CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Department of Transportation

Vassar Street Safety Improvement Project

Community Informational Meeting | August 6, 2025

Project Team

Project Manager

***Leah Grodstein,** *Street Design Project Manager | Department of Transportation*
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Department of Transportation (DOT)

- **Brooke McKenna,** *Transportation Commissioner*
- ***Jeffrey R. Parenti, P.E., P.T.O.E., P.T.P., ENV SP,** *Asst. Commissioner for Street Management*
- **Stephanie Groll,** *Assistant Commissioner for Transportation Planning*
- **Stephen Meuse, P.E.,** *Supervising Engineer*
- **Andreas Wolfe,** *Street Design Project Manager*
- ***Jackie McLaughlin,** *Communications Manager*
- **Chaimaa Medhat,** *Community Relations Project Admin*
- ***Andy Reker,** *Transit Program Manager*
- ***Nick Schmidt,** *Transportation Program Manager*

Department of Public Works (DPW)

- **Jerry Friedman,** *Supervising Engineer*

Design Consultants

- **Kittelson & Associates**

*** = on the call today**

Meeting Purpose, Outcome, & Process

Purpose

We are creating a new design for a section of Vassar Street as part of the City's Cycling Safety Ordinance. Tonight, we'll review community feedback and share the preferred design based on that input. We'll also go over the schedule for implementing the changes this Summer.

Outcome

By the end of the meeting, you'll know the implementation schedule and how the team decided on the preferred design using community feedback.

Process

City staff will share a slideshow showing the preferred design of the Vassar Street Safety Project, shaped by community feedback. After the presentation, there will be a question-and-answer session where participants can ask about the project and implementation schedule.

Agenda

01. Project Overview

- Project Area
- Why are we making changes?
- Timeline

02. Feedback Received

- What did we hear from you?

03. Final Street Design

- What is the preferred design?

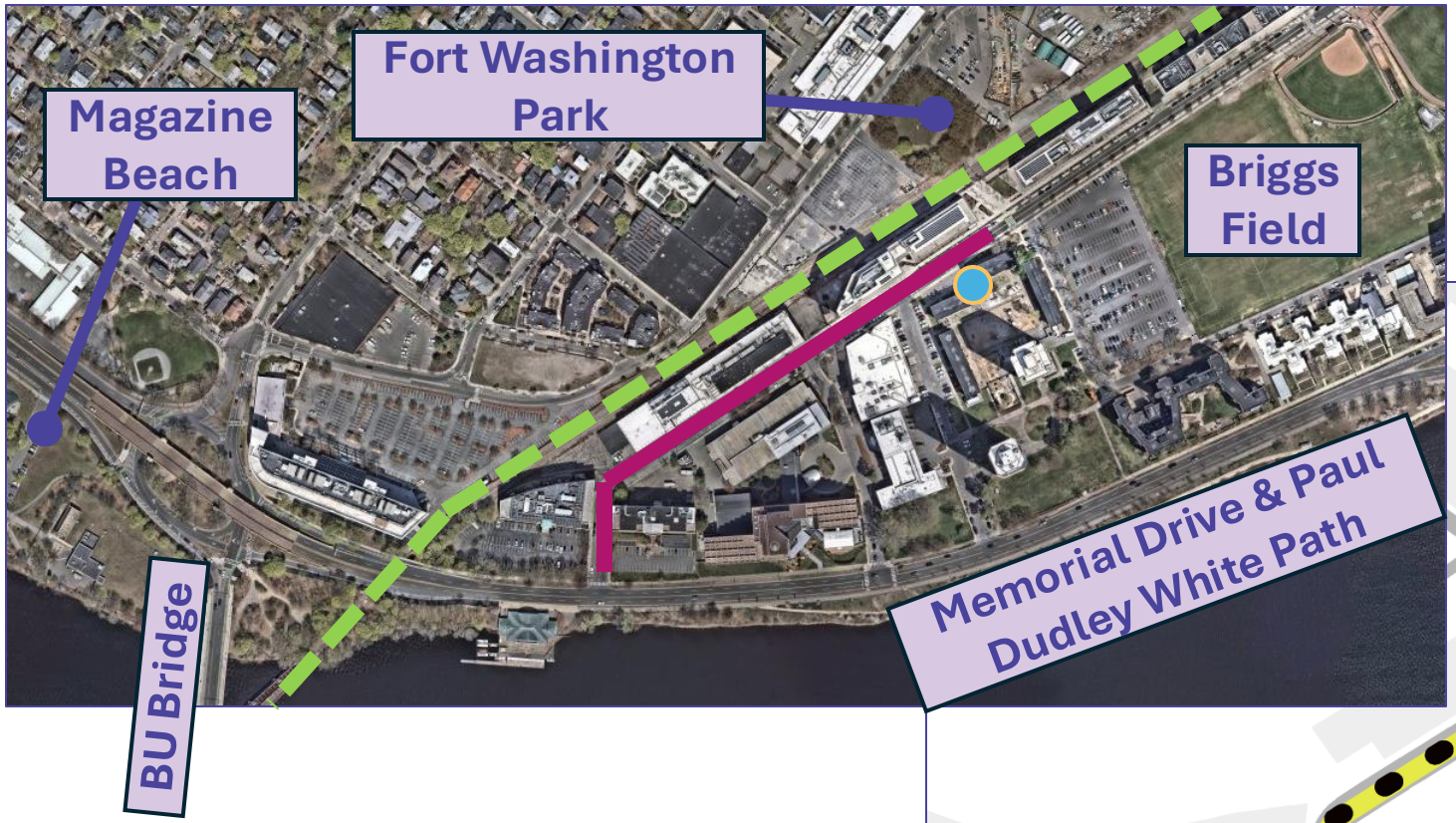
04. Next Steps

- What should you expect?

05. Questions

01. Project Overview

Project Area



Key:

Project Area

Bluebike Station

Future Grand Junction path

Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO)

2019

Cambridge City Council passes the Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO)

- When streets are reconstructed as a part of the City's **Five-Year Plan for Streets and Sidewalks,** the Ordinance requires the City to construct separated bike lanes if the street has been designated for "Greater Separation" in the **Bicycle Network Vision.**

2020

Cambridge City Council passes amendments to the CSO

- Requirement for the City to install about 25 miles of separated bike lanes by April 30, 2026, including quick-build projects not on the Five-Year Plan.

2024

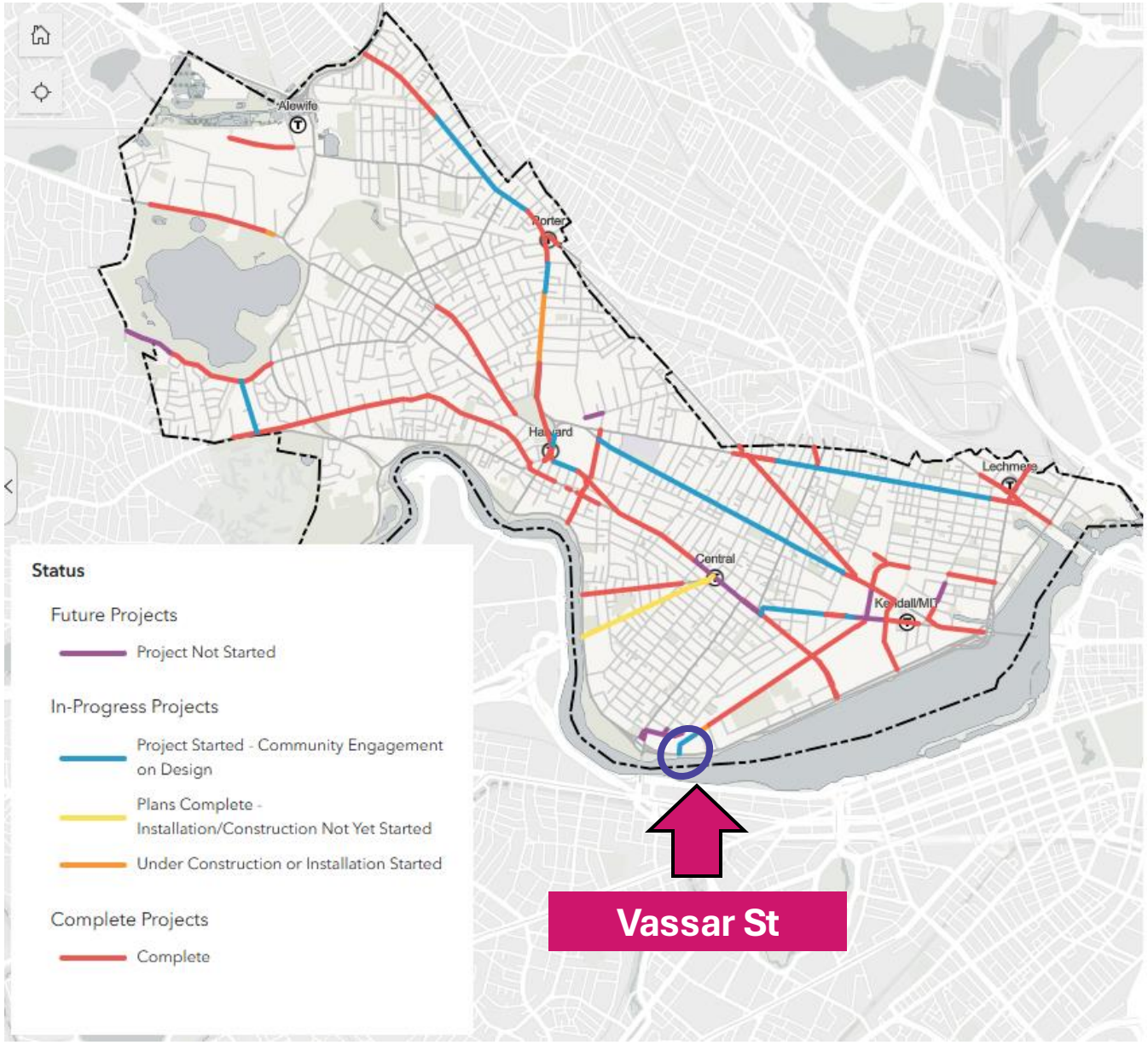
City Council sets new deadline of November 1, 2026

CSO Continued

The 2020 amendments require that the City install about 25 miles of separated bike lanes within five to seven years on:

- All of **Massachusetts Avenue**
- **Broadway** from Quincy Street to Hampshire Street
- **Cambridge Street** from Oak Street to Second Street
- **Hampshire Street** from Amory Street to Broadway
- **Garden Street** from Huron Avenue to Berkeley/Mason Street
- **11.6 miles** of separated bike lanes in other locations from the 2020 Bicycle Plan's Network Vision

Learn more at:
cambridgema.gov/cycling-safety-ordinance



Why Vassar Street?

The entire length of Vassar Street is designated for “greater separation” to support people biking safely and comfortably

Vassar St is a priority:

- Access: Used to access MIT dormitories, classrooms, and campus activity centers
- Connectivity: bike route to BU Bridge and Boston (interim Grand Junction path)
- Connectivity: MIT built separated bike lanes along other parts of Vassar Street. This project will extend the network
- Access: There are more opportunities for campus development in this area, and future buildings will need safe bike access

- A network that safely and comfortably connects important destinations throughout the City helps more people choose to bike if they want to

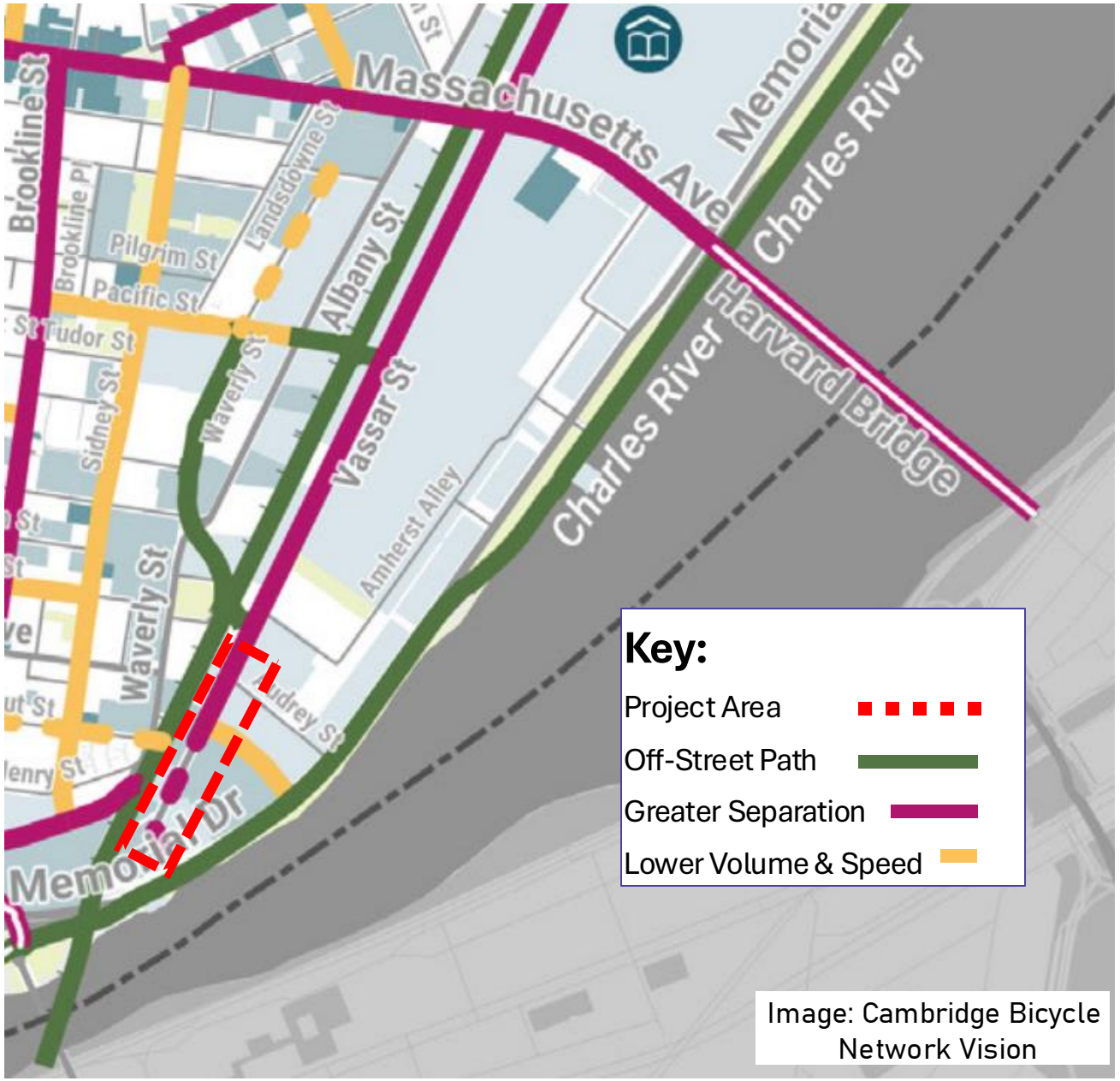


Image: Cambridge Bicycle Network Vision

Project Timeline

Phase 1: Evaluation

No design yet. City evaluates whether potential project is a good candidate for "quick-build" design

Spring 2024

Phase 2: Design Feedback

Review the draft designs and provide feedback

Discuss design feedback, considerations, and tradeoffs

March - July 2025

Phase 3: Final Feedback and Installation

Preferred design developed using community feedback

Inform community about plans for installation

Install the project!

August - September 2025

We Are Here!

02. Feedback Received

Community Input

- Open House hosted at Graduate Junction residence hall on May 8th
- Comment form open May 2025-June 2025: 39 responses
- Met with Cambridge Commission for Persons With Disabilities (June 12)
- Joint Meeting of Transportation Committees (June 18)

"As someone who will be biking that section of Vassar St frequently this coming year, safety improvements are welcome."

"The full length of Vassar and especially the west end attract too much aggressive through traffic which always feels risky given the volume of pedestrians and cyclists and the poor visibility due to tall parked cars at the various crosswalks."

"Better lanes and slower car speeds makes me feel much safer traveling on these streets."

"The [existing] bike lane leads to nowhere and I rarely see bikers there."

"It seems Vassar St is/could be a vital link that could serve as a replacement for the GJ path, and thus I encourage the most robust separated path as is feasible."

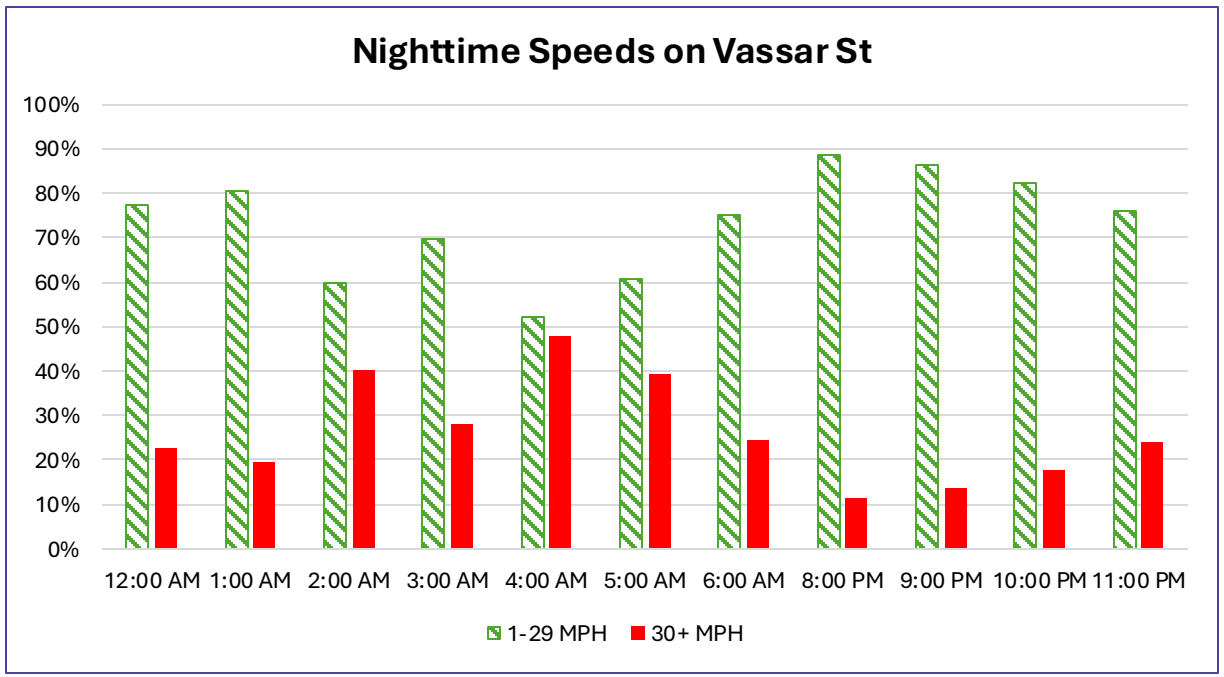
"Separated bike lanes will make my commute feel much safer."

"I have often felt at risk of suddenly opened doors from parked cars when biking on Vassar St… I used to live near Vassar St 3 years ago and felt the need for protected bike lanes on my daily commute."

"Cyclists in a hurry invariably swerve into pedestrian space [when there is no separate space for cyclists]."

+ Many specific comments …

Design Considerations – Traffic Calming



"If I have one further idea, it would be a calming measure at the curve behind W98. The sidewalks are narrow, so pedestrians are occasionally in the roadway, and some bikes/cars treat Vassar as if it were a highway, so it's a tough place for a blind corner."

"I commute down and across Vassar daily and have a near-miss with a car driving too aggressively through a crosswalk probably once a week… Modern mapping apps seem to direct people to use Vassar as a high speed throughfare, which is dangerous given the huge pedestrian and cyclist volume at MIT."

"Lower speed! Speed bumps?"

"I am worried cars will still speed without concrete [barriers to stop them]."

"To improve bike safety in the area, I would really like to see efforts to address the speed that cars drive."

Design Considerations – Path Connection

"Consider a bike turn box or lane to facilitate left turns from Vassar onto Amesbury street which most cyclists take to the memorial drive path."

"I really like this plan. If there's any way to incorporate safer crossing of Memorial Drive for bikes and pedestrians, that would be really helpful!"

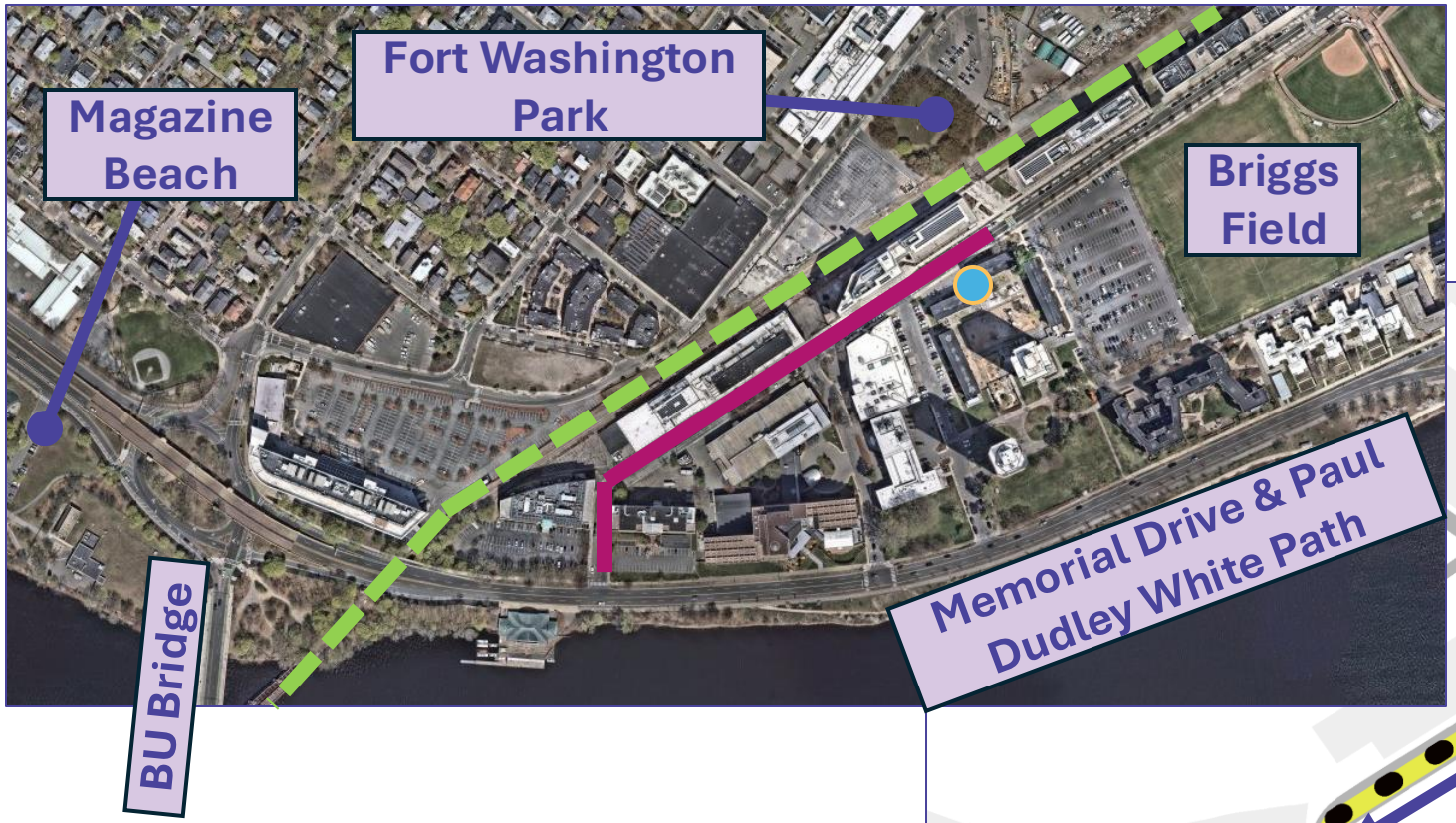
"The current proposal has the bike lanes ending abruptly at Memorial Drive, which has the potential to create conflict or funnel cyclists into a dangerous traffic pattern. If the bike infrastructure on Amesbury St. and the Amesbury/Memorial intersection could be improved during this project, I believe that would make the largest contribution to public safety."

"Having a safe connection using HAWK signals, etc. to cross Memorial Drive with protected bike infrastructure at that intersection would make this a very useful connection to the BU bridge."

"There needs to be coordination with DCR around this project."

03. Final Street Design

Project Area



Key:

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Bluebike Station

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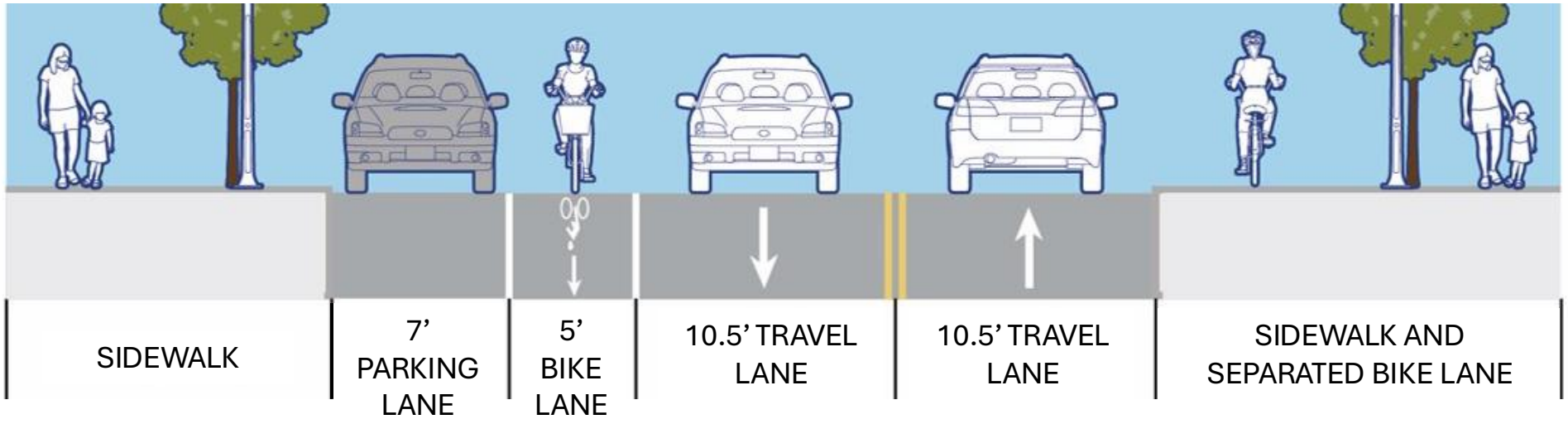
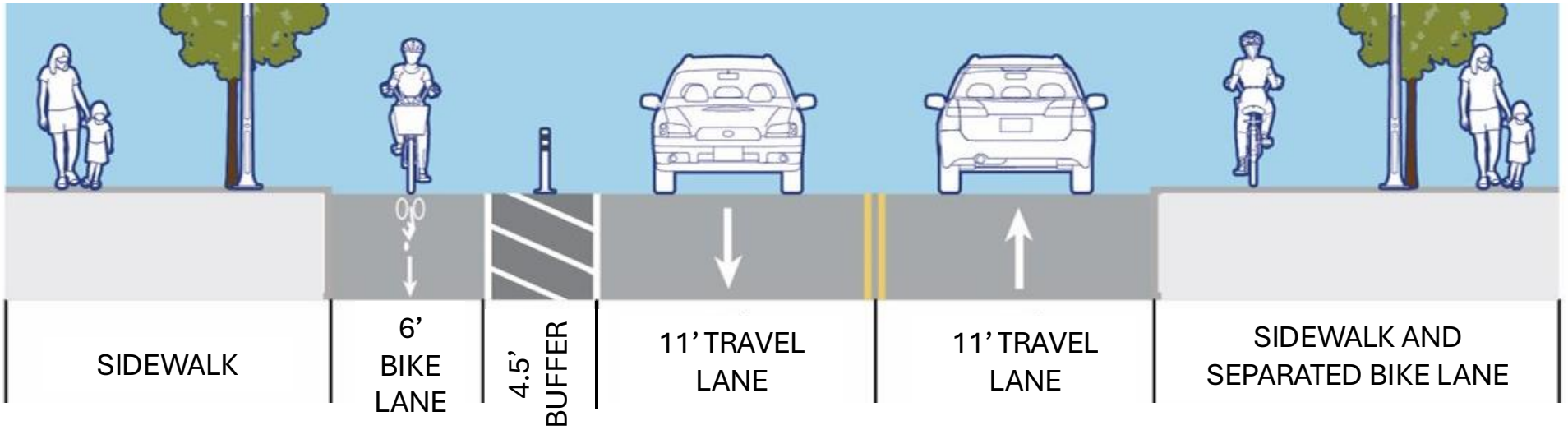
Amherst Alley to Amesbury St – Street View



Existing Conditions

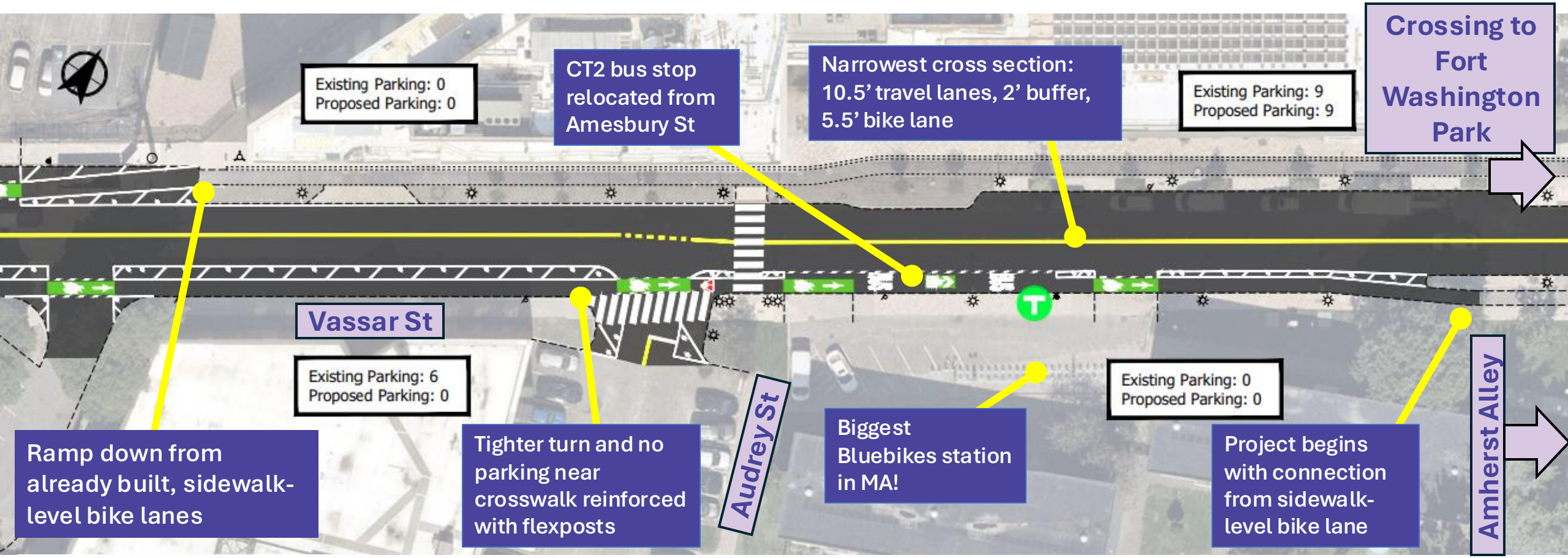
- Bike lane between parked and moving cars
- Smallest dimensions possible for all lanes



Proposed Conditions

- Parking removed for bike lane buffer
- Lane widths vary in this section (see next slide)

Project Design – Amherst Alley to Amesbury St



Existing MBTA Bus Stop

Relocated MBTA Bus Stop

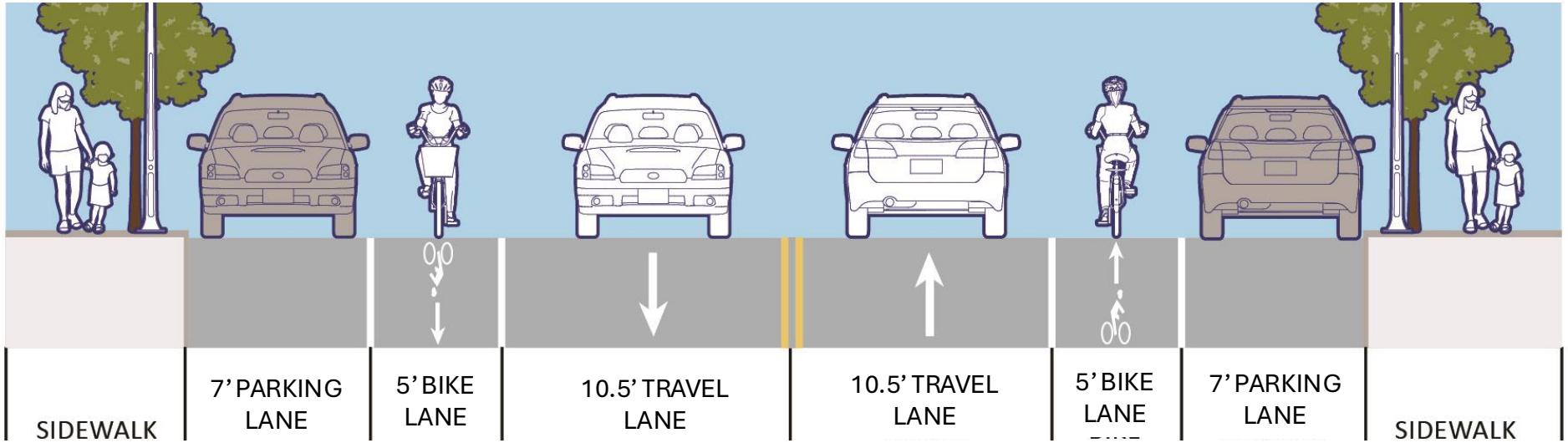
Proposed MBTA Bus Stop

Proposed Bicycle Facility

View at Home

A full resolution copy of the design is available on the project website at https://www.cambridgema.gov/streetsandtransportation/projectsandprograms/vassarstreetsafetyimprovementproject

Amesbury St to 353 Vassar St – Street View



Existing Conditions

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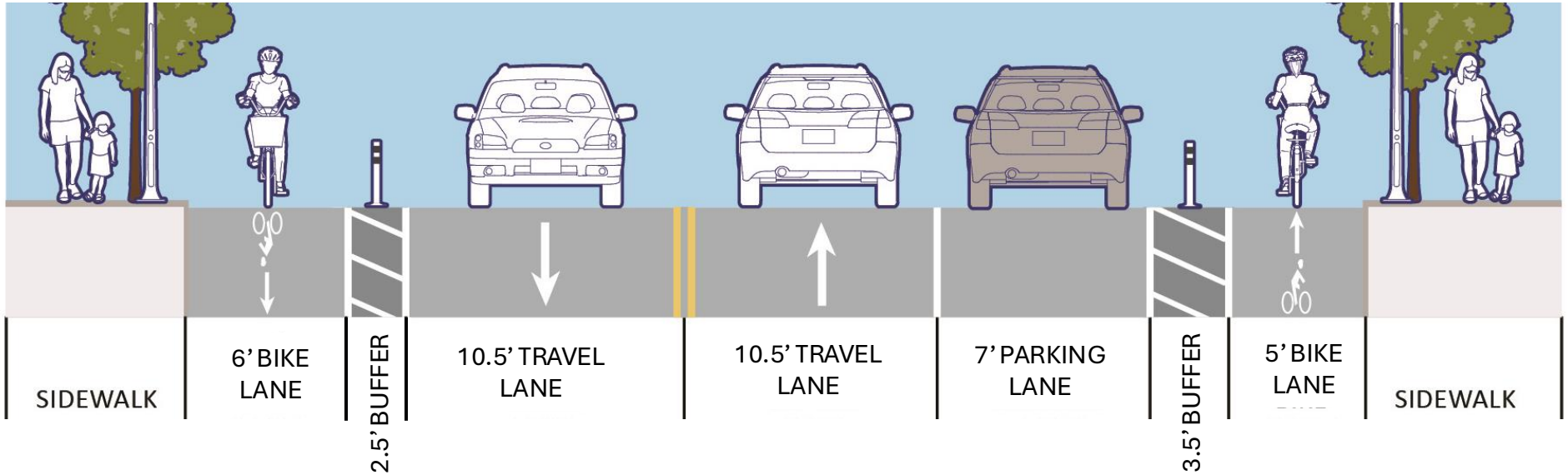
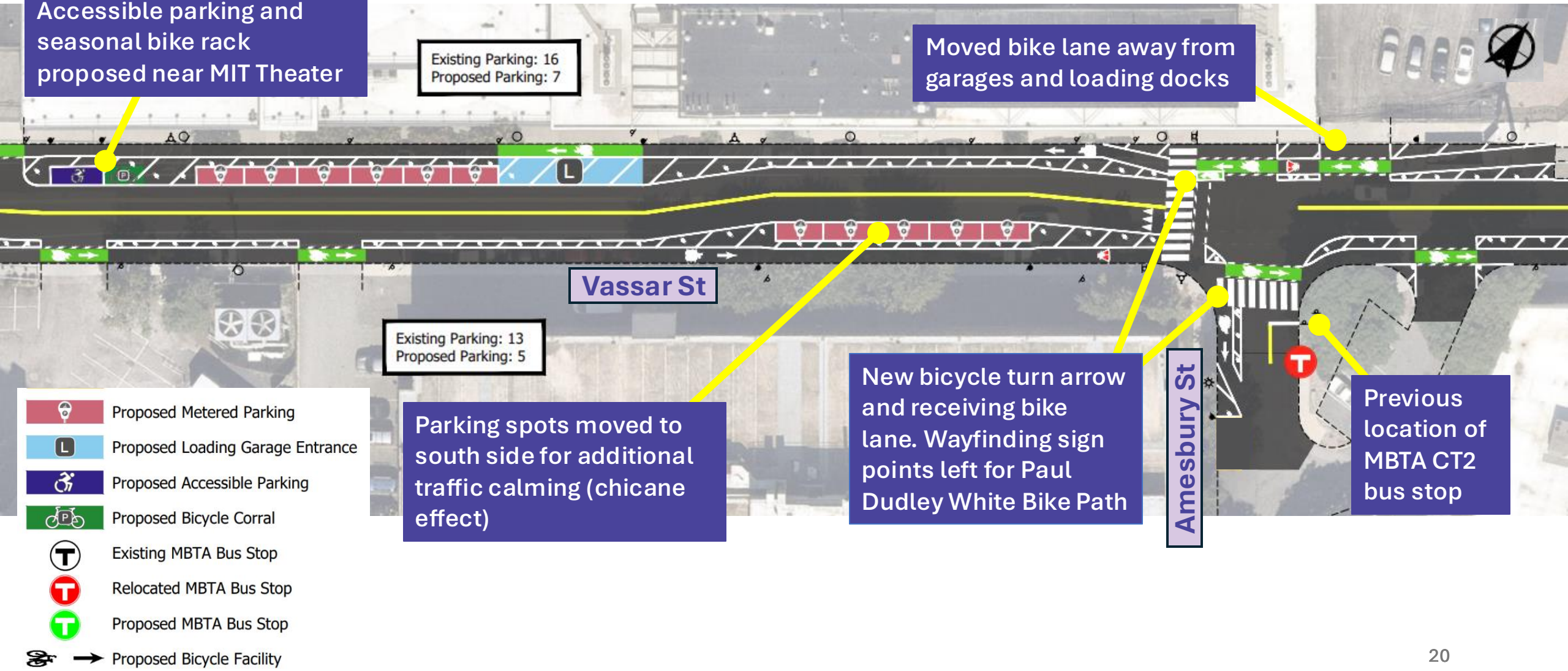


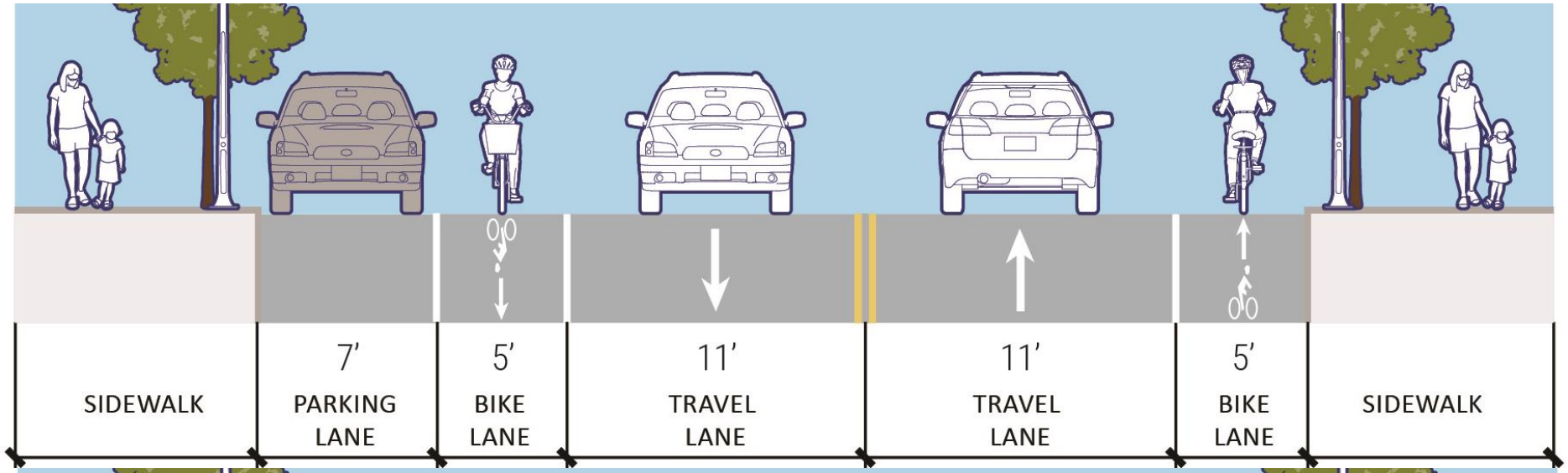
Proposed Conditions

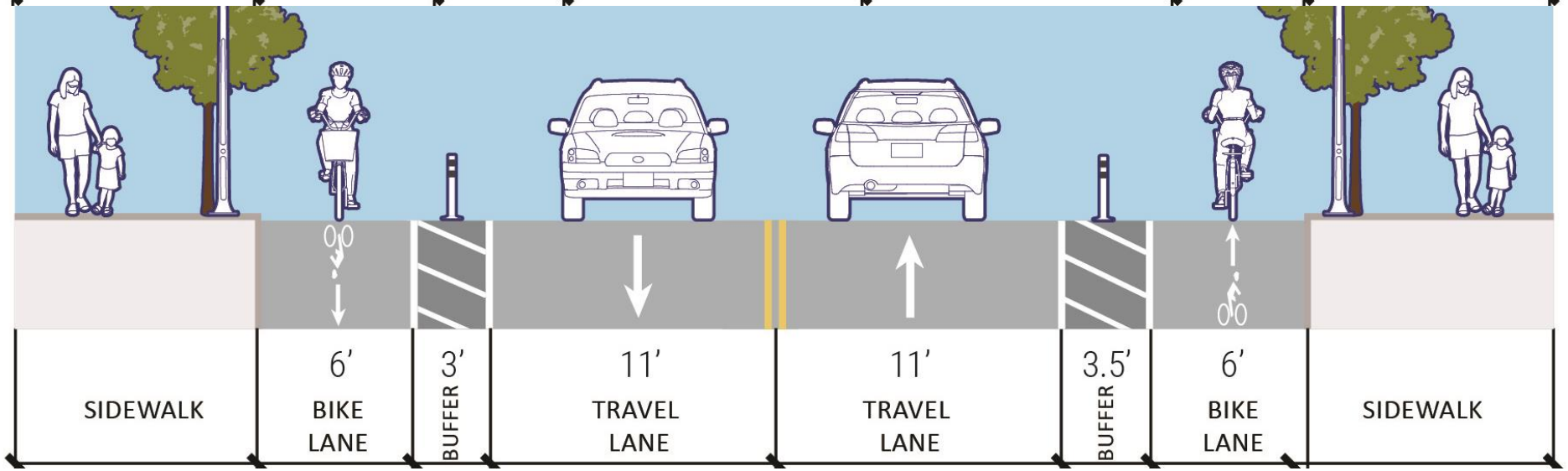
- One lane of parking removed for bike lane buffers
- Larger buffer next to parking for door swing and waiting space

Project Design – Amesbury St to 353 Vassar



353 Vassar St to Memorial Drive – Street View





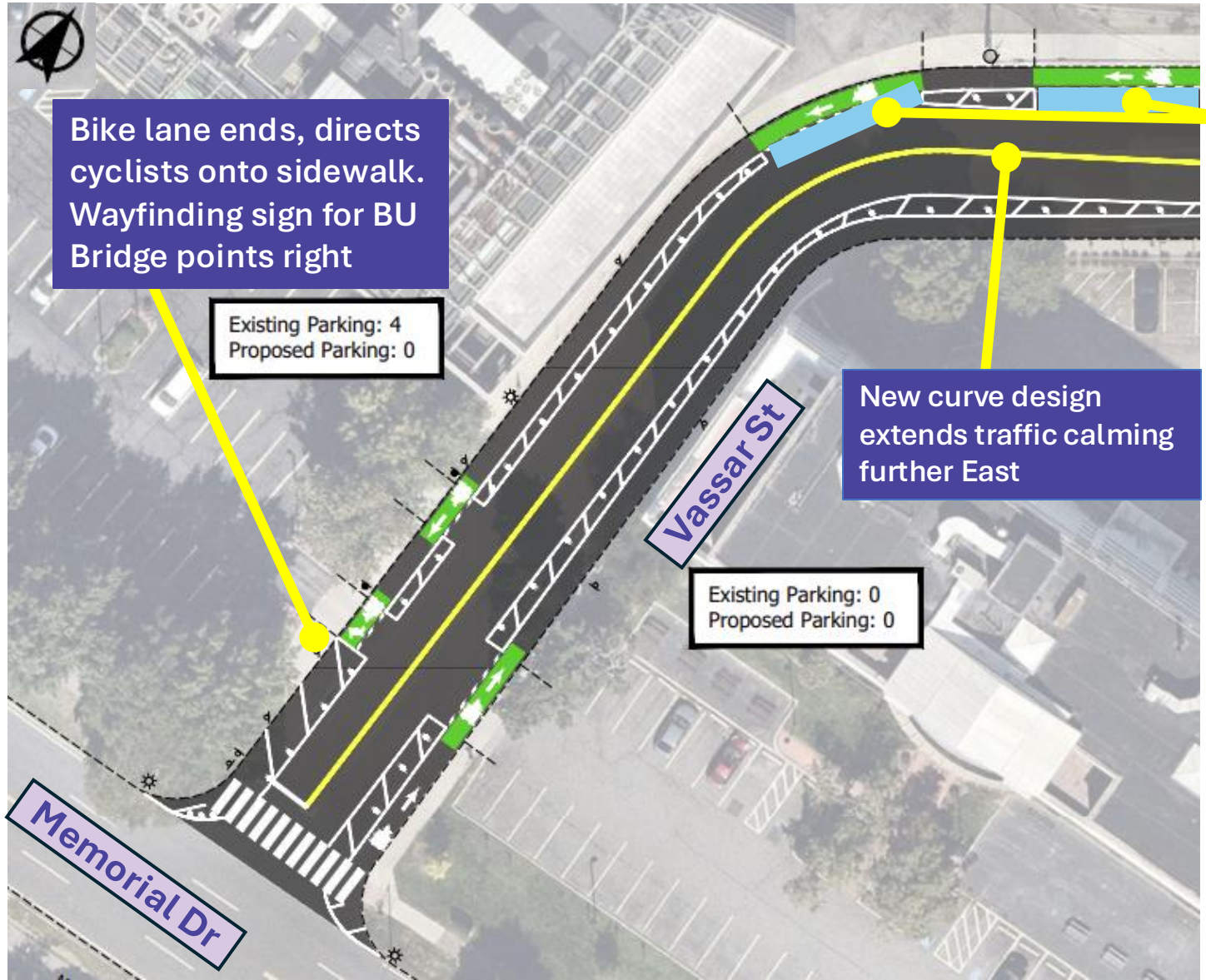
Existing Conditions

- Bike lanes next to moving cars
- Lots of empty asphalt leads to higher speeds

Proposed Conditions

- Parking removed for bike lane buffers
- Buffer size varies, travel lanes stay the same size

Project Design – 353 Vassar to Memorial Drive



- Proposed Metered Parking
- Proposed Loading Garage Entrance
- Proposed Accessible Parking
- Proposed Bicycle Corral
- Existing MBTA Bus Stop
- Relocated MBTA Bus Stop
- Proposed MBTA Bus Stop
- Proposed Bicycle Facility

04. Next Steps

Installation Schedule – Weather Dependent

Tonight

We Are Here!

- Final Design Presentation

Week of August 11th

- Install new parking signs
- Remove unneeded meters

Week of August 18th

- Remove current pavement markings
- Paint new lane lines and crosswalks

Week of August 25th

- Install flex posts
- Install green markings and bike stencils
- Move CT2 bus stop

Image: Installation of thermoplastic lane lines on Broadway

Join the email list for updates on overnight parking restrictions!

Stay Updated

Visit the project webpage:

- You'll find the recording and presentation from this meeting, the final design plans, and information on how to stay up-to-date on installation: https://www.cambridgema.gov/streetsandtransportation/projectsandprograms/vassarstreetsafetyimprovementproject

Sign up for the email list:

- Sign up for the email list for the latest updates on the implementation schedule.

Talk to the Project Manager, Leah Grodstein

- Via email lgrodstein@cambridgema.gov or,
- Call 617-349-7202

Scan the QR code to stay updated on this project!

05. Questions & Answers

Questions

- We will take comment in the order hands are raised
  - If calling in, dial *9 to raise your hand / *6 to unmute
- Additional questions can be asked using the Q+A function
- In order to allow everyone to speak, please try to limit your time to 2 minutes
- You may also contact the project manager directly to provide written or verbal feedback