

# CSO Committee Member Interview Summary Assessment

Drafted by the Consensus Building Institute

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## Overview

The Consensus Building Institute (CBI) Team interviewed 12 group members to discuss their perspectives on the impact of Cambridge's Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO), as well as their hopes and goals for the Advisory Group. The interviews were conducted December 2022 - February 2023. The interviews included questions about the group member's relationship with the City of Cambridge, their feedback on community engagement around the CSO in the past, present and future, the impact of the CSO on the Cambridge community, and their advice regarding the process for the advisory group. The group members have served on other Cambridge commissions or with a local business improvement district or university.

The information gained from these pre-meeting interviews helps CBI and City staff understand the context that members bring to the Advisory Committee, and helps inform the information and meeting structures that members will need to be successful. This document is for background only, and does not reflect the charter or work plan for the Advisory Committee.

## Feedback on the CSO Process and Engagement

Members expressed a variety of opinions on the CSO implementation and public engagement process so far. Some members felt that the City had conducted a great deal of community engagement for recent CSO projects. Others believed the City did not do enough engagement, and felt that there had not been enough transparency around next steps and the overall context of the plan. For example, some said that previous engagement had been too narrow, as it only engaged direct neighbors on the relevant streets. Some suggested that engagement opportunities be advertised and expressed to the larger community, and cited the engagement for the bike plan as a good example. Members also made observations about how the ordinance was passed during COVID with limited exploration of the full implications before passage. Some expressed interest in more effective communication between boards and commissions.

## **Member Perspectives on Impacts of CSO**

There was a strong interest in understanding the intended and unintended impacts of the CSO among group members. Almost every interviewee mentioned being a multi-modal commuter, and many ride bikes around the City. Members shared perspectives and questions about the following topics:

### Cyclist and Pedestrian Safety:

Some people noted that added bike lanes have made them feel safer biking, and that they have seen more bike ridership by kids and older adults due to increased safety measures. Members wanted to ensure that cycling safety was a top priority in the implementation of the ordinance. Some members noted concerns about pedestrian safety in the context of the CSO, considering interactions between pedestrians and bikers on sidewalks or at intersections.

### Small Businesses:

Members had a number of questions regarding the impacts of the CSO on small businesses. They wanted more information on the impact of reduced parking on small business earnings, filling current vacant commercial spaces, businesses leaving Cambridge, and how changes to nearby residential and side streets, particularly parking supply, affect businesses. Others wanted to understand what proportion of customers walk, bike, drive, and take public transit to businesses. Some asked for more information on the tradeoffs between bike lanes and outdoor dining. Some noted that they wanted parking rules in residential areas to be more clearly communicated. People noted that studies do not make business owners feel heard, and that they want the City of Cambridge to answer their questions about reduced parking and loading zones. Some members wanted help communicating to small business owners that cyclists have safety needs that need to be addressed.

### Socially Vulnerable Populations such as Older Adults, Disabled Residents, and Unhoused Residents:

Members felt that the CSO would improve safety conditions for biking, and allow for vulnerable populations such as the elderly to bike, while others noted that those same vulnerable populations need to have access to cars and parking close to businesses. Members noted that improving and adding public transportation could increase mobility options. Some wanted the City to consider that not everyone has computer or internet access, and their community outreach needs to accommodate that.

### Traffic and Car Usage:

Some wanted more information on the impacts of the CSO on traffic and driving for employees who work in Cambridge but live elsewhere. Members felt that reducing car usage was a positive goal of the ordinance as it is better for the climate, reduces pollution, and reduces traffic congestion and impacts. While some members were concerned that some cars do not follow traffic rules that lead to dangerous incidents, others also noted that some bikers do not follow proper bike etiquette.

## **Goals and Concerns for CSO Advisory Group Process**

Throughout the interviews, people said they would like the meetings to have clear agendas, goals, and protocols to ensure the meetings are effective. Members expressed interest in providing input into agenda development and determining about which topics to hear from the City. Some people expressed concerns that the work of the Advisory Group would not have the ability to change plans for CSO projects, and

wondered if the ordinance could be amended throughout the process. Others expressed concerns that the Advisory Group would undo the work of the CSO. Overall, everyone agreed that the meetings need to embody an environment of respect for all. In terms of community engagement, people wondered how those not previously engaged could get involved. Members hoped that this group would work to increase communication between groups who opposed certain measures of the CSO, as well as public communication between boards and commissions.

## **Role of Advisory Group – Input on community engagement**

Members wanted to improve community engagement for the CSO through developing and conducting innovative outreach methods, mapping and reaching out to key stakeholders, improving the process for listening to resident concerns in meetings, and increasing transparency around future projects.

Members shared their experiences and impressions of current outreach around the Cycling Safety Ordinance, and made the following suggestions for improvements. These initial suggestions will inform a basis for larger discussions.

### **Outreach Methods**

- Increased signage
- Text message outreach
- Automatic alerts such as during COVID
- Analysis of community assets to support outreach (churches, schools, libraries, etc)
- Provide educational resources and transparency to residents who are directly negatively affected by completed CSO projects
- Notify abutters (including a wider radius of residents near projects)

### **Key Stakeholders**

- Transit users, bikers, bus riders
- Businesses: Small Businesses, business improvement districts, employees, customers
- Residents: resident groups/neighborhood associations, residents close to bike lanes, residents on side streets near new bike lanes
- Subject matter experts outside Boston who might be able to share learnings from other communities.

### **Public Meeting Process**

- Increase time for public comment, especially on zoom to more than 60 seconds
- Make people feel they have been heard during the meetings, not ignored

### **Transparency About Upcoming Projects in Context of Overall Plan**

- Decrease misinformation
- Increase community and engagement between boards and commissions in the City
- Provide information about planned upcoming projects and timeline

### *Develop Metrics for Success*

Members expressed interest in developing criteria to evaluate the implementation of the Cycling Safety Ordinance and the installation of separated bike lanes. Suggested metrics included:

- Increased safety of bikers
- Effect on traffic conditions
- Greenhouse gas emissions reduction
- Accessibility for vulnerable populations
- Residents reached: depth of outreach and level of engagement
- Effect on small businesses