

Transit Advisory Committee

August 2025

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

Members

Present (15)

In-person participation (6): Bill McAvinney, Craig Tateronis, Miles Robinson, Omriqui Thomas, Andrew Zhou, Jackson Moore-Otto

Remote participation (9): Clyve Lawrence, Devin Chausse, Ian Hatch, Katherine Rafferty, Keisha Greaves, Matt Martin, Matthew Mccominskey, Pete Septoff, Matthew Kramer

Absent (8) Analisa Bhatia, Arthur Strang, David Rangaviz, Jim Gascoigne, Melissa Zampitella, Nick Lessin, Patrick Delaney, Sandhya Ramakrishnan

City staff (2) Andrew Reker, Marcella Cannatti (DOT-Transportation Planning)

Others (2) Members of the public (2)

Note: DOT = Department of Transportation

Welcome and Committee Introductions

Jackson Moore-Otto (JMO) began the meeting at 5:59 PM and began by welcoming members of the Transit Advisory Committee (TAC), members of the public, and presenters. JMO gave a quick tour of the virtual space for members and people joining by Zoom and shared details of the physical space.

JMO briefly covered the purpose of the TAC, topics for the day's meeting, and the code of conduct.

The Secretary then conducted a roll call – 15 members were present, 8 were absent

The committee then approved the meeting minutes for December 2024, January 2025, and February 2025, and July 2025 with all 15 members voting yes.

Presentation – TAC Actions

Andrew Reker (AR) then covered means by which the TAC can interact with Cambridge city staff, namely through requesting presentations on City projects, reviewing materials presented to City bodies, and writing letters to the Planning board with comments and suggestions. AR mentioned that for larger developments in the city, a joint meeting can be requested by members of multiple committees for developers to present to, and that the Committee can write letters on its thoughts about those developments.

AR also covered the ways the TAC can interact with state agencies, which included similar means of interacting with the city.

AR also mentioned that a good way to advance TAC recommendations and proposals is to form a subcommittee on specific topics, such as MBTA projects, City projects, and the Bus Network Redesign.

AR covered “writing a comment letter” which he mentions is one of the TAC’s most frequent actions: during an official committee meeting with quorum, any member can suggest the TAC write a formal comment letter. The committee would decide the general outline of the letter, choose a letter writer, and an expected completion date, and city staff can assist in sending the letter to the correct individual/body/agency and help with editing.

AR quickly described the rules of order for a committee and then asked for any questions.

No questions.

Discussion – Planning an Alewife-area Walk

JMO mentioned that in prior years, the TAC had done walks around nearby transit developments in the city and introduced the idea of a committee meeting around the Alewife area, citing new developments for Alewife Station, the potential of a new infill commuter rail station, and the new housing and pedestrian developments in the area.

JMO asks AR to share a Google Maps of the Alewife Area

JMO points out some new planned developments:

- A new commuter rail infill station has been suggested for the Fitchburg commuter rail line passing through Alewife
- A new commercial development is planned in the south of the Alewife area
- A new pedestrian/bike bridge is planned to go over the commuter rail tracks

JMO suggests that the walking tour should occur outside of the typical schedule for TAC meetings and then opens up to the committee for them to suggest locations in the Alewife area that the committee would want to see.

TAC members had the following comments and questions. Presenter responses are below the question in italic text

One member said they are excited to look at new pedestrian/bike bridge over the commuter rail lines, and they think it is important to look at the parking impact of the Health Peak development

JMO noted that it would be good to document this concern, and that in the future the TAC should get Health Peak to present to a joint committee

AR said that the city has already suggested to Health Peak that they present to the committee once the planning has begun

One member asked where on the map the new bridge will be located?

AR said it is planned to be approximately to the east of Alewife Brook Parkway, and will integrate with existing pathways in the area

One member said that they think the Alewife tour is a good idea, and they are interested in the impact that new developments in Alewife will have

Another member noted that they participated in the Mass Ave walking tour and think that another walking tour is a very good idea

Another member expressed enthusiasm about the walking tour and an interest in bringing in stakeholders regarding Alewife Garage reconstruction

JMO asked if it is out of order for MBTA members to join the committee on the walk?

AR said that, depending on where projects are in development, MBTA might not be able to answer exactly all questions, but the city can ask

JMO asked members specifically what projects/areas they want to see

One member asked to see the location of the pedestrian bridge from the Quadrangle side

Another member asked about where the potential infill commuter rail station will go, and how it will interact with existing transit, as well as status on transferring roads to the city?

JMO asked if the city knows where the infill station may be?

AR said that the MBTA has identified the old rail maintenance site as a location for a new station. He noted that the city had also formerly identified this site as well in the past.

One member pointed out that there is talk of removing parking at Alewife, and asked how a new infill station would affect the parking, and how much parking will be specifically for the station?

One member asked to visit Alewife Brook Parkway, namely the look at the condition of the roadway

AR said the committee can check in with Melissa Zampitella regarding the private Alewife TMA shuttle and if the TAC may be able to use that for the walking tour. He also noted that the city will eventually release a transportation impact study regarding future developments in Alewife.

One member asked if there has been any movement on the “intra-district path” through the old railway right of way? How is potential flooding in Alewife planned for in the future?

In response to the first question, AR said the answer is to be determined. For the second question, he said the TAC can walk through Fawcett St to see some of the measures taken to mitigate against future flooding/torrential rain situations.

One member asked if the tour is planning to visit Alewife station itself?

JMO said that the tour will likely begin the tour there.

One member suggested visiting the pedestrian improvements to the west side of Alewife Brook Parkway

AR said that new construction is proposed alongside the Health Peak development

JMO asked if the city is looking into how much the Health Peak development might affect pedestrian patterns, and what the city is planning for future pedestrian developments as a result?

AR said that city looked into that a while ago, but now with some changes to the necessity of the commuter rail yard, the city can go back to looking into a pedestrian crossing. He also noted that there have been suggestions to build a pedestrian path on both sides of the commuter rail path that would eventually connect to all of Alewife, but that is a long term project for the city

One member asked who owns the former rail right of way adjacent to the proposed Health Peak pedestrian bridge?

AR was unsure but said that based on how people talk about it, it may be multiple owners. He noted there is also a new residential development planned for Blanchard Rd/Brighton St. Although it is only partly in Cambridge, it will affect the Alewife area.

One member asked if there is a proposed large “tank” for flooding?

AR said that the initial sea level rise mitigation strategy was to develop projects that are resilient against flooding. AR suggests that Alewife might be a prime area to explore other tactics to minimize fossil fuel usage

The member then is if the TMA shuttle available to everyone, and whether its path will be changing as a result of the Health Peak development?

AR said it will probably change with the Health Peak development but did not know if the shuttle is open to the public

One member stated that if it is open to the public, the GTFS data should be available

AR noted that the buses on this route are smaller, not like EZRide shuttles but more like hotel airport shuttles

JMO suggested a 90 minute timeline for the walking tour and expressed excitement about the tour.

City, MBTA, + TAC Updates

AR mentioned that this is the first time that the TAC has presented the city and state updates in the new format of sending updates in advance and spending committee time answering questions. He noted that many questions were submitted by TAC members, then opened the floor to questions from the committee.

Marcella Cannatti mentioned that the updates slides were not printed, but if people would like, they can be printed for future meetings.

One member asked if the Aberdeen Ave project was included in the updates?

AR said yes, they are included on page 13. The Aberdeen Ave project will be completed in two stages.

The member asked if the angle of the slip lane be tightened to increase visibility of pedestrians? He noted that there is limited signage to warn drivers of the presence of pedestrians as they come to the intersection. He also pointed out that possibly the pedestrian crossing could be raised? He recounted an encounter where no drivers stopped for a young student trying to cross the slip lane.

AR promised to share those comments but noted that there will be a meeting about the project on 8/19 at Story Chapel where community members can share feedback directly with the project team.

One member asked if there are any updates on the Grand Junction Transit proposal?

AR said no, but that conceptual design was completed by the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority, which can be presented to the committee at any time

One member asked about the Concord Ave transit priority and whether that is in Cambridge's jurisdiction or Belmont's?

AR said it is Cambridge's, but the project is still difficult.

One member expressed excitement about the upcoming joint meeting about the Mass Ave Planning Study.

JMO said he is also excited for the meeting, and that the TAC could consider exploring density of developments around Porter station.

AR thanked members for the comments, and mentioned that the city is still open to modifying the meeting structure to make the committee better for members

Public comment

Before opening to public comment, AR opened the floor for Omriqui Thomas, who is retiring from the committee, to say a few words. AR mentioned the work that Thomas has done over her many years of work for the city, JMO has also thanked AR for her service.

JMO then opened the floor for public comment.

- **One member of the public noted that** many members of the committee are not audible on the Zoom call. He urged the city to consider extending the 83 to Alewife Brook Parkway to the mall, which would be useful for underprivileged members of the community to access those resources without having to use the bridge. He asked the city to explore pedestrian crossings around the area and suggested looking into the MBTA tunnel during the walking tour. He also said that it is interesting that there is a shuttle for workers in Alewife that is not available for residents.

JMO concludes the meeting at 6:58 PM

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