

## Cambridge Street Safety Improvement Project Working Group City of Cambridge

### March 18, 2025 | Meeting Summary

#### Introduction

The City of Cambridge convened a Working Group to advise on the Safety Improvement Project (SIP) on Cambridge Street. Working Group members are tasked with offering advice, ideas, and concerns about project design, and on the broader outreach about the project. The Working Group meeting was held at the Cambridge City Hall Annex and on Zoom. There were 13 members in attendance, along with City staff, facilitation team members, and members of the public (Appendix A).

This meeting summary captures the key discussion points, advisory group feedback, and actions identified during the meeting. The presentation slide decks and recordings may be found on the Safety Improvement Project on Cambridge Street webpage linked [here](#). This summary is loosely organized according to the structure of the meeting agenda (Appendix B). Opinions are not attributed to specific members unless there is a clear reason to do so.

#### Actions

- **Working Group members:** Share upcoming CSO meetings with respective networks.
- **City of Cambridge:**
  - Consider edge use cases for commercial parking permits.
  - Send update on upcoming Working Group meeting schedule.
- **Consensus Building Institute:** Share draft meeting summary and meeting materials.

#### Welcome and Introductions

Abby Fullem, facilitator with the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), welcomed Working Group (WG) members, reviewed the meeting agenda, and facilitated a round of introductions.

#### Zoning & Flexible Parking Corridors

Mason Wells, Community Development Department, and Ryan McKinnon, Department of Transportation, presented an overview of changes to city Zoning, Commercial Parking Space Permits, and Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) ordinances to adopt Flexible Parking Corridors rules. These changes aim to enable more efficient use of existing off-street parking to ease the transition to sustainable transportation options while balancing residents and businesses' parking needs. The Flexible Parking Corridors rules in the Zoning and PTDM Ordinances apply to all corridors on the 2020 Bike Plan Network for greater separation and bus priority corridors, including Cambridge Street.

WG members shared questions and comments during and following the presentation. They are summarized below based on topic, along with clarifications and responses from City staff, which are italicized in sub-bullets.

#### Zoning for Flexible Parking Corridors

- Where does the bus priority corridors definition come from?
  - The bus priority corridors come in part from a study conducted by the Community Development Department (CDD) and in part from areas identified by the MBTA. The list of bus priority corridors is in the zoning ordinance. The MBTA will not increase service along certain streets if the city does not create bus priority lanes.
- Has anyone contacted the city to participate in the program?
  - *Not yet, though we have received questions. We may not hear directly from people until they have decided to participate and need help figuring out how to do so.*
- If the MBTA needs a bus priority corridor not currently listed in the zoning ordinance, would a new rulemaking process be needed to add it?
  - *City Council would need to make an amendment to the existing rules.*
- Change the dots on the 'Parcel and Parking Facilities Affected by Proposed Changes' map; they currently read as parking spots in the city, which is confusing.
- How many vacant lots are there along the Flexible Parking Corridors?
  - *It is a relatively small number.*
- Why do these rules apply to existing parking facilities and not new development projects?
  - *These new rules target underutilized existing spaces along specific corridors where there is a loss in on-street parking; they are not to encourage new parking facilities more broadly.*
- Adopt consistent and clear messaging about new parking spaces as it pertains to spaces created in the vacant lots. This is especially important as the City tries to encourage private parking lot owners to participate.
- Why is the City restricting new parking despite the possibility of future development and upzoning that may necessitate parking?
  - *New construction is subject to the existing rules and permitting processes. Building new parking generates new driving; we are trying to limit greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. This solution is an attempt to mitigate impacts to parking without dramatically increasing driving and traffic in Cambridge.*
- Are the vacant lots evenly distributed across the city?
  - *It is unlikely they are evenly distributed.*
- The 'Flexible Parking Handout' says "mitigating short-term parking impacts" but the impacts do not seem short term.
  - *In this case, the phrase short-term means between 15 minutes and 2 hours of parking.*
  - *Clarification on "short-term" parking impacts from the city following the meeting: The hand-out should have said "mitigating near-term parking impacts." The parking removal is permanent. However, because building a complete bike and bus network will make it safer and more convenient to travel by bike and bus, we expect the demand for parking to decrease in the long term. The Flexible Parking*

*Corridor rules are intended to help mitigate the initial impact of removing on-street parking before people's transportation habits shift.*

- Are zoning changes intended to meet demands for residential or business parking?
  - *These rules are applicable to residential and business uses. The zoning rules allow new uses of existing spaces rather than determining who participates. The changes are not in response to a specific type of user but rather the overwhelming request from community members to find better ways to utilize existing parking.*
- What percentage of total emissions in Cambridge come from vehicles?
  - *Transportation accounts for 10% of overall emissions, with private cars and trucks responsible for 94% of transportation emissions. The percentage is lower than the average of other cities, but that is because of the energy-intensive buildings in Kendall Square. The total amount of greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles is significant.*

### **PTDM for Flexible Parking Corridors**

- If an office building has unused parking spaces, could they rent parking to nearby residents without creating a new PTDM Plan?
  - *Yes, neighboring residents could rent spaces without a new PTDM Plan.*
- What is the definition of the 'off-site employees' category?
  - *Employee parking for anyone who does not work at the site. This could be the lot owner's employees who work at a different property, or unrelated employees who work nearby.*
- How are churchgoers categorized in the PTDM changes?
  - *Most likely they would be categorized as 'visitor and guest'.*
- If there are multiple categories of users for one parking facility, are they specified in the PTDM by percentage?
  - *It is specified by the number of spaces.*
- Is it permissible for a church to use their lot for commercial parking during the week and revert to visitor parking on the weekend?
  - *Yes, if they get Commercial Parking Space permits for any spaces used for commercial parking. As long as there is no net increase in the number of spaces, this would not require a new PTDM Plan.*
- In commercial areas with triple net leases, traffic surveys can impact small businesses as they may incur both the cost of the survey and experience disruption to visitors when surveys are conducted on the property.

### **Commercial Parking Space Permits**

- Do the new transportation demand management plan requirements only apply to commercial parking facilities on the corridors?
  - *The amendment is not limited to the specific corridors and applies to any small commercial parking facility that meets the requirements.*
- What is the process for forming the Commercial Parking Control Committee (CPCC) and who will participate?

- *The CPCC consists of five Cambridge residents appointed by the City Manager for three-year terms. Members will begin reviewing commercial parking applications once the law department has given guidance on the correct process for initiating the committee.*
- How do you account for applications (e.g., Spot Hero) that allow people to rent parking spaces for short-term use?
  - *We will have to put more thought into less-common use cases.*
  - *Clarification from the city following the meeting: Occasional commercial parking offered through apps like Spot Hero requires a commercial parking space permit issued by the Commercial Parking Control Committee.*

### General Comments

- Share specific use cases when you present to the general public.
- The city-owned parking garage on Cambridge Street appears underutilized. Making necessary infrastructure changes to open it for public use could be part of this effort.
- To avoid creating additional traffic, the WG should not advocate for more parking unless it directly benefits local businesses and residents. Focus on the most effective messaging strategy for city programs—particularly what matters most to Cambridge Street and Broadway respectively.
- Part of the motivation for promoting more parking on Cambridge Street was employee parking for businesses, not just customer parking.

### CSO projects timeline & Prospect to Oak St Implementation

Jackie McLaughlin, Department of Transportation, presented updates on the installation on Cambridge Street between Prospect Street and Oak Street. The first phase will include pavement markings and flexpost installation in early spring 2025. Installing this portion will allow for the deployment of outdoor dining and separated bike lanes. Jackie shared an overview of the outreach plan for the installation and asked WG Members to share outreach advice, specific to the installation, via emailing or by scheduling a meeting. Jackie concluded by sharing a schedule of all upcoming meetings related to CSO projects.

WG members shared questions and comments during and following the presentation. They are summarized below, along with clarifications and responses from City staff, which are italicized in sub-bullets.

- Will the markings mark parking spots during the summer or winter months? I.e., will they be applicable to outdoor dining?
  - *The markings will show parking for the winter months, i.e., during times of no outdoor dining, and temporary jersey barriers will indicate outdoor dining spots during the summer months.*
- Why have no meetings been scheduled in East Cambridge?
  - *We are holding meetings when there are project updates for that stretch of the project.*
- Are all of the meetings just a presentation?

- *The open houses are not a presentation format, they aim to facilitate one-on-one conversations and offer opportunities for participants to give feedback*
- It is important to engage food delivery drivers in the broader outreach.
  - *If anyone knows delivery drivers or has additional information, please reach out.*
- It is important to reach out to employees who commute to work on Cambridge Street and do not live on Cambridge Street. Consider talking to business owners to facilitate these conversations.
  - *We visit businesses as part of our engagement effort. We will consider thinking about how to ensure that the resources we share are distributed to all employees.*
- Is it possible to work with app developers to add a feature that guides drivers to loading zones and appropriate places to pull over?
  - *This is a good idea. It may be challenging to do but we can do some research.*

#### Public Comment

Members of the public were offered the opportunity to share public comments with WG members. Public comments are summarized below.

Betty Saccoccio: The bus schedule is not accurate which makes it difficult for bus patrons. Recently, I had an appointment, and I waited for three buses that did not come, and I cannot ride a bicycle. So, alternate transportation modes do not really exist. There are apps that people use to reserve spaces for one another that are not really open to the public.

#### Appendix A: Meeting Participants

<b>WG members</b>	<b>City staff:</b>	<b>Facilitation team:</b> CBI
Amanda Sindel-Keswick Brian Cafferelli Carmen Baskauf Christopher Cassa Christopher Herlich Helen Fu Helen Gibbons Jim McSweeney Marie Elena Saccoccio Patrick Magee Sky Rose Joshua Crooms Helen Gibbons Kaleb Abebe	Jeff Parenti Andreas Wolfe Jackie McLaughlin Chaimaa Medhat Ryan McKinnon Mason Wells Stephanie Groll	Abby Fullem Meira Downie

#### Appendix B: Meeting Agenda

<b>4:00 PM</b>	<b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>
<b>4:20</b>	<b>Zoning &amp; Flexible Parking Corridors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation and clarifying Q&amp;A</li> </ul>
<b>5:20</b>	<b>CSO projects timeline &amp; Prospect to Oak St Implementation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Presentation and group discussion</li> </ul>
<b>5:40</b>	<b>Public Comment</b>
<b>5:50</b>	<b>Wrap-up &amp; next steps</b>
<b>6:00 PM</b>	<b>Adjourn</b>