

Transit Advisory Committee

September 2019

Abbreviated meeting notes

Attendance

Members

Present (9) John Attanucci (Chair), Devin Chausse, Jim Gascoine, Kristiana Lachiusa, Katherine Rafferty, Rob Ricchi, Saul Tannenbaum, Alex Taylor, Melissa Zampitella

Absent (4) Joseph Beggan, Kelly Brown, Robert Fitzgerald, Arthur Strang

City Staff (2)

Tegin Teich, Andrew Reker (CDD)

Others (6)

Andy Smith (MBTA), 5 members of the public

Tegin Teich (TT) opened the meeting at 5:30 PM. TT and members of the TAC and public gave self introductions.

Public comment

James Williamson (JW) made a comment requesting a more public transit-friendly venue for these meetings. JW also made a comment on the turnaround at the western end of the Route 83, identifying his long-standing concern about the turn-around. He also expressed concern about bicycle advocates and plans for Mass Ave. in Central Square and the implementation of the Route 1 Better Bus Project proposals in Harvard Square.

No other members of the public made a comment.

The TAC voted a motion to approve the last meeting minutes from the June TAC meeting. Ayes all around.

South Mass Ave transit evaluation

Andy Reker (AR) summarized the South Mass Ave Corridor Safety Improvements Project elements as they related to transit. AR introduced the MBTA data evaluation. TT acknowledged that TAC member, John Attanucci, has shown some analysis in the past which was a slightly different methodology but the overall conclusions are the same. The MBTA data evaluation looked at typical day (50th percentile) and typical worst (90th percentile). For this project, City staff didn't see the level of improvements that we had expected; a number of bus stop-to-stop segments were worse than the previous conditions.

TAC members asked questions about what might be happening outside of the project area impacting these travel times (e.g. construction) but also emphasized that improvements need to be made within the project area because the project changes may be having adverse effects outside of the project area.

AR presented some observations found in follow-up site visits focused on evaluating transit:

- Buses aren't using the bus lane in the second segment of bus lane (Front St to Windsor St)
- Buses are challenged with the merge at Windsor St
- Buses were not traveling far from edge of lane when there were cars parked in the parking lane
- At Vassar, Albany, and Front St, drivers have difficulty entering Mass Ave and end up blocking both the bus lane and bike lane.
- In the Central-square bound direction, the street configuration appears to have excess capacity

TAC members asked about:

- refreshing the markings/paint for the bus lanes
- ensuring that signage and markings are clear about lanes in the Vassar to Albany section
- wanting to fix all directions of bus traffic, including EZride, CT2, MIT tech shuttle, etc.
- River Street and why a shared bus bike lane wasn't being considered --- TT described the ordinance.

TAC members proposed:

- Bus priority on the Memorial Drive ramp approaching Mass Ave
- Routing MIT shuttles to cross Mass Ave instead of turning toward Central Square
- Removing parking in areas that have problems with bus lanes
- Exploring shared bus-bike lanes

TAC members also mentioned how dramatically this improves the infrastructure for cyclists.

Updates on Better Bus Project implementation

AR summarized the upcoming BBP changes and the fact that two of the approved changes were referenced in the CM letter as us having additional concerns. AR showed a graphic of the Route 1 Dunster street rerouting and summarized the outreach for public input on the Route 1. This outreach received 327 responses from people who live, work, play, and study in Cambridge. Most common destination was to Back Bay and most respondents did not approve of the changes. Respondents stated that other routes do not serve the destinations they are trying to go to. Some respondents also say they are walking from Somerville to access the stops to be closed.

TAC members asked:

- to clarify who was represented in the outreach. TT described that the survey was targeted (per council request) to get feedback from the people who might be more adversely impacted by these changes.
- if the survey is scientific or provides statistical relevance. AR responded that this does not.
- if the sidewalk at Dunster Street could be expanded and moving the bus stop at Holyoke Gate to Dunster Street for better connections to the Red Line.

AR then summarized the proposals for the West Cambridge routes 72, 74, 75, 78 and next steps with the MBTA. AR summarized the impact to bus headways on the various segments in the proposal. To

summarize, TT said that overall these are looking to be more of an improvement and that MBTA has been addressing concerns like better coordinating.

TAC members commented that the increases to service on outer ends of the routes 74, 75, and 78 seemed to be misplaced. TT stated that the City is interested in increased service on Huron between Grove and Aberdeen and Concord between the rotaries and Blanchard. In addition, TAC members asked about doing more transit improvements that are not constrained by existing conditions when those conditions could be changed.

In addition, TAC members emphasized need considering trips made at all hours of the day not just traditional 9-to-5 jobs. Especially in Mount Auburn Street and Concord Avenue corridors, worker travel to health care facilities is very important.

TAC members also encouraged the City and the MBTA that an important principle for this proposal is having evenly scheduled departures (headways). Andy Smith from the MBTA stated that he would make sure to follow-through on making sure that schedules are evenly-spaced on the shared segments.

Bus Network Redesign

Given the amount of time spent discussing the MBTA Better Bus Project proposal implementations, the TAC moved to delay discussion about the Transit Strategic Plan implementation plan to another TAC meeting.

TT presented on the bus network redesign scope and background. TT shared that the MBTA is looking for demonstration projects for the bus network redesign project – named differently than “pilot” because of the MBTA Pilot policy. TT presented a summary of the Bus Network Redesign and pilot projects ideas that the City would like to submit. TT presented different proposals that the City of Cambridge had developed which were broken into several categories: new service, improved key bus routes, new key bus routes, modified services, and enhanced BBP ideas.

TAC members asked about how the MBTA is doing outreach for these ideas. In addition, TAC members asked about how KSTEP funding could be used improve the chances of implementing a demonstration project. TT expressed that the other MBTA pilot project solicitation process may be better because the MBTA’s requirements indicate that proposals with local funding are evaluated better than ones without local funding.

Public comment

JW made a comment that the Union Square Neighborhood Council is looking to finalize the community benefits agreement in the Union Square area. This includes benefits that would positively affect the community in Cambridge that may utilize a future Union Square Green Line station.

Updates and announcements

AR presented a brief update on the Green Line Extension project and potential scheduling of a closure of the Green Line in 2020. TT presented a brief update on the River Street Reconstruction project. In addition, TT presented a brief update on the Grand Junction Multi-Use Path Design project. Finally, AR presented a number of other updates for meetings related to regional and local transportation projects.

At 7:30 the TAC adjourned.

Version Information

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