

# Cambridge Street Safety Improvement Project Working Group City of Cambridge

**December 16, 2024 | Draft 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. This second Working Group meeting was held at the Cambridge City Hall Annex and on Zoom. There were 12 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.

The objectives of this meeting were to introduce Working Group members to the City's design considerations and the quick-build process, and to observe project section A of Cambridge Street through a site tour.

## Actions

- Consensus Building Institute: Share draft meeting summaries and an agenda for the next meeting with Working Group members.
- City of Cambridge: Share a draft outreach plan at an upcoming meeting and information about state and federal guidelines on width requirements

## Welcome and Introductions

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

## Cambridge Street SIP Relevant Policies Plans

Andreas Wolfe, TPT Street Design Project Manager, summarized the City policies, ordinances and plans that support sustainable transportation options. Andreas clarified the differences

between quick-build and construction projects, and noted that Cambridge Street is a quick-build project with the exception of construction at bus stops.

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 Cambridge Street always be a quick-build project or will it eventually become a full construction project?
  - *We plan construction projects five years in advance. It is possible that quick-build projects, including Cambridge Street, could become construction projects, but it is not slated for construction at this point.*
- How do you prioritize different streets for renovation?
  - *We look at crash rates, vehicle volumes, and a number of different factors to determine what's the right facility for a corridor. The outcome of this prioritization process is detailed in the Bicycle Plan and pedestrian plan.*
- Did creating the elevated surface near King Open constitute a construction project?
  - Yes.

### CSO Quick-build Project Design Considerations and Decision-making

Andreas explained how the City of Cambridge weighs decisions and design options for Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) projects given limited street space. Andreas emphasized that final designs reflect engineering best practices, physical and legal constraints, and community feedback.

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. Some responses from City Staff include contextual footnotes that provide additional insights.

- Are the width requirements a law or a best practice?
  - *The specifications come from federal and state guidelines. They are an engineering design constraint, not a law.*
- Are we jeopardizing safety if we make lanes more narrow than the width requirements?
  - *The design will feel unsafe if bike lanes or buffer space is narrower than the requirements.*
- How do you measure the travel lane widths?
  - *Travel lanes are measured from the center of the road, specifically, from the two yellow lines to the beginning of the buffer zone.*
- Is there a point in the design process where you decide that not everything can fit?

- *Yes. All of the lanes do not fit on Cambridge Street, which is why there is only parking planned on one side of the street.*
- Is there space for drivers to pull over for emergency vehicles between Columbia Street and Warren Street?
  - *The fire department has commented on this, and we need to address it.*
- Is there a quick-build separation option other than flexible posts?
  - *We have considered other options, but flex posts are the best and most affordable option we currently have.*
  - *Clarification from the city following the meeting: The city will re-evaluate the use of precast concrete curb at the end of the current winter season. This could be a potential option on Cambridge St*
- Do you have baseline data on bus travel time on Cambridge Street from the MBTA?
  - *Clarification from the city following the meeting: This data is tracked the Community Development Department (CDD), not the MBTA. A Community Development Department representative will discuss transit data at a future Working Group meeting. Baseline data will help us measure the effectiveness of various transit improvements proposed as part of this project, such as stop consolidation and boarding islands.*
- What best practices for bus stop siting are you considering? Are you looking at floating bus stops?
  - *The best practice is to put a bus stop on the far side of traffic lights. The goal is not necessarily improving the speed of the bus but rather making the travel time more predictable. We are planning to build floating bus stops, which improve travel times as buses do not need to exit and re-enter the flow of traffic.*
- Do emergency vehicles and buses have transit signal priority?
  - *The department uses transit signal pre-emption strategically throughout the city, at the request of the Fire Department. This feature allows the operator of the apparatus or firehouse to “pre-empt” the signal to provide a red light to traffic that would conflict with where the apparatus is heading.*
- If a property had redundant access, e.g., three driveways, would the City ever take one over to provide another parking spot? Would you ever ask the property owner to use it?
  - *We would have to use eminent domain to take the spot, which we are unlikely to do.*
- Is the City only able to accommodate outdoor dining for businesses on the side of the street without parking?
  - *We are currently accommodating for all interested businesses.*
- How can we avoid double parking?
  - *By building separated bike lanes and strategic placement of loading zones*
- What happens when delivery vehicles double park in the traffic lane? Cars cannot go around them across the double yellow line.
  - *Clarification from the city following the meeting: Painted bike lanes, such as those on Cambridge St today, are an attractive place for drivers to illegally pull over. Cars frequently cross the double yellow centerline in many circumstances today to pass illegally stopped vehicles. We expect the installation of separated bike lanes to decrease the amount of illegal stopping.*

## Public Comment

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

Giovanni Berlanda-Scorza: I drive and bike with my children. I really enjoy that the west side of Cambridge Street has separated bike lanes. The concept design includes loading zones near Oakland Street that will transition to on-street dining in the summer. The loading zones are necessary even in the summer; perhaps resident parking spots could be made into loading zones.

Jason Alves: This project has been more manageable than others because you divided it into sections. I have not heard much push back from business owners on the side of the street that will have eliminated parking. Focusing on business owners that currently have on-street dining is important. I recommend that the WG does not get tied up thinking about narrowing lanes and adjusting width requirements because Cambridge Street is so narrow even if you play with lane width. Business owners are nervous about losing commercial parking spots. I recommend the City and WG learn from the problems with the Inman Square design.

## Site Visit for Working Group Members

WG members walked down Section A of Cambridge Street and were asked to reflect on how it feels to travel using different modes and on different streets in Cambridge.

WG members shared reflections at the end of the site visit. They are summarized below.

- Garbage bins are blocking sidewalks and bike lanes, and compromising accessibility.
- Various vehicles, including a senior center shuttle and mail delivery truck, blocked the bike lane, resulting in cyclists weaving into the driving lane.
- A fire truck passed a double-parked vehicle with very tight clearance.
- The intersection daylighting paint markers are worn down and thus hard to enforce. More maintenance would be helpful.
- Multiple WG members noted that the Windsor and Cambridge Streets intersection is wide and confusing for users. One member shared that they felt unsafe crossing at that intersection due to vehicles making fast turns.
- It is helpful to know which cross streets receive heavy truck traffic because it will affect the turning radius required at the intersection.

- There are places on the street that prevent ambulance passage during traffic congestion and could impact drivers from hearing emergency vehicle sirens.
- One member noted that visiting at rush hour would reveal different patterns and needs.

### Appendix A: Meeting Participants

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

### Appendix B: Meeting Agenda

11:00 AM	<b>Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>
11:15	<b>Relevant policies and plans</b>
11:40	<b>CSO Quick-build project design considerations and decision-making</b>
12:15	<b>Public Comment</b>
12:30	<b>Wrap-up &amp; next steps</b> <b>Adjourn meeting</b>

12:35	<b>Site walk for Working Group members</b>
1:10	<b>Debrief at Valente Library conference room</b>
1:30	<b>Adjourn site walk</b>