

Transit Advisory Committee

March 2026

Abbreviated meeting summary

Attendance

Members **Present** (17)

In-person participation (4): Jackson Moore-Otto, Matthew Kramer, Ander Zhou, Arthur Strang

Remote participation (13): Matthew Mccomiskey, Melissa Zampitella, Ian Hatch, Patrick Delaney, Matt Martin, Miles Robinson, Nick Lessin, Annalisa Bhatia, Bill McAvinney, Pete Septoff, Devin Chausse, Katherine Rafferty, Craig Tateronis

Absent (3): Clyve Lawrence, Jim Gascoigne, Sandhya Ramakrishnan

City staff (3) Andrew Reker, Fernando Aguiluz, Marcella Cannatti

Others (6) Six members of the public joined via zoom.

Notes: DOT = Department of Transportation

Welcome and Committee Introductions

Jackson Moore-Otto (JMO) opened the meeting at 6:00 PM by welcoming members and presenters to the meeting. JMO went over the meeting etiquette, gave an overview of the physical room and space, and gave instructions for members of the public joining remotely and in-person. JMO reviewed the purpose of the meeting, the code of conduct, and read through the agenda for the meeting.

Andrew Zhou (AZ) took roll - 17 members were present, 3 were absent during roll call.

JMO made a motion for the committee to approve the last meeting's minutes: 17 voted yes, 0 voted no.

Presentation – Charles River Crossings and Alewife Station

Access Road Subcommittee

JMO introduced Matthew Kramer (MK) to discuss the subcommittee for Charles River Crossing and Alewife station Access Road. MK explained that that the bridges across the Charles are major sources of bus delays. He explained that the subcommittee can advocate for bus priority and work with transit stakeholders to improve service on these bridges.

MK reviewed data from the Cambridge Bus Delay and Unreliability Study for the bridges that cross the Charles

- The Anderson Bridge near Harvard received grades of E and F for all routes crossing the bridge, showing the need for bus improvements on that bridge.
- The crossings on Western Ave and River St have similar issues with delays and unreliability
 - This is part of the planned improvements for River St, which will hopefully address some of the bus travel problems.
- The BU bridge has similar problems that the committee has discussed
- The Harvard Bridge also received poor grades, which is a particular issue because of the MBTA-designated Frequent Bus Route (Route 1) that crosses there

Bill McAvinney (BM) added that the most recent study only included MBTA routes, but there are other buses such as EZRide that use Charles River crossings and are also important to look at.

MK said that the MBTA's Bus Priority Vision already notes the need for new bus priority infrastructure on Anderson and Western Ave, and the River St bridge is already in progress. The BU Bridge is not marked as priority by the MBTA, and the Harvard Bridge is marked as having existing priority, but MK notes that there is still room for improvement.

Arthur Strang (AS) notes that future developments will add strain to Charles River crossings, especially related to non-MBTA routes like the Harvard shuttles to Lower Allston.

Jackson Moore-Otto (JMO) adds that Harvard should have a vested interest in helping bus priority between their campuses. He said that the committee should investigate working with Harvard directly on this issue.

AS suggested adding bus lanes onto the Charles River crossings that are bus-only between certain hours, noting that the system has worked well in NYC.

- AR responded to potential use of "peak-only" designations that there is some benefit to keeping the bus lane regulation active at all hours to discourage speeding that results from cars trying to pass each other.

JMO pointed out that in some European cities build reversible bus lanes, where the bus lane is in the center of the road, and the flow of bus travel changes. He suggested this as a possible inspiration for future bridge design.

- AR responded that the bridges offer a good chance to explore this. Because there are no stops on the bridges themselves, there is opportunity to have buses run in the center lane

MK then discussed the Alewife Station Access Road project, which involves the access road connecting the Alewife Red Line station to Route 2. IQHQ conducted a feasibility study and found it feasible to add a bus lane and signal priority, but there is no concrete plan to implement it. MK said that the committee can advocate and work with state agencies to get the project implemented.

MK talked about the potential impact of a bus lane on the access road. The road currently serves the 62, 67, 76, and 350 routes, and with the Bus Network Redesign it will serve 61 trips every weekday. The bus lane design that that studied is designed to match the average car queues, meaning that a bus lane would help buses to move past the car queue. The proposed project plan also preserves the sidewalk.

MK asked the committee for any comments or future items to look into.

AS noted that there is a bridge that crosses the access road that is relatively narrow for buses, and asked if there is any work that will need to be done to the bridge?

- MK said the answer is likely no

JMO asked if this is a city-owned road?

- AR answered that it is not. Part of the road is in the property for the IQHQ development with an assumed roadway easement. Therefore, a good next step would be to bring in IQHQ to discuss the project. The connecting roads and infrastructure are owned by DCR, MassDOT, and the MBTA, so there is a lot of complexity with land and infrastructure ownership. There is also a waterbody nearby, so there are environmental concerns with the water drainage impact in the area.

AS added that there might be impacts from potential reconstruction of Alewife parking lot

MK then discussed next steps for the subcommittee. The subcommittee will draft letters to state agencies in March, and will plan to present, review, and revise the letters at the next TAC meeting in April. MK thanked the subcommittee members for their work.

AR added that the subcommittee should reach out to the MBTA to discuss their bus priority plans and offered to make an email introduction.

Presentation – Transit Long Range Planning

Marcella Cannatti (MC) introduced her presentation on long-range planning in the Boston metro area.

MC explained that there are three organizations that have long-range plans that govern the city: MBTA, MassDOT, and the Boston Region MPO. The MBTA and MassDOT are more “guiding” plans to help determine with both agencies should be putting support into in the future.

MC discussed the MBTA’s Long Range Plan, Focus40, and highlighted the projects that are relevant to Cambridge:

- Goal of modernized Red Line with peak trains every 3 minutes, all-door boarding and exclusive busways, and an improved bus system.

MC then reviewed MassDOT’s Beyond Mobility long range plan:

- Released in 2025
- Focused on reliability for transit users, transit electrification, and transit priority improvements

MC then summarized the Boston Region MPO’s Destination 2050

- Most recent version was released in 2023
- Next one will go into effect in 2027
- This plan is the only one of the three that actually has money to distribute
- Current plan focuses on multimodal improvements at and near stations, electrification, and improvements to customer amenities

MC then went over MassDOT's Beyond Mobility plan as an example of how these kinds of plans are structured. The plan identified six priority areas for improvement through community engagement and then suggested individual action items with relation to those areas. MC highlighted some of the individual actions that the plan has called out:

- Improving signage and customer information (real-time signage, translating material)
- Identifying areas where transit spending would have the greatest impact
- Bus and other transit electrification
- Building a funding program for transit priority projects to reduce congestion.

MC explained that because this is a MassDOT plan, it involves both the MBTA and other regional transit authorities across the entire state. MC also noted additional actions that the plan suggested like improving commute time disparities, enforcing traffic violations, and roadway investments for transit reliability.

MC then gave an overview of short-term capital plans, noting each of the three agencies have their own five-year (short-term) plans. Unlike the long-range plans, these plans outline plans for distribution of money and resources to immediate projects. The MBTA has the Capital Investment Plan (CIP), MassDOT has the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), and the Boston Region MPO has the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). MC noted that MassDOT's STIP has no transit projects planned for Cambridge specifically, and that the Boston Region MPO TIP plans to fund programs and projects for the MBTA, CATA, and MWRTA, and for the Fitchburg crossing.

AS asked if the values per year are additive, or if there is a reduction in the overall total due to being duplicative between projects?

- AR said that there is some duplication, since there is overlap with the MPO and MBTA's CIP.

AR then discussed how the plans interact: the long-term plans guide the development of the short-term plans. Long-range planning is not necessarily a list of projects, but instead ideas for programs to help accomplish some of the transit goals set out by the agency. AR noted that for the MBTA, if there is not a clearly related goal established in the long-term plan, the MBTA cannot add projects to the CIP.

A lot of transportation funding comes from the federal and state governments and is controlled by a lot of different organizations and agencies. Federal transportation funding is distributed primarily by MassDOT, transit agencies like the MBTA, and Metropolitan Planning Organizations, such as the Boston Region MPO. State funds are distributed to MassDOT and local transit agencies. Localities can access funds through regular disbursement such as Massachusetts' chapter 90 program, competitive grants from MassDOT and Boston Region MPO, and by working with state agencies like the MBTA.

AR noted upcoming opportunities to impact future planning by several of the agencies: the MBTA's Program for Mass Transportation is set to be developed over the next 18 months, with the first event to be held on March 18th. The MBTA did CIP outreach in March-April 2025, so announcements of outreach for the next plan update are to be expected soon. AR added that the feedback period on the CIP is quick, as the CIP is largely a technical funding document where the MBTA announces what projects are going to receive what amount of funding.

MassDOT's STIP will have a similar kind of discussion around May to June. AR said that the Boston Region MPO's TIP has a place to apply through intake forms to six investment programs, and its LRTP is currently in development. AR said that the LRTP may be a good place for the committee to either collectively or individually engage with the plan.

AS noted that there is a desire to build a lot of housing in Cambridge and asked if there is any note in any of these plans about how the development of new housing may impact the future of the proposed projects?

- MC answered that there is a note in the Beyond Mobility report that planning should be considerate of housing development and where new housing could be developed.

AS also asked who is managing the procurement of the new Red Line vehicles unstuck?

- AR: Given the situation is largely federal, there are a lot of factors outside of the MBTA, so not much can be done by the city or the MBTA to address those.

AS asked what is happening with red line improvements in the meantime while the MBTA waits on the new cars?

- AR: The city doesn't know if there is a plan from the MBTA yet; the agency is trying to adapt right now to the existing circumstances. The increased number of 4-car trains is a sign.

MK: asked if there is a way the committee can influence the agencies' long-term plans?

- AR: Yes, the last time the long-term plans were developed, a list of things developed by the city were included in those plans – but also a lot of things were not included which the committee could have some impact by advocating for them. Since the next round of long-term planning is upcoming, this could be a good opportunity for the committee.

City, MBTA, and TAC Updates

JMO moved on to city and state project updates, giving the floor to AR, who opened to questions with regards to city projects.

JMO asked if there is anything new with the Healthpeak development?

- AR: They have posted their materials to the planning board, but there are not many new updates. Once they have scheduled an official meeting, we would like them to participate in a joint meeting

AS asked if there is any plan to rebuild the road near 221 Mt. Auburn St once the demolition is completed?

- AR: This project is largely with regards to the transit mitigations and detours, the impact to the road should be largely surface level.
- JMO: The quickness of the demolition by the city is good

JMO asked if there is any update on the Reid Overpass letter?

- AR: The bike committee sent a letter, and the TAC letter will be sent in the coming days.

Bill McAvinney added that the Reid Overpass is a very important Charles River crossing; special attention should be drawn to it, and the committee should advocate hard for a good solution

AR mentions that Melissa Zampitella (MZ) had some material to go over with relation to the Alewife TMA

Presentation – Alewife Loop Shuttle Updates

Melissa Zampitella (MZ) shared information about the Alewife Loop Shuttle between the Alewife quadrangle and the Alewife Red Line station. She announced that the shuttle is now free and open to the public. The shuttle operates at peak hours from 7-10 AM and 3-7 PM. The shuttle stops at most large commercial and residential locations in the quadrangle. The TAC visited many residential developments in the quadrangle which are being serviced by the Alewife Loop Shuttle.

MZ stated that a MassDOT grant gave the Alewife TMA funding to obtain a second shuttle, so service is now every 15 minutes. One of the requirements for that grant was that the shuttle would be open to the public. The shuttle is also funded by multiple private companies across Alewife. MZ stated that hopefully the improved quality of service will show the private partners the value in funding the shuttle fully.

MZ shared a map of the Alewife Loop Shuttle's route and noted that the Wheeler Street stop is probably the best shuttle stop for use by the public because it is on the sidewalk and located near many amenities. MZ then went over the shuttle's 2025 ridership, noting that over the past year the shuttle has generally increased in ridership every month. MZ said that the Alewife TMA is very excited that the local community seems to like the shuttle and ended the presentation by showing the links to learn more about the shuttle and a live tracker for the shuttle.

Devin Chausse asked if there is a breakdown of how many users are going to and from the Red Line station vs. going back and forth between locations within Alewife itself?

- MZ: "Almost 99%" of riders are starting and stopping journeys at the Red Line station. Mostly everyone is either going to work or going home.

Arthur Strang asked if the shuttles see more riders during bad weather events?

- MZ: Yes, there definitely seem to be more riders during bad weather. The TMA is planning on applying to the MassDOT grant for a third year, and it may be worthwhile looking into expanding the shuttle to run mid-day service between peak hours.

JMO asked if the Alewife TMA has been in conversations with Healthpeak or the MBTA with regards to full-day service?

- MZ: Healthpeak is already one of the shuttle partners, and as they become more established, we can continue to work with them to find ways to fit the needs of the Alewife area. We do envision service growing over time, but as of right now there is not enough demand to justify significant expansion. The current plan is to keep up with development in the area as it occurs.

Public comment

JMO opened the floor for public comment. Before public comment, AR noted that the joint meeting for March will likely not be happening, and that the meeting date for April needs to be adjusted because he is celebrating his birthday. AR asked if the committee has thoughts on how the committee would want to handle the April meeting.

AR, MK, and MC note that April 16th is the date of the Broadway open house. JMO asked for an informal rollcall to see if April 8th would work as a date. All present committee members voted yes.

JMO then opened the floor to public comment.

No public comment.

JMO ended the meeting at 7:16 PM

Version Information

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