

Cambridge Street Safety Improvement Project Working Group City of Cambridge

January 23, 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 14 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 review the preliminary concept design for Section A and elicit Working Group members' feedback on the design and on four specific design components.

Actions

- **Working Group Members:** Share feedback on the roll plan, design features, and outreach plan by email or scheduled appointment by **January 31**. Contact Andreas (awolfe@cambridgema.gov) and Jackie (jmclaughlin@cambridgema.gov) to share.
- **Consensus Building Institute:** Share breakout session materials, a draft meeting summary, channels for WG members to provide additional feedback on the design, and an agenda for the next meeting with Working Group members.
- **City of Cambridge:** Compile materials and information for upcoming meeting, specifically MBTA bus data, and parking utilization analysis.

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.

Cambridge Street SIP Section A Design Presentation

Andreas Wolfe, TPT Street Design Project Manager, and Michelle Danila, Cambridge Street engineering consultant from Toole Design, presented key features of the project's preliminary design including bus stop locations, parking, separated bike lanes, and on-street dining.

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.

- Are the goals of the Cambridge SIP prioritized on the slide? How should WG members think about conflicting goals?
 - *Treat the goals equally; there is no prioritization. Everyone in the WG will bring their own perspectives and priorities to our discussions.*
- Is there visibility of cyclists at intersections when a bus stop is directly before a cross street, e.g., Windsor Street westbound stop?
 - *The standard for the MBTA and other cities is to move bus stops to the far side of an intersection. This improves visibility, prevents buses from stopping twice at traffic lights, and creates a clear path for buses to reach the sidewalk for accessibility purposes. At this specific intersection, though, it is not doable as the bus stop would block the gas station driveway.*
- Is this SIP still considered quick-build given the construction at bus stops? Is that construction approved and fully funded?
 - *This is a quick-build project with a slightly expanded scope to include construction at bus stops, e.g., curb and drainage work, and crosswalks.*
 - *Clarification from the city following the meeting: The project is fully funded through the design process and funding for construction is expected to come primarily from city sources, pending budget approval from the City Council.*¹
- Did the City use MBTA user data when considering which bus stops to remove?
 - *Yes. We look at land use and ridership. Ridership at the Norfolk Street stop was very low so we removed it, and we consolidated it to be near Inman Square Apartments since there are a lot of riders there at the existing Prospect St stop.*
- There is a gas station with three driveways at a dangerous intersection. Could the City take a driveway or talk to the owners about using one for additional parking?
 - *Toole Design: Gas stations need enough space to accommodate fuel trucks. That may contribute to their need for three driveways.*
- What outreach did the City do to businesses about this project?
 - *We went door-to-door to the list of businesses provided by the Cambridge Community Development Department (CDD) to share information and solicit feedback. We also met with the East Cambridge Business Association.*
- In your discussions with businesses, did any share how many parking spots their customers use?
 - *Businesses did not share that information, and they likely do not know it. We did, however, conduct a comprehensive parking study to understand average parking spot occupancy.*
- Has the City conducted a parking utilization study?
 - *Yes, and we will share the results at an upcoming meeting.*

¹ Many adjacent streets in Section A are on the City's 5-year plan for streets and sidewalks, including Tremont St, Norfolk St and Elm St. This provides an opportunity to expand the construction to Cambridge St, where appropriate.

- Are loading zones only available for commercial vehicles? There are often private delivery vehicles parked on Cambridge Street.
 - *Loading zones are open to everyone; there are different time constraints, 30 minutes for commercial vehicles and 15 minutes for personal vehicles. In select locations, the city will provide the time limits on signs, encouraging too much private vehicle use in loading zones reduces their effectiveness.*
- What is the economic impact of using parking spots for parking versus on-street dining?
 - *That is hard to assess directly. The City has heard from the business community that on-street dining has been a valuable program for businesses.*
- A few WG members offered broader feedback to the City about the on-street dining program. Some expressed interest in understanding the program's economic impacts for businesses that do not have permits and experience access to fewer parking spots. One member suggested that on-street dining permits rotate between businesses on an annual basis.

Cambridge Street SIP Section A Design Breakout Discussions

Results from the Section A City-wide survey revealed differing opinions on four specific design topics: (1) bus stop and sidewalk design, (2) loading and bike conflict, (3) address safety at high-crash intersections, and (4) additional side-street parking. For each topic, the City prepared multiple design options and was requesting WG guidance on which to select. WG members split into breakout discussions on two topics of their choosing, reviewed the design options, and gave feedback. Their feedback is summarized thematically below. One member shared the concern that WG members were not able to give input on more than two design topics during the meeting. WG members were invited to share feedback asynchronously on design topics for which they did not give feedback on during the meeting.

Bus Stop and Sidewalk Design – *Facilitated by Michelle Danila*

- General comments:
 - Increased safety and reducing conflicts between transportation modes were priorities of members.
 - The City should consider how wheelchair users would access the bus stop and navigate the sidewalk in each option.
- Option A: Multiple members expressed concerns about the narrowed sidewalk and restricted loading activity for adjacent businesses.
- Option B: It comforted some members to know that this design works in other parts of the city. Some members expect to see the bus stop blocked by non-bus vehicles.
- Option C: There was some concern that this option has not been tested elsewhere in the City but also hope that it could work if the bus headways (or the time between two individual buses on the route) are low.

Loading and Bike Conflict – *Facilitated by Jackie McLaughlin and Jeff Parenti*

- Proposed plan:

- Many members preferred this option over the center island option in the concept design.
- One member suggested reducing the island footprint to help vehicles turn into the parking bay and to avoid vehicles reversing into the bike lane.
- There were some concerns about the lack of flex posts on the southbound side of the street.
- Multiple members expressed concerns about vehicles safely accessing the accessible parking spot in the absence of flex posts.
- One member asked if the accessible parking and the loading zone pick-up/drop-off spots could be relocated to a nearby side street to prevent vehicle and bike conflict.
- General comments: Members expressed additional concerns about the impacts of delivery drivers, parking for a new residential building, and meeting CSO requirements.

Address Safety at high-crash intersections – *Facilitated by Andreas Wolfe and Elizabeth Cooper*

- General comments: One member indicated that the intersection needs to feel smaller to encourage safe practices and suggested the use of a raised sidewalk.
- Proposed plan:
 - One member was interested in learning more about the traffic impacts of the design.
 - Members expressed appreciation for the design’s attention to safety.
 - Members encouraged the westbound bus stop to be moved to the far side of the intersection, and block off the driveway.

Additional side-street parking – *Facilitated by Chaimaa Medhat and Meira Downie*

- General comments:
 - One member was interested in learning how local businesses feel about proposed changes.
 - One member recommended a street-specific approach, based on resident and business need, as to when to end meters and start residential parking.
 - One member recommended talking to Roosevelt Towers residents.
 - One member noted uneven parking allocation between businesses and residents.

Public Comment

Jules Kobek: When it snows, bike lanes are plowed such that snow is pushed into the crosswalk. Because sidewalks are not consistently cleared, pedestrians will walk in the bike lanes. When bus stops are plowed, the snow goes into the bus shelter.

Betty Saccoccio: Sidewalks are not shoveled properly, which results in pedestrians walking in the street or bike lane. Cyclists should yield to pedestrians in the bike lane. It is challenging to navigate on-street dining tables when there is limited sidewalk space.

Jason Alves: At East Cambridge Business Association, we have heard that outdoor dining allows restaurants to be competitive and is of real value to the district in the summer. We presented a plan that is deemed unacceptable and seeing these proposals installed in different areas is frustrating. The Cambridge Street study found there are not enough loading zones in the current design, so I am wary of removing any of them.

Appendix A: Meeting Participants

WG members:	City staff: TPT	Facilitation team: CBI	Technical team:
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 Keisha Greeves Kaleb Abebe	Jeff Parenti Andreas Wolfe Jackie McLaughlin Chaimaa Medhat	Abby Fullem Elizabeth Cooper Meira Downie	Michelle Danila, Toole Design Kate Ackerson, Kleinfelder

Appendix B: Meeting Agenda

4:00 PM	Welcome & Introductions
4:15	Cambridge Street SIP Section A Design Presentation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation – initial design, key feedback received to date
4:50	Public Comment
5:05	Cambridge Street SIP Section A Design Breakout Discussions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakout group discussions on specific design questions
5:45	Working Group Business <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review work plan, confirm charter, discuss outreach plan next steps
5:55	Wrap-up & next steps
6:00	Adjourn