

Cambridge Cycling Safety Ordinance Advisory Group

Meeting Summary

Meeting 1 | March 10, 2023

MEETING OBJECTIVES

- Introduce the CSO Advisory Group and get to know each other
- Review background information
- Formulate Group Goals, Norms, and Protocols

MEETING MATERIALS

- Draft Group Charter
- Meeting Agenda
- Advisory Group Assessment Report

WELCOME & OVERVIEW

Elizabeth Cooper, Facilitator, Consensus Building Institute, welcomed the Advisory Group members and members of the public to the first Cambridge Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) Advisory Group meeting. She turned to Brooke McKenna, Acting Chief of the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department, to give opening remarks where she thanked members for their participation in this group. Elizabeth went over the meeting agenda, and then turned the discussion over to participants to introduce themselves.

To see the full attendance list, please see Appendix A.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION, SHORT-TERM AND LONG-TERM GOALS OF CSO

Brooke gave a brief overview of the Cycling Safety Ordinance. She described the Cycling Safety Ordinance passed by the City Council in 2019, as well as the 2020 amendment to the Ordinance. She also discussed the Five Year Plan for Streets and Sidewalks, separated bike lanes, the difference between quick-build projects and construction projects, and potential future topics for the Advisory Group. Elizabeth then opened the discussion for questions and comments:

Advisory Group Role

Several members wanted clarity on what the role and responsibilities of the group would be, including if they had the ability to impact designs of projects or the overall CSO itself. Staff explained that this group was created after the City received feedback that important voices were being left out of the conversation, and that only those who were focused on this process were getting messaging. This group will help advise the City on community engagement, outreach, and implementation of the CSO. The group will also give input into how the CSO implementation is evaluated. Brooke noted that the City is happy to take feedback on past or current projects and design, but that is not the main goal of this committee.

Schedule of Projects

One member pointed out that community members often do not know when or what street the next project will be on, and it would be helpful to publish a schedule (even if it is in draft form)

of future projects. A sequence of the next couple months and years regarding these projects and their rollout would be helpful. Another member noted Hampshire St. as a good case study since it would be coming soon.

Signage and Communication

A member noted that instead of putting up signs with lots of words, the City could be more strategic about sign design and location. A visible, easy to read sign that everyone is going to see is a great form of community engagement.

Project Advertisement

One member said that there is often misunderstanding about how these projects are advertised and named Garden Street as an example of a big change. How the City chooses to advertise these projects is important, and it is also important for community members to look at the website and get involved when that is made available. Another member noted that sending out postcards, getting more people subscribed to the project website, and posting digital signs are all good strategies. They also noted that there will always be people who feel like these projects are a surprise regardless of the outreach done.

CBI ASSESSMENT REPORT

Elizabeth then gave a brief presentation on the findings from CBI's conversations with CSO AG members. CBI produced a report synthesizing the findings from 12 interviews of the Advisory Group members. CBI asked members to discuss their feedback on the CSO process and community engagement. Members shared perspectives about cyclist and pedestrian safety, small businesses, socially vulnerable populations, and traffic and car usage, among other topics. Members made comments about their goals and concerns for the CSO Advisory Group process and discussed what they felt the goals of the group should be.

Members were given the opportunity following the meeting to provide any further feedback or edits on the draft assessment report before it would be finalized and posted.

REVIEW OF DRAFT CHARTER, WORKPLAN, AND DEVELOPMENT OF GROUP NORMS

Elizabeth reviewed the Draft Charter and Workplan and welcomed members to share any comments or questions they had. Members were given the opportunity following the meeting to provide any further feedback or edits on the draft charter before it would be finalized and posted.

Elizabeth shared a proposed starting list of group norms drafted by CBI to guide how group members talk to each other and engage in the process. She then opened the discussion to comments about and additions to these norms. One member wanted to add "keep a respectful tone throughout the conversation". Another wanted to include a norm to not talk about groups or people in a generalizing manner. The group discussed the importance of not falling into stereotyping and remembering that no group is a monolith, but some noted there are cases where it is important to talk about groups and to highlight the needs or concerns understood to be held by that group, especially if members are here to represent or give voice to a particular group. One member noted that we should look at materials in different languages if we plan on doing outreach to a diverse group of people.

NEXT STEPS

When Elizabeth asked members to give their thoughts on venue and frequency of working group meetings, people noted the following:

- Several people noted they would be interested in coming to in person meetings, but daytime can be hard for some members of this group.
- Once a month is a good number of times to meet, but the day of the month and time of the month depends on people's availability.
- It would be ideal to have a regularly scheduled time to meet.
- One member suggested that going forward each meeting have one big topic that the group can discuss, rather than jumping between topics.
- One member asked that people avoid using the chat as it can be hard to keep up with discussion happening verbally and in the chat at the same time.

Members of the public are welcome to join meetings and there will be a chance for public comment. During hybrid meetings, they will have the opportunity to join either in person or virtually.

Elizabeth went over the next steps and action items:

- Members should send CBI their schedule restraints.
- Members should provide any further comments on the draft assessment report and charter.
- CBI will draft a meeting summary.
- CBI will work with Cambridge City staff to schedule the next meeting date.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

- Paul Toner: Thanks everyone for your time and efforts. I hope we are able to solve problems through this committee, and I apologize if I offended anyone with my comments about perception, but I hope we can be helpful.
- Patrick Magee: It might be helpful to include how many meetings the town had on this topic by the Council. The frustration of the public has been the framing of conversation. The issue wasn't whether these changes should be happening, but how can we engage everyone because it is happening. It is hard for people to get involved in the conversation about something they feel they can't change, and it doesn't seem the Council is open to hearing anything if there is a collective voice around changing the ordinance. This might deter public participation in this process. CBI wrote an assessment several years ago suggesting this group and there might not be so much contention now if they had listened to that recommendation.
- John Pitkin: There is no rocket science about communicating with the public about changes. Don't reinvent the wheel. Post a sign where you are going to take the parking away, and people will connect the dots, and that is codified in the ordinance. That would save a lot of meeting time, and would eliminate complaints about failure to notice.
- Vickey Bestor: Thank you to CBI, this has been a very useful meeting, and if this is the way it's going forward, I feel positive. I feel concerned about communication: we get most of our messages by posting something on the street or street poles and that's great. Mailing postcards is not effective because it is not regarded as first-class mail, so most people do not see them. It is an expensive means of communication that doesn't work very well. Go directly to the light pole and trees.

- Marie Saccoccio: I want embedded in your mission what your policy order was because it seems to be broader than what was communicated today. There are constitutionally protected groups such as elderly, disabled, and minorities, and businesses. They have a right to be here and labeled as they are. Also, regarding language about being polite and civil: there was a Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court decision that said rudeness is welcomed and you do not have to be kind, prefatory statements like "be kind" are not lawful.
- Craig Kelley: How does the City look at safety? What are the criteria? Who is actually doing the looking?
 - Staff noted that there wasn't time to address this question right now, but there will be opportunities to do so in the future.

Elizabeth thanked everyone for their participation and closed the meeting.

APPENDIX A:

Advisory Group Attendance:

Denise Jillson – Small Business Advisory Committee
Amy Flax – Bicycle Committee
Yuqi Wang – Kendall Square Association
Angela Hofmann – Black, Indigenous, People of Color Owned Businesses
Mark Boswell – Bicycle Committee
Diane Gray – Vision Zero Advisory Committee
Jason Alves – Small Business Advisory Committee
Jennie Song - Black, Indigenous, People of Color Owned Businesses
Michael Monestime – Small Business Advisory Committee
Lois Carra – Council on Aging
Henny Turner-Trauring – Pedestrian Committee
Mercedes Evans – Human Rights Commission
Debby Galef – Pedestrian Committee
Kaleb Abebe – Peace Commission

Advisory Group Staff

Elizabeth Cooper, Consensus Building Institute
Simenesh Semine, Consensus Building Institute
Brooke McKenna, City of Cambridge
Elise Harmon-Freeman, City of Cambridge
Andrew Reker, City of Cambridge
Cara Seiderman, City of Cambridge