

Cambridge Street Safety Improvement Project Working Group

City of Cambridge

December 2, 2024 | Draft Meeting Summary

Introduction

The City of Cambridge convened a Working Group to advise on the Safety Improvement Project 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. This first 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 key discussion points, advisory group feedback, and actions identified during the meeting. The presentation slide decks and recordings may be found on the project webpage linked [here](#). This summary is organized by the meeting agenda (Appendix B). Opinions are not attributed to specific participants unless there is a clear reason to do so.

The objectives of this meeting were to introduce Working Group members and orient them to the Safety Improvement Project on Cambridge Street.

Actions

- Consensus Building Institute: Share links to city project webpages, a draft meeting summary, and an agenda for the next meeting with Working Group members.
- City of Cambridge: Verify and update relevant links on the city website and share a draft outreach plan at an upcoming meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

Abby Fullem, facilitator with the Consensus Building Institute (CBI), welcomed Working Group (WG) members and reviewed the meeting agenda. Jackie McLaughlin, Traffic, Parking, + Transportation Department (TPT) Communications Manager, introduced the project team. WG members introduced themselves and shared hopes for the process, summarized below:

- Interest in amplifying voices traditionally marginalized in decision-making processes, such as older residents, less abled residents, and church communities.
- Interest in understanding the broader context, such as past city processes, historical context, and global examples, and pulling from those lessons learned and best practices.

- Interest in a welcoming and comfortable Cambridge Street, and a vision of a balanced street redesign that prioritizes safety, accessibility, and multi-purpose use, while considering practical constraints like parking.

Introduction to Cambridge Street Safety Improvement Project

Jeff Parenti, TPT Assistant Commissioner for Street Management, provided background on the Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) and Safety Improvement Project on Cambridge Street (SIP). Andreas Wolfe, TPT Street Design Project Manager, explained the significance of Cambridge Street, the SIP goals, and upcoming engagement efforts.

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.

- How many total miles of roads are there in Cambridge?
 - *There are roughly 125 miles of centerline road. Most of these are side streets.*
- The city needs to conduct tailored outreach to older residents; they will not fill out the online survey and their feedback needs to be included in the process.
 - *We agree that online feedback tools are not accessible to everyone. We are working on reaching more people and are open to your outreach suggestions.*
- Is the City conducting proactive outreach to all street users?
 - *We are working to reach as many people as possible. We sent introductory postcards to people around the corridor to raise awareness about the project and impacts. We have heard concerns from many types of users, and their comments are being incorporated into the next iteration of the design.*
- It is confusing and frustrating that the timeline for implementing the CSO keeps changing.
 - *It is confusing. We have to operate under the timeline the City Council sets. The Council is currently considering an updated completion date of November 2026. This provides an additional construction season for implementation.*
- The City of Boston's Blue Hill Avenue street safety project has received positive feedback. I recommend learning from and collaborating with them.
- Is it within the purview of this Working Group to recommend changes to the CSO?
 - *Discussing changes to the CSO is outside the scope of this WG. This is a space to share feedback on the design and implementation of the Cambridge Street SIP.*
- Meeting summaries should reflect discussion, including dissatisfaction with the CSO.

Cambridge Street SIP Working Group

Abby shared key takeaways from WG interviews including commonalities among WG members, what members want for our conversations, and members' vision for Cambridge Street after the SIP. Abby reviewed the WG charter and work plan. WG members accepted interim guiding principles for discussion to be in place until the charter review is complete.

The following questions and comments were shared by WG members during and following the presentation. Clarifications and responses from the City or CBI are included and italicized in sub-bullets.

- How do the differing timelines of Section A and Section B influence our work?
 - *CBI: We will focus first on design feedback for Section A because the design needs to be complete this spring. We will then transition to Section B.*
- I was a commissioner for a different group and was required to take a conflict-of-interest training. Why does this WG not require one?
 - *CBI: Working and advisory groups do not require that. Perhaps an appointed Commission has differing protocols. You have all been accepted because of your direct experience on Cambridge Street.*
 - *City: WG members have finite terms, and likely not enough time to complete a course. We should be aware of any ethics concerns and prepared to discuss them if they arise.*
- Is sidewalk reconfiguration within the scope of this project?
 - *This is a quick build project which means there is less construction compared to a project like Western Avenue. This means more minimal impacts but also more limited street and sidewalk changes. We will make all sidewalk ramps fully accessible and constructed according to national standards for accessibility but not do other reconfiguration.*

Public Comment

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

- Helen Kobek: It is challenging for blind and visually impaired people to navigate the street changes. Through the participatory budgeting process, I requested that an employee be hired to offer orientation and mobility training to the roughly 700 blind and vision impaired people in Cambridge. There needs to be a focus on the less abled and elderly communities, and the social, political, and interpersonal impacts of this project. You should look to Boston's program, with the acronym S.T.O.P., for people with disabilities.

- Lee Farris: Think more about the meeting visuals for those attending online. If a member of the public is joining virtually and has a technical issue or suggestion, there is no way to reach someone in real time. I recommend including a Q&A box.
- Jules Kobek: I hope some of the Inman Square design issues are not repeated elsewhere. The floating island bus stop does not work; bus drivers let riders off before the floating island, directly into the bicycle lane. This is challenging for cyclists and for riders, especially those with shopping carts, carriages, or visual impairments. A design alternative would be moving the bus stop after the traffic light. Another problem design area is near the eating area where people assume the bike lane is an extension of the sidewalk. I hope that you ask people who walk, bike, and take buses in the area what dangers they notice now, and then not duplicate them.
- Betty Saccoccio: Cambridge Street near the Lechmere station needs to be redesigned. It is so difficult to cross the street to get to the train that I now drive instead of walk. There are a lot of places on Cambridge Street that will need loading zones, such as the church and medical offices. The sidewalks should be usable.

Appendix A: Meeting Participants

WG members:	City staff: TPT	Facilitation team: CBI
Amanda Sindel-Keswick Brian Cafferelli Carmen Baskauf Christopher Cassa Christopher Herlich Helen Fu Helen Gibbons Jim McSweeney Kaleb Abebe Keisha Greaves Marie Elena Saccoccio Patrick Magee Sky Rose <i>Not present:</i> Chuck Hinds Joshua Croom	Jeff Parenti Andreas Wolfe Jackie McLaughlin	Elizabeth Cooper Abby Fullem Meira Downie

Appendix B: Meeting Agenda

4:00 PM	Settling in, coffee & snacks
4:10	Welcome & Introductions
4:35	Introduction to Cambridge St. Safety Improvement Project (SIP) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation ● Discussion
5:00	Cambridge Street SIP Working Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Presentation: Role, guidelines, work plan ● Discussion
5:30	Public Comment
5:50	Closing & Next Steps
6:00 PM	Adjourn