

# Inner Mount Auburn Corridor Safety Improvement and Quincy/Bow/DeWolfe Corridor Improvement Projects Responses to Community Feedback

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The Inner Mount Auburn Corridor Safety Improvement Project aims to improve safety and efficiency along Mt. Auburn St. in the project area, from JFK Street to Putnam Avenue. The design was developed over an 18-month period that included several community meetings and other opportunities for the public to give input. Through this community process, we have received comments from many members of the public, including members of the Cambridge Bicycle Committee, Cambridge Bicycle Safety, the Cambridge Pedestrian Committee, the Harvard Square Business Association, St. Paul's School, and the Transit Advisory Committee. In general, the plan was well-received by the community, and there was support for moving ahead with its implementation.

The purpose of this document is to provide responses to comments and suggestions that we received on the most recent version of the plans, which were presented at the December 21, 2019 community meeting. During this meeting, Harvard University also provided an update on the Quincy/Bow/DeWolfe Project, which has a separate process and timeline, but intersects the Inner Mount Auburn project.

Please note that in the interest of brevity, we have not repeated every comment here, especially if it was a broad or general comment. The items included below are questions or comments that relate to specific details of the plans. We have condensed and combined similar comments as appropriate.

## General Comments

### Loading Zones

**Comment:** Adding more loading zones and reducing metered parking is a good idea.

We received several comments in support of adding loading zones and pick-up/drop-off zones for ride hail and food delivery vehicles. The plan includes loading zones, which can be used for multiple purposes, in the following locations:

- on the north side of Mount Auburn Street, adjacent to The Garage;
- on the north side of Mount Auburn Street, adjacent to the new plaza space east of Holyoke Street; and
- approaching DeWolfe Street, in front of the businesses.

Based on a request noted below, we have also added one loading zone space in front of the church, east of DeWolfe Street.

## Tour Bus Parking on Mount Auburn Street

**Comment:** Provide floating tour bus spaces and move the bike lane to the curb.

We cannot make this change as it would not meet our accessibility standards. Passengers must have direct access to the sidewalk when exiting the bus. This is especially important for people who cannot step up onto the curb, and people who are blind or have low vision, as they may have difficulty navigating to or from the middle of the street. Buses also have to be adjacent to the curb so that operators can deploy ramps or lifts for passengers who use wheelchairs or strollers.

Furthermore, given the frequency of tour buses that visit Harvard Square, it is likely that the large number of people getting on and off of the buses would block the bike lane. This would make the lane unusable during the busy season.

**Comments:** Eliminate the tour bus spaces between Holyoke Place and Plympton Street.

This is a good location for the tour buses to drop off/pick up.

We received comments from people who appreciate the location of the tour bus parking and from people who do not. We recognize the importance of tourism and work to ensure that tour bus operators have access to pick-up/drop-off zones that are safe and functional.

At this time, it is not possible to eliminate the tour bus spaces on the block approaching Plympton Street. We must allow tour buses to operate in Harvard Square. There are already more tour buses than can be accommodated by the four spaces. Removing spaces would unreasonably burden the tourism industry, which is an important part of Cambridge's local economy. It would also likely cause safety problems in other locations around the Square as the tour bus drivers will simply park illegally. While enforcement could address these issues to a degree, it is impossible to consistently enforce such a high frequency of short-term violations.

We are aware of the concerns with this location and will continue to explore opportunities to relocate these pick-up/drop-off areas. Based on the feedback we received during the last round of community input, we swapped one of the tour bus spaces east of Holyoke Place with a Harvard Shuttle bus stop. This leaves only one tour bus space east of Holyoke Place. We have also added bus stop/bike lane markings to the plans to reduce the frequency of tour buses blocking the shuttle stop. We anticipate that these additional markings will help shuttle bus drivers differentiate between tour bus and shuttle bus stops.

## Site-Specific Comments

These comments relate to specific areas of the project. We've grouped them by block(s).

### Mount Auburn Street - Brattle Square to JFK Street

**Comment:** Add separation for the bike lane approaching JFK Street.

We have looked into adding separation to the bike lane at this location by removing one travel lane between the Mount Auburn/Eliot merge and JFK Street. Staff from the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department conducted a one-day pilot of this configuration. We found that drivers turning left onto JFK Street were able to safely yield to people walking, while people driving straight continued on Mount Auburn Street. As a result, we have extend the separated

bike lane. We will continue to monitor this location and make additional changes if needed to ensure safety.

**Comment:** Provide a two-stage-turn box at the Mount Auburn Street and JFK Street intersection.

We have updated the plan to provide a two-stage left turn box. These additional pavement markings will create space for people biking to make left turns in two stages. In stage one, they will proceed straight, on Mount Auburn St, to the far-side of the intersection. In stage two, they will use the space created by the two-stage-turn box to rotate their bike so that they can proceed straight on JFK Street.

### **Mount Auburn Street - Plympton Street to DeWolfe Street**

**Comment:** Provide a separated bike lane for the entire block.

During the design process, City staff evaluated different designs that would create a separated bike lane for the full length of this block. Some of the problems created by these designs included:

- unacceptable delays for the MBTA Route 1 bus;
- signal timing changes that would result in the potential for more conflicts between drivers who are turning from Mount Auburn Street and people walking across the street;
- the elimination of all curbside access (loading zones) for the four local businesses on the north side of Mount Auburn Street.

The design proposed by the City increases separation at the intersection of DeWolfe Street, where conflicts are the greatest, while still providing safe loading zones for the businesses. Loading zones on Bow Street are not a viable alternative, as there is not enough space for truck drivers to make the turn from Bow Street back to Mount Auburn Street.

### **Mount Auburn Street - DeWolfe to Athens**

**Comment:** Please place a loading zone on Mount Auburn Street in front of the gate/fence between the Saint Paul parish and Saint Paul choir school lots (between DeWolfe and Athens).

A loading zone has been added in this location.

### **Mount Auburn Street - DeWolfe Street to Putnam Avenue**

**Comments:** Extend the shared bus/bike lane for the entire length of this segment.

Replace the proposed shared bus/bike lane with a separated bicycle lane for the entire length of the block.

We heard strong and differing opinions about the bus lane. The design proposed by the City attempts to accommodate a variety of needs. Our traffic analysis shows that during rush hours, the Route 1 bus may be delayed by other vehicles waiting at the signal. This design will help reduce delays for the bus, by allowing it to pass those vehicles.

Extending the bus lane back to DeWolfe Street would require the removal of the buffer, which provides separation between people driving and people biking. It is also unlikely that extending the bus lane would result in additional time savings for the Route 1 bus.

**Comment:** Remove one general travel lane to allow for both a bus lane and a separated bike lane approaching Putnam Avenue.

Removing a general travel lane would reduce 50 percent of the capacity, which would result in significant impacts for motor vehicles traveling along Mount Auburn Street, including MBTA buses. With the proposed plan, we expect people driving to wait an average of 50 seconds. If a travel lane was removed, this wait time would increase to 180 seconds. In addition, during rush hours, traffic queues would extend 800 feet, which includes the DeWolfe Street intersection. As result, we would expect to see an increase of people blocking the intersection, which would have a negative impact on people traveling on DeWolfe St, including the safety of people walking and biking. Additionally, the Route 1 buses would not be able to make use of the bus lane. This would negatively impact reliability and frequency of the entire MBTA Route 1, which serves 14,000 riders each weekday.

### **Quincy/DeWolfe Corridor - Broadway to Mill Street**

**Comment:** Use minimum widths to create a two-way bicycle facility with a one-foot buffer. This would allow the parking to be maintained.

A design that included a two-way bicycle facility and parking was evaluated during the design process. This design was not selected because a one-foot buffer does not meet our design standards. Additionally, we would not be able to install any vertical separation (flex-posts) in such a small area. Based on behaviors seen in other locations, we expect that this would result in people driving and parking in the bike lane. Furthermore, it is likely that snow plowing would make the parking lane unusable during the winter and further narrow the two-way bicycle facility.

This parking is important for the local business in Harvard Square. While this project will remove a significant number of parking spaces along the corridor, it is important to maintain a balance to mitigate impacts on business owners.

Quincy Street, between Broadway and Harvard Street, frequently serves as an area for dignitary parking during events at Harvard University. Given that these are generally high-security events, it is required that parking be provided immediately adjacent to the Yard. If this parking were eliminated, these vehicle convoys would occupy the two-way bike lane on a frequent basis.

### **Quincy Street at Massachusetts Avenue**

**Comment:** Provide an all-way stop

Vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle volumes at this location do not meet Federal criteria for installation of all-way stop. Research shows that installing unwarranted all-way stops can lead to more crashes as compliance with unwarranted stop signs tends to be low. We will evaluate this intersection in the future to see if traffic volumes increase enough to meet the Federal criteria for this, or another appropriate traffic control.

### **Bow Street from Massachusetts Avenue to DeWolfe Street**

**Comment:** Use minimum widths to create a two-way bicycle facility with a one-and-a-half-foot buffer. This would allow the parking to be maintained.

The curve along Bow Street makes the suggested change impossible, as any vehicle larger than a passenger car is unable to stay in a 10.5' lane through a curve with this radius. In order

to create a two-way bike facility along this segment, we would have to remove all of the parking, which is heavily used by customers of the nearby businesses.

## Responses to Our Questions

We asked the community for feedback on curbside use at two locations and moving the bus stop at Putnam Avenue. Below is a summary of the feedback we received.

**Question:** On Mount Auburn Street from Holyoke Street to Holyoke Place and from Plympton Street to DeWolfe Street, we're proposing converting the meters to loading zones. Would you prefer meters or loading zones?

Most people, who stated a preference, preferred that we move forward with converting these areas to loading zones.

We expect that the proposed mix of parking spaces and loading zones will address the needs of users and maximize efficiency. If, in the future, the community identifies needs that can be better met with a different mix of regulations, we can make adjustments.

**Question:** Would you support moving the bus stop at the Putnam Ave intersection to the other side of Putnam Ave?

The vast majority of respondents said they would support the relocation of the bus stop.

Based on the feedback, the design team will proceed with a feasibility analysis and design for an accessible bus stop on the southeast corner of the intersection.