



MEMORANDUM

To: Cambridge Planning Board
From: Brooke McKenna, Transportation Commissioner *BMK*
Date: July 15, 2026
Subject: 9 & 25 Birch St and 30-36 Bay State Road (PB#412)

The Cambridge Department of Transportation (DOT) has reviewed the Transportation Impact Study (TIS) for the proposed 9 & 25 Birch St and 30-36 Bay State Road Project by BSR Birch, LLC.

The Project entails reconstruction of three lots bounded by Birch Street and Bay State Road into a new approximately 91,585 sf multifamily residential building with 85 units and 15 at-grade parking spaces. Access to the parking will be provided by a one-way driveway from Bay State Road with an exit onto Birch Street. The Project will also provide 89 long-term and 10 short-term bicycle parking spaces.

DOT certified the Project's TIS as accurate and complete on April 16, 2026. The TIS evaluated the transportation conditions surrounding the site, including adjacent roadways and intersections, projected trip generation, and a five-year future transportation analysis. The analysis incorporated a general background traffic growth rate of 0.5% annually, and other planned developments in the area. The TIS did not include the proposed Healthpeak project trips, as a TIS for the Healthpeak project had not yet been submitted. However, DOT believes that the Healthpeak TIS incorporated this Project's trips as part of its background traffic growth rate.

The TIS evaluated all modes of transportation—automobile, transit, walking, and bicycling—and indicated that the Project will generate a total of:

- **680 total daily person trips** including:
 - **258 vehicle trips** (20 AM peak hour/24 PM peak hour)
 - **206 transit trips** (16 AM peak hour/16 PM peak hour)
 - **54 pedestrian trips** (4 AM peak hour /5 PM peak hour)
 - **42 bicycle trips** (4 AM peak hour/5 PM peak hour)
 - **118 work-from-home trips** (9 AM peak hour/11 PM peak hour)
 - **2 other trips**

Planning Board Special Permit Transportation Criteria Exceedances.

The TIS indicated that the Planning Board Special Permit Transportation Criteria were exceeded in three instances as shown below. Full Planning Board criteria summary sheets are attached.

- **Pedestrian Level-of-Service (PLOS) exceedances** (2 total):
Crossing Bay State Road (east) at New Street (unsignalized) - PLOS E in AM and PM peak hours (2 exceedances).
- **Pedestrian and bicycle facilities exceedances** (1 total):
Lack of bicycle facilities - No bicycle facilities exist on Birch Street.

DOT Comments and Recommendations

DOT provides the following comments and recommendations for the Planning Board's consideration regarding this Project:

1.0 General Comments.

DOT believes the proposed Project is positive because it will replace a surface parking lot and two small commercial buildings with much needed housing in Cambridge (85 units). The total number of on-site parking spaces will be reduced from 21 employee spaces to 15 residential parking spaces. The low number of parking spaces (0.18 spaces/unit) aligns with the city's goal of minimizing vehicle use and promoting sustainable transportation. One of three existing curb cuts will be eliminated. The site's sidewalks and street frontages will be improved, and the Project will meet the city's bicycle parking zoning requirements.

The Project has committed to a Transportation Demand Management Program to offset the potential adverse impacts on the surrounding street network. A full list of TDM measures recommended by DOT is provided in this memo.

2.0 Automobile Parking.

Parking spaces are not required by zoning. The Project proposes 15 at-grade parking spaces to serve building residents. The limited number of parking spaces is intended to attract tenants without vehicles to the site, which will help in reducing single occupancy vehicle use in Cambridge.

DOT recommends that the parking spaces be managed to prioritize short-term parking needs, such as drop-of/pick-up and loading needs, healthcare workers serving residents, residents with mobility challenges, residents, visitors, and building contractors.

DOT recommends that four (4) parking spaces have access to an EV charging station and the parking garage be available for 100% of the spaces to have EV charging equipment in the future.

The TIS conducted an on-street parking occupancy study on two weekdays, Wednesday, October 22, 2025, at 10 PM and Thursday, October 23, 2005, at 4 AM and 12 PM. It found that within 0.2 miles from the site, there were 138 existing on-street spaces and between 54 to 63 spaces were unused during 4 AM and 10 PM. The study concluded that there is sufficient on-street parking availability to meet the parking needs for residents that have a car.

3.0 Bicycle Parking.

The Project will provide a minimum of 89 long-term and 10 short-term bicycle parking spaces that appear to meet city zoning layout requirements.

DOT had provided some comments to make changes to the hallways to and from the bike room to make access more comfortable for people and the final Special Permit application made the recommended changes. DOT thanks the Project for the modifications. DOT also recommends that the location of the bike repair station may be better slightly relocated instead of being in the middle of an aisle in the bike room.

4.0 Site Plan and Circulation.

The Project site plan will include screened at-grade parking. As stated above, access to parking will be provided by a one-way driveway from Bay State Road using an existing 15' curb cut with a vehicle exit onto Birch Street. Two existing curb cuts along Birch Street will be repositions and reduced to a single 16' curb cut at the driveway exit. DOT is fine with the design. The Project should make sure that the back-out space for the parking spaces is acceptable for zoning by the Cambridge Inspectional Service Department (ISD) when seeking their Building Permit.

A main lobby with residential amenity spaces will face Bay State Road, and a secondary lobby and amenity space will face Birch Street.

Short-term bike parking spaces will be provided near the building pedestrian entrances on Bay State Road and Birch Street. Sidewalks will include street trees and landscaping against the building frontage which will enhance pedestrian conditions, especially for Birch Street.

DOT previously had recommended to the Project that parking spaces be backing in for improved safety. This was a recommendation not a requirement. The Final Special Permit application stated that the spaces are configured as pull-in parking rather than back-in spaces as this conventional design is expected to be more familiar to new residents. It also preserves usable space for the lobby.

Loading, deliveries, move-in / move-out, and maintenance- / service-related activities will be through the 10' wide service pathway along Birch Street. No curb cut is needed or proposed for this pathway. As shown in the graphics volume for the Final Special Permit Application, trash containers can be moved from the trash room located by the lobby to the parking garage and brought out to Birch Street using the garage driveway.

5.0 Transportation Mitigation.

DOT provides the following transportation mitigation recommendations to offset the Project's transportation impacts, which are consistent with other development projects that have a Planning Board Special Permit in Cambridge. These measures prioritize pedestrian and cyclist safety, public transportation improvements, and sustainable mobility options.

5.1 Fund Speed Humps on Bay State Road.

Bay State Road is listed in the 2020 Cambridge Bicycle Plan as a Bicycled Priority Street. The TIS found that the average speed was 21 and 22 mph Eastbound and Westbound respectively, and the 85th percentile speed was 25 and 26 mph Eastbound and Westbound, respectively. These speeds are above the 20-mph speed limit. The also TIS found Bay State Road had a weekday daily traffic volume of 5,573 which exceeds the preferred maximum of 3,000 for a Bicycle Priority Street.

To offset the Project's transportation impacts on Bay State Road, DOT recommends prior to the issuance of a Building Permit the Project provide \$10,000 to DOT toward installing a new speed hump on Bay State Road to reduce vehicle speeds and reduce volume by deterring drivers from using Bay State Road to avoid congestion on Concord Avenue.

5.2 Provide space for a Bluebikes station on-site or at a location approved by DOT.

To mitigate the Project's impacts, DOT recommends that the Project either provide space on its site to locate a minimum 15-dock Bluebikes Station or construct a curb extension for a station at a location to be approved by DOT. This Project is farther than a quarter mile walk from the nearest stations. Space is a premium. The City can provide funding for the station if the Project builds a curb extension. A potential location is the extension of an existing curb cut on Bay State Road at New Street in place of two parking spaces along the former Sozio building to fit a Bluebikes Station.

The expanded curb extension should be completed before the issuance of the first Occupancy Permit for the Project. If new sidewalk/curb extension space is constructed by the Project, the City will install a new station. The Project is not responsible for paying for a new Bluebikes Station. If the space is on-site to fit a minimum 15-dock Bluebikes Station, the Project shall enter into a License Agreement for the Bluebikes Station, and the City will fund and install the station.

5.3 Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Measures.

DOT recommends the following TDM measures to offset the Project's transportation impacts which are consistent with other projects with Planning Board Special Permits:

- i. All parking spaces provided for residents shall be charged at market rate, whether they are located on-site or off-site through a shared parking arrangement. Parking shall be charged separately from rent to remind residents of the cost of owning a vehicle.

- ii. Designate a Transportation Coordinator (TC) to oversee TDM initiatives, provide transportation information, and liaise with transportation organizations. The TC will:
 - a. Oversee the marketing and promotion of transportation options to all residents and employees and respond to individual requests for information in person and via phone and email.
 - b. Compile and distribute up-to-date information explaining all transportation options to new residents as part of their welcome packet.
 - c. Post their email and phone information in a central and visible location where all residents can access it.
 - d. Be the liaison between the site and transportation organizations including, but not limited to, the MBTA, Alewife TMA, and the City of Cambridge.
 - e. Participate in any TC training offered by the City of Cambridge.
- iii. Provide information about transportation options available to residents in a welcome packet. The packet will contain information on both the range of options available and any building manager programs to support the use of these options. Getting Around Cambridge maps can be purchased from the Community Development Department.
- iv. To establish the habit of using public transportation, advertise and offer a 100% subsidy for the cost of a bus/subway LinkPass (currently \$90/month) for two consecutive months to each adult member of a residential household upon move-in. For rental units, this requirement renews each time a new household moves in.
- v. Provide sustainable transportation information on the Project's website, advertising, social media, and property newsletters.
- vi. To share and promote sustainable transportation information with residents and visitors, provide information on nearby transportation options in a central and visible location where residents and visitors can access it. If the information is provided in print, include nearby bicycle facilities, pedestrian facilities, and public transit schedules, including Alewife TMA shuttle schedules. An accurate real-time transportation information screen may be provided instead of print maps and schedules. If provided, the real-time transportation information screen must show nearby public transit, shuttle, and bikeshare availability.
- vii. The Project shall have annual Alewife TMA membership, emergency ride home, ride-matching, and other TMA programs to residents and employees.
- viii. The Project shall offer a one-year Bluebikes membership (Gold Level) to each adult member of new rental households upon move-in. This requirement is renewed each time a new household moves in.
- ix. Provide and maintain bike repair areas in the long-term bicycle parking areas. Bike room equipment should include a repair station including bike pump and tools, lockers, battery storage, and charging station.
- x. Do not charge residents fees for bicycle parking, lockers, battery storage, or charging station.
- xi. Encourage registration for bike parking at MBTA Pedal and Park Facilities
- xii. Host an Annual Transportation Fair around the third week of May, aligning with National Bike to Work Day, to provide residents with information on sustainable transportation options.
- xiii. The Project will host an Annual Transportation Fair around the third week of May, aligning with National Bike to Work Day, to provide residents with information on sustainable transportation options.
- xiv. The Project proponent will provide comprehensive bike services and programming, including bike safety training and scheduled or on-demand repair services.