

Transit Advisory Committee

November 4, 2020

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

Members	Present (11) John Attanucci, Kelly Brown, Devin Chausse, Mathew Coogan, Jackie Jones, Bill McAvinney, Sylvia Parsons, Katherine Rafferty, Robert Ricchi, Arthur Strang, Saul Tannenbaum
	Absent (6) Joseph Beggan, Jim Gascoine, Kristiana Lachiusa, Margaret McKenna, Alexander Taylor, Melissa Zampitella
City staff (5)	Andrew Reker (CDD); Adam Shulman (TPT); Susanne Rasmussen (CDD); Bill Deignan (CDD) Jerry Friedman (DPW)
Others (3)	3 members of the public

Welcome and committee introductions

Andy Reker (AR) began the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting with remote participation at 5:30 PM by welcoming members of the TAC, members of the public and presenters. AR announced that the meeting is taking place with remote participation as a result of statewide emergency actions limiting the size of public gatherings in response the danger caused by COVID-19. AR completed a roll call of TAC members, 11 members were present.

AR gave a tour of the virtual space and shared some ground rules for participation in a virtual meeting.

AR called for approvals of past meeting notes for February, March, July and October. Based on a motion and a second, the TAC members in attendance voted to approve the meeting notes unanimously.

River Street Reconstruction project

AR provided an update on the City's River Street project and went through a PowerPoint slide presentation showing key transit related aspects of the project. This included the following information:

- Summary of the design and engagement process
- Review of the proposed changes at Carl Barron Plaza
- Review of required Route 47 changes and summary of demographic and ridership data

TAC members asked several questions about the River Street Reconstruction project, including the following, note responses from City staff are included in italics:

- Will TAC be included in future events for the River Street Reconstruction project?
Yes.

- How could COVID-19 impact plans for River Street?
The intention is to maximize space for pedestrians, cyclists and transit users and that the space is designed for sustainable modes, which will be important in any future regardless of COVID-19.
- Concern about bus not always stopping for pedestrians at the Green Street/Magazine intersection
- How many spaces will be available buses at the plaza bus stop on River Street.
Though, up to 3 buses may be able to fit, it is designed for 2 buses to operate regularly.
- Concern about MBTA scheduled layover and if buses would likely be in the layover space more than currently.
- Concern that the City hasn't gotten more MBTA bus service with improvements in reliability and travel time from bus lanes
- A question was asked if the Route 47 cannot make a right-turn from Green Street to River Street.
Project staff shared the expected additional benefits that would come from the current plaza design and what transit elements may need to be traded to allow for the Route 47 to turn from Green Street to River Street. Project staff will reconfirm with the project engineering team about the analysis.
- A concern that the walk from the bus stop on Green Street at Pearl Street to the Red Line is not good, especially in winter and that routing the 47 off Mass Ave will have negative impacts on riders with disabilities.
- What type of pavement will be used in Carl Baron Plaza?
Generally, the City primarily uses concrete for pedestrian routes. There may be some ornamental paving for areas outside the main path of travel.
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AR provided data on flows of people to and from the 47 bus to other transit and Central Square in general. TAC members shared the following concerns and questions:

- Noted that one-third of Route 47 riders connect with the Red Line, therefore, concerned about moving the 47 bus stop from the Red Line Station.
- Another comment was that riders like to pick which ever bus for Route 1 or Route 47 shows up at the bus stop on Massachusetts Avenue at Pearl Street. Concern that this flexibility/option will be eliminated if the Route 47 is no longer on Mass. Ave.
- A comment was made that maybe sidewalks and bus stops should be heated (instead of paying for the cost of a new elevator).
Project staff stated that the elevator project is an MBTA project, not a City project and that the City will look at what could be changed on Pearl Street to make it more comfortable route for pedestrians connecting with the Red Line or Route 1.

Public Comments

A member of the public had several questions and concerns:

- Question about meeting with the residents of the Lyndon B. Johnson building for feedback

- Hope that project staff would trim the plaza so the 47 bus can continue to make the turn off Green Street onto River Street.
- Concern about having a bike lane go right through the plaza.
- Concern about the elimination of the 47 stopping at the Library and the impacts that will cause.

Another member of the public shared their comment and concerns about it being significantly dangerous to cycle in Central Square.

AR recommended to all to view the River Street project web site which has more information and details and to enter comments.

Cambridge Updates

Adam Shulman (AS) provided an update on the status of the development project review process for major projects, including CambridgeSide and MIT Volpe Exchange Parcel.

TAC members commented as follows:

- Improve bus service between CambridgeSide to the new Lechmere Station
- Improve access to new Lechmere station
- Add transit priority on First Street

City staff referenced the future construction along O'Brien Highway that will make it easier to cross O'Brien Highway to access the new Lechmere Green Line station.

MBTA Forging Ahead Status Updates

AR presented a brief summary of of the MBTA's materials for the "Forging Ahead" initiative that aims to bridge the MBTA's expected Fiscal Year 2021-2022 budgetary gaps by, among other initiatives, reduce service.

TAC members made the following comments, asking City staff to:

- Advocate for Routes 71 and 73 as it serves Mount Auburn Hospital and is important for hospital patients and staff all day and is already crowded, especially at terminal locations
- Recommend that the City state that the MBTA's plan is not acceptable.
- Advocate for maintaining minimum levels of service
- Maintain core service in Cambridge
- Advocate and ask for detailed information on schedules and cost savings
- Coordinate a response with the TAC
- Advocate for state and federal funds for MBTA to maintain current service
- Advocate for additional permanent revenue sources like gas tax

Public Comments

A member of the public repeated their previous comments, asked how service reductions will be advertised, advocated for routes 71 and 73, and demanded that cyclists respect pedestrians.

Version Information

Draft: 11/25/2020 AS/AR

Approved: 12/2/2020 Unanimously with 11 votes