

# City of Cambridge Cycling Safety Ordinance Advisory Group

## Summary of July 25, 2023 Meeting

### Introduction

The City of Cambridge convened a group of stakeholders to provide advice to the City on outreach, implementation, and evaluation regarding the Cycling Safety Ordinance, a policy to build a network of bike lanes and safety improvements on roads in the City. This fifth meeting of the group was held as a hybrid meeting, on Zoom and in person at the City Hall Annex. There were 11 members in attendance (Appendix A.)

This meeting summary is intended to capture the key points of discussion and input from the group, and to capture action items identified during the meeting. Presentations with additional detail may be found on the Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) Advisory Group (AG) website: [camb.ma/cso-advisory-committee](https://camb.ma/cso-advisory-committee). 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:

- Discuss design and implementation of past projects to glean lessons learned for future corridors
- Discuss next steps for the AG

### Action items and next steps

- City to reach out to Community Development Department to have them join a future meeting
- CBI to draft a meeting summary from this meeting to be shared with the AG
- The next AG meeting is scheduled for September 26.

### City updates

The City gave a brief update on the following:

- Updates on the Economic Impact Study
- Brattle Street Project Update
- Other Project Updates
  - Hampshire Street
  - Huron Ave and Cushing Plaza improvements
  - Main Street
  - Mass Ave Partial Construction Project
  - River Street Infrastructure and Streetscape Project

When one member asked for more information about the Economic Impact survey, Elise Harmon-Freeman, Communications Manager in the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department, noted that the study is being conducted by the Community Development Department, and that questions regarding the survey process and methodology would be best answered by those more knowledgeable about the process. The City committed to providing more information and answering specific questions at upcoming meetings.

### Mid-Mass Ave: Design Process and Decision Making

### ***Design Process***

Elise Harmon-Freeman gave some background to this project, noting that the Mid-Mass Ave project had a faster timeline than previous full-construction projects. The project, which started community engagement in Fall 2021 and was installed in Summer 2022, happened at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. She introduced Stephen Meuse, Street Design Project Manager, to give an overview of the design process for the Mid-Mass Ave project. The goal of sharing the design process for Mid-Mass Ave was to illustrate via a case study the considerations and limitations that go into CSO project designs.

Stephen Meuse gave a presentation that reviewed the considerations and limitations of the design of this project. He noted that there are minimums and width requirements for bike lanes that are based on state and national standards. Considerations for width requirements include bus routes, commercial activity, and the context of the surrounding businesses and streets. The City needs a minimum of 7 feet between a flex post and the curb for maintenance, and meaning quick-build separated bike lanes take up a minimum of eight feet (including the width of the flex post and the line next to the flex post). The lane design also includes considerations for the needs of different types of bicycles, such as adaptive bicycles, cargo bikes, adult tricycles, and families riding together.

Stephen also reviewed national examples of separated bike lane width best practices from other cities, and explained the street width specifics for Mid-Mass Ave. He noted other components of the street that impact the design of bike lanes and the amount of parking available, including safety and visibility, user convenience and access to nearby destinations, bus stops, and accessible parking spaces.

In the context of Mid-Mass Ave, the street was not wide enough to fit both separated bike lanes and parking on each side of the street. On one section (between Trowbridge Street and Bay Street), there was no room for parking and loading, and on another (between Bay Street and Bigelow Street), there was enough room for one lane of parking/loading. Factors like the number of side streets, driveways, and curb cuts influence on which side of the street the City could fit more parking on each block.

One member asked if the Jersey barriers shown on one of the slides stay up year-round, and what issues they might pose to street cleaning or weather events. Stephen said that the Jersey barriers are going to be there year-round, and to date they have not heard issues with cleaning and maintenance given they have special tools to clean those lanes.

### ***Decision Making***

Elise Harmon-Freeman then gave a presentation on the decision-making process for the street design of Mid-Mass Ave. She began by giving an overview on the community outreach process, where the City asked community members to give feedback on the packing and loading needs of residents, businesses, and shoppers, what the parking regulations should be, and the bus stop locations via color coded posters around the neighborhood.

The City received the following feedback on Mid-Mass Ave:

- Online feedback map and comment form received about 500 comments in March 2021.
- From March – April of 2021, a business survey was sent out to hear delivery and parking needs, as well as opportunity for business owners to schedule 1 on 1 calls with the city. 50 businesses were contacted through in-person visits, letters, and email outreach, and 17 provided specific feedback on the project design.

- May 2021 the City held a community meeting to present the design and proposed parking changes.

Between May and June 2021, there was a comment period on the proposed design that received 30 responses. Based on the comments received from the community, the City made several changes to the design of the Mid-Mass Ave project. These included keeping parking on the south side of the street, prioritizing metered parking on Mass Ave, keeping the existing outdoor dining, and keeping one loading zone. In front of City Hall, the City prioritized accessible parking, accessible loading, taxi stands and bus stops, and kept the existing bus stop location. Elise also noted that the City continued making changes after installation based on public feedback including adding more accessible spaces on the street, changing the no stopping to a loading zone, and adding an accessible parking space.

One member noted that they saw the design proposal for Harvard Square (Bow St. to Garden Street), and they have been encouraging businesses to respond to the survey on economic development. They asked the City to comment on if there are any concerns over the current design proposal, and what opportunities there might be to change it. The City noted that there is a conceptual design from October 2022, but that they are still working on confirming the underground landscape with Public Works. Further design cannot happen until Public Works has completed their work given the complexity of the Harvard Square Red Line tunnels and other underground infrastructure. Members of the public are always free to reach out to the project team with thoughts and concerns, and request site visits with the staff.

One member asked, if the economic impact survey indicates that businesses have been adversely impacted by bike lanes, what changes will be made in the design process. They expressed concern that during other projects, such as Garden Street, concerns from the community did not have an impact on the design of the project. If the City wants to ask businesses to participate in surveys and meetings, they need to know that something will come of it if there are major concerns, especially if the questions ask about their business's profits. They added that below a 60% response rate to any survey is not an accurate representation of the community, and although it can be very hard to get people to fill out surveys, the City should think of ways to create more value for respondents around this survey exercise.

In response to a question about what goes into deciding if there are bike lanes on both sides of the street or just one, the City explained that connectivity, or what the City is connecting on each side of the street and where people are going, is a major factor. The City aims to create good transitions throughout the network. It would be very difficult to make the whole path two-way bike lanes, because if you have a two-way path on one side of the street, it's harder for people biking to get to destinations or turn onto side streets on the other side of the street. The spots where the City has added two-way bicycle lanes have largely been non-commercial streets. The design team also tries to control the types of interactions between bicycles and others, so they also consider safety factors like the number of crossings a bike-lane would have to pass.

One member suggested that when the City is communicating design considerations to the community, they focus on explaining what people are going to get and lose. Although explaining context such as width requirements can be helpful, sharing that will not help change the outcome. The City acknowledged the difficult tension between accepting feedback from the community where they can have real impact on the design and creating a space for people to share their overall thoughts and frustrations on the process. They noted that they have worked to adapt to hear people's general ideas while being clear about which parts of the process are not flexible.

One member shared their excitement over the final design for this project. They have been to many public meetings about bike lanes throughout the city and have noticed it is much easier to ride their bike on this section. Another member added that for them, it's easier for them to go to local businesses by parking their bicycle rather than their car, and that bicycle users are a big part of the groups supporting local businesses in Cambridge.

Outstanding questions that Advisory Group members expressed a desire to learn more about included:

- Targeted Outreach to Business Owners: Have the people who expressed concerns or not liked the bike lanes mostly been business owners? Residents? What are the different outreach strategies for these and other groups?
- Members were interested to learn more about the data, methodology, and goals of the Economic Impact Survey

## Public Comment

Joan Pickett, resident, expressed appreciation for the details shared on considerations in the design process, including parking. Joan asked if a parking survey would be done as part of this process, and stressed the importance of setting expectations with businesses so they are not disappointed.

Carol Lee Rawn, clean transportation consultant, shared appreciation for the City and the Advisory Group for their work on the CSO. Carol shared that the lanes are well designed and thoughtful and make biking safe.

Chris Cassa, MIT Center for Transportation & Logistics, shared appreciation for the Advisory Group. Chris shared that cyclists also like and support local business and outdoor dining, and shared the desire to not shut down bike lanes because of inconveniences.

## Appendix A: Meeting participants

AG members:

1. Kaleb Abebe
2. Mark Boswell
3. Amy Flax
4. Deborah (Debby) Galef
5. Denise Jillson
6. Jenny Turner-Trauring

City staff:

1. Elise Harmon-Freeman, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation
2. Brooke McKenna, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation
3. Andy Reker, Community Development
4. Cara Seiderman, Environmental and Transportation Planning
5. Stephen Meuse, Street Design Project Manager

Facilitation:

1. Elizabeth Cooper, Consensus Building Institute
2. Simenesh Semine, Consensus Building Institute

## Appendix B: Meeting agenda

- **4:00** **Welcome**
- **4:10** **City updates**
  - Brief Q&A
- **4:30** **Mid-Mass Ave: Design Process and Decision Making**
- **5:45** **Next Steps**
  - Future Agenda Items
- **5:50** **Public comment**
- **6:00** **Adjourn**