



## CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

# TRAFFIC, PARKING, + TRANSPORTATION

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** Cambridge Planning Board

**From:** Joseph E. Barr, Director

**Date:** May 5, 2022

**Subject:** Alewife Park Project, 36-64 Whittemore Avenue (PB#387)

The Cambridge Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department (TP+T) submitted a memo to the Planning Board, dated February 22, 2022, with our initial comments and recommendations on the proposed Alewife Park Project by IQHQ-Alewife LLC.

Based on comments at the Planning Board hearing held on March 1, 2022, the Applicant has worked with City staff and the Project has advanced on many details. TP+T has reviewed the Supplemental Materials dated April 8, 2022 and has been working with the Applicant and we believe we have reached an agreement on Project's transportation elements.

From a transportation and climate protection perspective, some key positive Project changes that have occurred since the first Planning Board hearing include the following:

- Reduction in parking spaces from 653 spaces to 609 spaces.
- Refinements to site roadway and circulation plan, including widening the pedestrian and bicycle connection between Whittemore Avenue and the Linear Path, reducing the Service Road width from 22 to 20 feet, and additional sidewalk on the north side of the service road.
- Additional landscaping in in the surface parking lots.

As a reminder, TP+T certified the Project's TIS as complete and reliable on June 8, 2021.

TP+T has worked with the Applicant and has reached an agreement on a transportation mitigation program for the Project which we believe offset the project's transportation impacts.

### 1.0 Automobile Parking

Based on comments from the Planning Board, the Project has reduced the number of parking to 609 spaces, which is a parking ratio of 1.0 space/1,000 square feet of R&D use (based on 735,500 total sf, minus 121,000 sf parking garage, minus 3,500 sf ancillary retail space). The Applicant has also committed to reducing the total number of parking spaces over time.

The parking plan will meet the parking needs for the project and prevent spillover parking onto neighborhood streets. The Project will also implement Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures and monitoring the parking demands. The goal is for the Applicant is to reduce parking and have a path to a 0.8 parking ratio as soon as possible as demand warrants, while working to minimize negative parking impacts on neighborhood streets.

The project does not require a PTDM plan but will be required under the Planning Board Special Permit to implement a robust TDM program, designed to encourage employees to commute by sustainable modes of travel (i.e., taking transit, walking, bicycling, and carpool/vanpooling). This will help reduce the parking and Project generated traffic impacts for the area. The Applicant will also monitor its parking demand and traffic impacts over time and work with the city and community as needed, including access to parking spaces for area residents during weekday nights and weekends and access to Electric Vehicle charging stations. TP+T believes that together, the Applicant, residential community and City can meet both the parking needs of today and strive to reduce parking needs in the future to help us all contribute to our environmental and sustainability goals, especially near the important natural resources in the area.

TP+T also believes that the initial 1.0 parking ratio is acceptable given the committed improvements by the Project, such as designing and constructing dedicated bus lanes, improving public pedestrian and bicycle connections on-site and in and around Jerry's Pond area, green space improvements, transportation and parking demand monitoring, and committing to reduce parking over time and even sooner if warranted. This will be, based partly on what the post-Covid future will bring (given changing work patterns) for the number of employees working on-site at any one-time due to the evolving remote work and hybrid work options being implemented at many worksites.

## **2.0 Bicycle Parking**

The Project's will provide 140 long-term bicycle parking spaces and 44 short-term bicycle parking spaces distributed around the Project's property. During the Building Permit process, TP+T will make sure the bicycle parking spaces meet the City's bicycle parking design standards.

## **3.0 Access and Circulation Plan**

The Project access and circulation plan has been refined by the Applicant in various locations, including pedestrian and bicycle access between Whittemore Avenue and the Linear path, and sidewalks on both sides of the Service Road.

The Applicant has also committed to working with the city on the Linear Path design to better help separate pedestrians and bicyclists that use this high traveled pathway and improve the comfort of all path users.

The Applicant has committed to providing traffic control measures on their internal roads, such as gates to prevent automobile cut thru traffic that negatively affects residential streets in the area. TP+T will work closely with IQHQ and the immediate neighbors to look at design options that could reduce the likelihood of cars unintentionally continuing to drive on Harvey Street beyond Clifton Street while also improving the crossing at

Linear Path. TP+T will work closely with IQHQ on the best places to provide gates to prevent cut thru traffic.

#### **4.0 Transportation Mitigation**

Below are TP+T's updated recommendations to mitigate the Project's Planning Board Special Permit Transportation exceedances and overall transportation impacts by improving bicycle, transit, and pedestrian conditions and encouraging sustainable and healthy forms of transportation instead of single occupancy vehicle use.

#### **4.1 Parking Plan**

The Project will initially provide up to 609 parking spaces (358 garage spaces and 251 surface spaces). The 609 parking spaces will be a parking ratio of approximately 1.0 space per 1,000 square feet of R&D use (based on 611,000 sf R&D use). However, our goal is to move to a 0.8 parking ratio over time, and the Applicant has agreed to a path toward meeting that goal as shown below:

- 1 Five years after the date of issuance of the final building occupancy permit, the Project will reduce it's parking to a 0.95 parking ratio.
- 2 Ten years after the date of the issuance of the final building occupancy permit, the Project will reduce it's parking to 0.9 parking ratio.
- 3 In addition to the above schedule, the Project will have checkpoints regarding parking utilization, and can go lower than 0.95 and 0.9 ratios, to as low as 0.8 ratio) if supported by the parking utilization studies.
- 4 Parking use evaluation should be conducted two years after the issuance of the first occupancy permit. The scope for evaluation shall be approved by TP+T and CDD, and will include items such as, average, and peak number of parking spaces used, employee surveys on how they commute to work and where they park if they drive to work. If data shows that the parking demands are lower than supply by a reasonable amount, and there is limited on-street residential parking impacts from the Project, the Applicant will be obligated to reduce parking to as low as a 0.8 parking ratio.
- 5 Biennial parking demand monitoring (occurring once every two years) may stop when the Project reaches a 0.8 space/1,000 sf of R&D use parking ratio.

#### **4.2 Infrastructure Improvements**

1. Dedicated bus lane along the Alewife Access Road (Loop Road) after vehicles exit the arched tunnel under Alewife Brook Parkway.
  - 1.1. Within one year of the issuance of the first Building Permit for the Project, IQHQ-Alewife LLC shall independently study the construction of a bus-only lane along the loop road, for review by the City, MassDOT, MBTA, DCR, and the Cambridge Conservation Commission.
  - 1.2. Should the bus-only lane on the loop road be determined to be feasible, the Applicant shall develop 100% design plans for review by the relevant agencies, and then construct those improvements within five years (or sooner) of the Project's first Certificate of Occupancy or another timeline if reasonably necessary due to conditions outside the control of the Applicant and as approved by the City and MassDOT. These improvements shall also include any necessary intersection changes at the Alewife Access Road/Rt. 2/16

- intersection to support the bus-only lane, as well as creating any necessary compensatory flood storage and providing an easement across any land that is owned by the Applicant.
2. Widening of the arched tunnel under Alewife Brook Parkway to accommodate safer bicycle facilities connecting from the Minuteman Bikeway to the Project site.
    - 2.1. Within one year of the issuance of the first Building Permit for the Project, IQHQ-Alewife LLC shall independently study the widening of the arched tunnel for review by the City, MassDOT, MBTA, DCR, and Cambridge Conservation Commission.
    - 2.2. The widening of the arched tunnel will not be the responsibility of the Applicant, but they shall provide 100% design plans to the appropriate agency for construction.
  3. If requested by TP+T, the Applicant shall fund (i.e., design and construct) the signalization of the Steel Place/Alewife Access Road intersection, including transit priority treatment and Miovision traffic equipment or similar traffic control equipment approved by TP+T.
    - 3.1. This improvement is expected to cost approximately \$250,000 (subject to inflation). The Applicant should complete by the Project prior to the issuance of a final certificate of occupancy for the Project or a later date as approved by TP+T.
  4. The Applicant will be responsible for funding a 27-dock public bikeshare station (Bluebikes or its successor) on the Project site but has committed to a 33-dock station due to layout constraints. The station shall be located as per the project plans, unless an alternative is approved
    - 4.1. The Project shall make payment prior to the issuance of a Building Permit. The Project proponent will be responsible for securing a siting/licensing agreement if the station is on proponent's property prior to Certificate of Occupancy.
  5. Reconstruct the driveway apron on Rindge Avenue to better accommodate MBTA buses turning off Rindge Avenue into the Comeau Park parking lot without having an abrupt bump. TP+T believes that the slope of the driveway apron needs adjusting, and the curb cut width may not need to be widened as part of the work.
    - 5.1. The Department of Public Works (DPW) shall approve final design. The improvement should be completed by the Applicant prior to the issuance of the Project's first Occupancy Permit.
  6. The Applicant should work with the city to improve and reconstruct the end of Harvey Street west of Clifton Street to improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists that access the Project site.
    - 6.1. The changes should be completed prior to the issuance of the first Occupancy Permit unless the timing needs to be modified as approved by TP+T due to reasonable conditions.
  7. In order to support the increasing number of people walking and bicycling in the area -- including people of all ages and abilities -- and minimize user's conflicts, a more direct pedestrian and bicycle connection should be created between the Linear Path and the MBTA's east headhouse, designed in such a way as to minimize impact on habitat and hydrology (for example, a more direct connection in the vicinity of the community garden area).

- 7.1. IQHQ shall be obligated to participate with the City on the ongoing Linear Park re-design and reconstruction project, including evaluating alternative proposed pedestrian paths and bicycle or multi-modal paths as shown in the Revised conceptual graphics materials (Overall Site Circulation Plan, sheet 5.6B) and construct the final city recommended designs that results from that process.
8. To align with recent requests from the City Council for electric vehicle charging in development projects, the Project should install Electric Vehicle Service Equipment (EVSE) in 25% of the total number of spaces (based on 609 total spaces), or one dual-head Level 2 charger for every two vehicles to be served. The remaining 75% of spaces should be EV-ready, meaning that wiring/conduit and electrical panel/transformer capacity is installed to support the future installation of additional charging stations at those remaining parking spaces. Initially, this EV-ready installation can exclude the surface lots on the north side of Whittemore Avenue because the potential reuse of those lots is yet to be determined. Within five years of the final occupancy permit, the applicant shall present a plan to make the lots on the north side of Whittemore Avenue EV-ready, excluding any lots/spaces that are identified for reuse for a purpose other than parking, and shall implement that plan after review by TP+T and CDD. The plan shall include information about the expected electrical demand and electrical capacity needs associated with the future installation of charging stations serving all spaces.
9. Provide and maintain publicly accessible sidewalks and paths, including performance of crack repairs, snow, and ice removal.
  - 9.1. IQHQ-Alewife LLC shall have a maintenance agreement with the Department of Public Works (DPW) prior to the issuance of the first Occupancy Permit for the publicly accessible pedestrian/bicycle connections as mutually agreed upon between IQHQ-Alewife LLC and DPW.
10. TP+T notes that the Applicant has committed to significant improvements around Jerry's Pond, including adding new and expanded bicycle and pedestrian connections from Rindge Avenue, Alewife Brook Parkway, and the area around the MBTA's east headhouse. Taken together, all these improvements and enhancements will contribute significantly to improving sustainable transportation access to both the Project site and the Alewife area in general.

#### **4.3 Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Measures**

1. Charge employees 100% market rate parking fee while working to mitigate the potential impacts of Cambridge residents parking on nearby streets.
  - 1.1. Employees should have options to pay parking fees only for the days they drive to work, to provide flexibility to employees that do not drive to work every day and commute by sustainable modes other days (such as taking transit). The pay-by-day element of the program may be modified by the Applicant from time to time as approved by TP+T and CDD.
  - 1.2. TP+T and CDD should approve the details of the parking fee program prior to issuance of the first Occupancy Permit.
2. Permanently reserve and post signs that designate 5% of parking spaces for carpool/vanpool parking.
3. Provide carpool/vanpool parking at discounted rate.
4. Provide employees 100% transit pass subsidies, up to the federal fringe tax benefit.
5. Allow pre-tax purchase for all federal fringe benefit categories
6. Provide Gold-level Bluebikes corporate membership to employees.

7. Provide showers/lockers to employees.
8. Provide at least one publicly available bicycle repair tool stand with pump.
9. Provide electric outlets in bike parking rooms for charging small electric devices such as e-bikes and e-scooters.
10. Designate an on-site Transportation Coordinator to promote walking, biking, taking the bus, train, or shuttle, and carpooling to employees, including posting information on the Project's website and newsletters, coordinating with the Alewife TMA, providing up to date information to all employees, and responding to individual requests for information. Post information about pedestrian and bicycle facilities near the project; MBTA maps, schedules, and fares; "Getting Around in Cambridge" maps; carsharing/ride-matching programs; Bluebikes system. Alternatively, the Project can provide real-time transportation information by hanging a screen at building lobbies or locations accessible to all employees and visitors.
11. Become a member of the Alewife TMA, to offer ride-matching services and emergency ride home program for all employees who commute by walk, bike, bus, train, shuttle, or carpool.
12. Hold an annual transportation event day.
13. Provide annual transportation monitoring reports to CDD and TP+T using a form and format as approved by CDD. The monitoring program should include an employee mode share and preference survey and parking/driveway counts for cars and bikes
  - 13.1. The annual transportation monitoring reports may be combined in a study with the biennial parking demand monitoring. The details of the monitoring program and schedule shall be approved by TP+T and CDD prior to the issuance of the first Occupancy Permit and may be adjusted as mutually agreed between the City and Applicant.
14. Tenants will work with the Office of Workforce Development (OWD) to hire Cambridge residents.

#### **4.4 Other Project commitments supported by TP+T**

In addition to the mitigation commitments described above, the Project has also committed to other improvements that will benefit sustainable transportation in the area:

- The Project has indicated a commitment to restore the MBTA Alewife Station east headhouse plaza and lighting, subject to MBTA approval, including replacing pavers, providing separated bike and pedestrian circulation, new/improved lighting, green space/planters/trees, clean and repaint the headhouse, replace doors, install art and other items subject to MBTA agreement and approval.
- The Project has agreed to participate with other developers and the City to help initiate formal study for a new commuter rail stop in the Alewife/Quad area.
- If MassDOT builds two-way bike/pedestrian paths through the arched tunnel under Alewife Brook Parkway, IQHQ will build connecting bike/pedestrian paths on its property to provide a more direct connection between the Linear Path to the east with the Fitchburg Bypass path to the west, and with the Minuteman Path to the north
- IQHQ-Alewife LLC has made commitments to police details for afternoon peak hours as available and needed to reduce unwanted cut-through traffic through the Project Site and adjacent neighborhood
- The Project has also agreed to allow residential parking on site during specific time periods (weekdays, 6 PM-8 AM, Friday-Sunday, 6 PM-8 AM Monday).
- Residents will have access to electric vehicle charging stations.

- The Project has agreed to allow residents to park on site during declared snow emergencies.
- The Project will also permit residents direct access across the site and to the MBTA headhouse from the north and east neighborhoods on pedestrian and bicycle connections.
- The Project has agreed to make sidewalk improvements on Rt. 16 including repairing and adding lights.