City should be aware of: Red Line improvements, urban commuter rail, and the MBTA bus service plan. TAC members asked for clarification on the City's advocacy on the service plan and if the service plan is resource-constrained. TT stated that the MBTA is running the short-term bus service planning process which is generally more resource-constrained, and MassDOT is managing the longer-term less-constrained process which potentially could result in a bus network re-design. JA noted that the MBTA has been able to add services in specific regions in a way that is not resource-constrained.

For the second area of importance, improved bus service, JA presented principles to improve bus services. Some of the principles presented were: realigning certain routes to provide more direct service and create more one-seat rides in Cambridge. For the third area of importance, JA presented a prioritization of dedicated transit improvement funds which would focus on operations over amenities. For the next area of importance, bus priority treatments, JA presented on on-going projects that are critical to create priority for buses. JA stated that some key factors include "speaking to everybody", that is, not only solely focusing on improvements in terms of transit riders but speaking to the improvements and their impact on general traffic operations. The final area of importance, the Parking and Transportation Demand Management

(PTDM) ordinance, JA presented the current thought of the transit committee is that the PTDM has been a key reason for achieving increased transit use in the city. Finally, JA presented on potential next steps and priorities. TAC members discussed: language already on the slides, relative importance of areas identified in the presentation, potential other topics at the meeting with the City Manager, and the involvement of the Kendal Square Transit Enhancement Program (KSTEP) funding.

[Discuss Next Steps for Transit Strategic Plan and MBTA Service Planning Process](#)

TT presented on a strategy of next steps for the City to get involved in the MBTA's service planning process. One avenue is to conduct outreach in the City in a compelling way to convey and gain feedback on the service planning priorities that the TAC has created. Thus far, the proposal is a set of neighborhood meetings to discuss transit issues. TT noted that it would be nice to have a clearer idea of what the goals are for the TAC and to solicit and discuss service planning ideas. TAC members discussed the TAC's role in the MBTA's service planning process, the role of citywide meetings with respect to input for the MBTA, the MBTA's service plan, and developing some materials that could be used to help the public better understand what the bus network is like in Cambridge currently. TAC members also discussed public engagement strategies – web page, map-based input, etc.—and equity concerns. TT stated that the City will be having interdepartmental meetings to coordinate on the City's input into the MBTA service plan. The city's staff is also expecting input from Councilors. TAC members also discussed if the experience from Boston's recent transportation master planning process would be useful. Devin Chausse (DC) mentioned that CHA staff would be able to further support any planned engagements with notices to public housing facilities or people on other public housing programs like Section 8. TT summarized that next steps for the Transit Strategic Plan will continue to be fleshed out and the need to better define the TAC's role for the MBTA's public process.

[Mt Auburn Bus Priority Draft Design Drawings](#)

TT presented a draft set of plans for the Mount Auburn Street Bus Priority Pilot Project which are built on concepts developed in the DCR Mount Auburn Street Corridor study. These plans are going to be presented in draft form at the joint Cambridge-Watertown public meeting on May 1st. JA asked about timeline. TT clarified there is going ongoing coordination with the DCR to ensure that the pilot project does not affect local traffic operations, as this pilot project relies on a DCR implementation of construction and signal re-timing at the Fresh Pond Parkway and Mt Auburn St intersection. TT also reported on the Strawberry Hill meeting. TAC members had questions and discussion about finer points of the design proposals. These included some stop consolidation, the format of the May public meeting, materials for the public meeting, and the merge location at Brattle St with Mount Auburn St. TT stated that the May meeting will have a portion that will have breakout groups to discuss specific issues.

[AccessMIT Program](#)

JA presented on AccessMIT program. In September 2016, MIT changed their commuter benefits programs, rebranding it as “AccessMIT”. MIT’s administration decided to rebrand the commuter benefits program as a way to further decrease drive-alone rates, even when they had been historically low. Given the high-expense of additional parking and further development of campus office, lab, and classroom spaces, MIT’s goal was to reduce commuter parking demand by 10%. MIT employed several strategies: parking with daily rates as only available employee parking, implemented universal bus/subway pass for all employees, increased subsidy to commuter rail, reimbursed parking at transit stations. There has been significant impacts to mode-share, parking permits, and other commuter benefit programs at MIT.

[Additional Updates and Final Public Comment](#)

Brian Francis from the MBTA made an announcement:

- Beginning with the summer schedule, Route 47 will have resources added to it so that it can better meet on-time performance standards; as a result, riders should feel like the Route 47 runs is more on time.

[Adjournment.](#)

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 PM