City of Cambridge Cycling Safety Ordinance Advisory Group
Summary of May 23, 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 third meeting of the group was held as a hybrid meeting, on Zoom and in person at the City Hall Annex. There were 14 members in attendance (Appendix A.)

This meeting summary is intended to capture the key points of discussion and input from the group, as well as 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. 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:
- Share information on how the City undertakes evaluation of projects
- Solicit feedback on what is working well and how project evaluation could be improved
- Discuss what success looks like for this group

Action items and next steps

- The next meeting will be Tuesday, June 27, 4-6 PM
- CBI will amend the group charter to reflect the new understanding of priority topics the group will address
- Upcoming agenda items:
  - Discussion of lessons learned from past projects
  - Wave 4/Post-installation phase
  - Continue to look at engagement and outreach strategies:
    - How to effectively connect with harder-to-reach stakeholders
    - Messaging about the overall plan and goals of the CSO
  - Revisit topic of defining success for this group at a later point.

City updates

In response to AG feedback, the City is working to improve signage related to CSO projects:
- Adding QR codes on posters and flyers
- Making parking impacts more clear
- Simplifying language

The City is also doing further thinking on how to advance a Wave 4/Post Installation outreach stage for appropriate projects, centered on connecting with local businesses and partners.

In response to a question, Brooke McKenna, Transportation Commissioner, clarified expectations for transparency in AG discussions: While the group is not technically a deliberative body that would be subject to Open Meeting Law, the group should strive to maintain transparency and limit group

substantive conversations to meetings, which are open to the public, and avoid using emails among the group to deliberate. This will also help avoid members being required to track a lot of additional back and forth and ensures that the time and capacity commitment that members agreed to when they joined (i.e., approximately monthly meetings) will be respected.

Discussion of the scope of the Advisory Group

Some AG members expressed concern that the scope of issues being discussed by the group were not what they expected. Some members had expected that the group would be giving feedback on issues with and helping improve the design of bike lanes. Members expressed concern that bike lanes are negatively affecting businesses as well as older residents and others with mobility challenges getting around the city and wanted the opportunity to raise these concerns and discuss how they could be mitigated. They were disappointed that the focus of the AG was on communication, outreach, and evaluation and that there had not been space made to discuss people's concerns with the impacts of completed projects. Even if nothing can be done about concerns with projects, they wanted concerns to be heard in this process. Other members preferred the group to continue to be more forward-looking, but expressed openness to going back and looking at past projects to help members feel heard and potentially surface issues and advice that could inform future projects.

Brooke apologized for the misunderstanding regarding the scope of the group when some members agreed to join. Given that the CSO is very specific in proscribing what must be accomplished within certain timeframes, she explained that the intention was for the group to focus on what members could have input and an impact on. City staff do not wish to limit feedback that the group can give, but want to be clear about what types of feedback they can act on and which are outside the scope of issues that can be influenced. City staff were very willing to hear feedback about how projects had gone and try to apply those lessons to future projects.

Based on this discussion, members agreed to a new understanding of the scope of the group, with a focus on the following priority topics:
1. Look back at completed projects and glean lessons learned on design and implementation
2. Share timely feedback about best practices for implementation on current projects
3. Provide guidance on how to make outreach and engagement as effective as possible
4. Provide input to how the City should evaluate projects (what data to look at and what metrics to consider)

CBI will update the group's charter to ensure that these priorities are reflected, especially the understanding of the role of #1 in the process.

Data collection and evaluation of projects

Elise Harmon-Freeman, Communications Manager in the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department, shared about what kinds of data the City collects regarding projects and examples of how projects have been evaluated. Key questions that evaluations seek to address include:
- Crash rates: Are people safer?
- Bike and pedestrian counts: Are people using these facilities?
- Transit travel times: Are we moving more people faster?
- Vehicle speeds: Are people driving slower + safer?
- Vehicle travel times: What is the effect on single-occupancy vehicles?

Data that the City looks at include:
- Surveys on:
  - Bicycling habits
  - Comfort levels
  - Barriers to bicycling
- Bicycle traffic counts
- Crash data analysis for crashes involving bikes
  - Crash rates
  - Crash locations
  - Crash types
  - Injury severity

Elise noted that evaluations differ among projects, since what is most significant to measure and criteria for success varies depending on the project context. The below table illustrates this range, showing what data was collected for four different projects with different criteria and scopes:

	Cambridge Street (quick build, 2017)	Brattle Street (quick-build, 2017)	Western Avenue (construction, 2012-2016)	Mass Ave from Dudley to Alewife Brook Parkway Bus/Transit Evaluation (quick-build, 2021)
Time between project and evaluation	2 years	2 years	3 years	1.5 years
Bicycle Counts	x	x	x	
Pedestrian Counts	x		x	
Vehicle Counts	x		x	
Transit Rider Counts			x	x
Vehicle Speeds	x		x	
Parking Utilization	x	x	x	
Crash Data	x	x	x	
Pedestrian and Bicyclist Demographic Study			x	
Pedestrian Yield Study			x	
Post-Implementation Survey	x	x		
Intercept Survey	x	x		
Travel Time Analysis (vehicles)			x	x
Travel Time Analysis (MBTA buses)			x	x

Getting accurate data about the effects of a project after it is completed takes time:
- Previously, the City conducted evaluations about two years after a project is complete

- Usually, it takes at least four to six months for new traffic patterns to emerge after major changes
- To get the best crash data, best practice is to compare three years of data before implementation to three years after
- COVID-19 was a major complicating factor for gathering data on recent projects, since it had major impacts on traffic patterns.

AG feedback on evaluation of projects

Group members shared some preliminary feedback on evaluation *(Direct responses from City staff are in italics)*:
- What resources are required to conduct each of these kinds of analysis?
  - *The resources required vary. For example, vehicles can be counted with a counter technology we have, whereas intercept surveys, parking utilization studies, and other analyses are very resource intensive and likely require consultant support. Additionally, some data sources such as crash data require significant interpretation and can't be used "raw."*
- Pedestrian yield studies are very valuable, especially because it seems like yields are getting worse in general.
- What can we learn from how other cities conduct this kind of evaluation?
- How do you predict and measure what areas a project will affect, e.g. the traffic shifts from Garden Street?
  - *We do think about the impacted area when we do outreach. On Garden Street, we broadened that outreach when the public process led to one way being preferred that was going to have broader impacts. However, we didn't do it well enough and in hindsight we probably should have been more direct about potential impacts to encourage people to engage, especially since it is tough to get the attention of people not directly on the corridor. This was a real learning moment for us.*
- Consider analyzing how patrons arrive at businesses and how installation of bike lanes affects this.
- Can more be learned from how other cities do economic development studies? Do other places have the some constraints on data that we do in Massachusetts?
  - *Available info does vary a lot (for example, a similar evaluation in New York had more granular data because of a local tax that provided info on revenues.) We will continue to look for lessons from other places.*
- Consider whether lanes for buses and bikes have helped school buses keep more on schedule

Forthcoming economic development study

The City's Economic Development Department will be launching a study with the goal of understanding the effects of separated bike lane infrastructure on nearby businesses. It is expected to be published this fall. Elise shared some background on the study design and offered to provide more information to the AG as it is developed:

- Challenges with designing the study:
  - Limited number of comparable studies on the impacts of bike infrastructure on retail sales in North American.
  - Ideal source would be actual retail transaction data: state doesn't release detailed enough data

- - - Difficult to get the block/street specific data that could be used to analyze bike project impacts
  - Data will include:
    - Retail rent levels and occupancy rates,
    - Traffic counts and parking counts
    - City-wide employment, wage data
  - Business survey will launch May 2023 with direct mail to all known ground-floor businesses.
    - Follow-up to non-respondents
    - Questions include: changes to sales/revenue since 2019, whether a bike facility was installed nearby, perceived impact

Next steps for project evaluation discussion

The City is preparing to evaluate more CSO projects and seeks the AG's feedback on how best to do so. In the next AG meeting, the group will discuss:

- What worked well about past evaluations?
- What else should the City consider looking at?
- Recognizing that there are differences in what is most relevant to measure across different projects, what core data should always be assessed in every project?

Appendix A: Meeting participants

AG members:

1. Kaleb Abebe
2. Jason Alves
3. Mark Boswell
4. Lois Carra
5. Mary Devlin
6. Mercedes Evans
7. Amy Flax
8. Deborah (Debby) Galef
9. Diane Gray
10. Angela Hoffman
11. Denise Jillson
12. Michael Monastime
13. Jennie Song
14. 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. Jim Wilcox, Public Works

Facilitation:

1. Elizabeth Cooper, Consensus Building Institute
2. Abby Fullem, Consensus Building Institute

Appendix B: Meeting agenda

- **4:00   Welcome**
- **4:15   City updates**
  - Brief Q&A
- **4:25   Discussion of data collection and project evaluation**
  - What evaluations and analysis does the City undertake generally?
  - What analysis is underway?
  - What is planned for the future?
  - Discussion:
    - What other questions should evaluation efforts address?
    - Are there other sources of information that could be included?

- **5:20   What does success look like for this group?**
  - How will we evaluate the effectiveness of this process?
- **5:40   Next steps**
  - Future agenda items
- **5:50   Public comment**
- **6:00   Adjourn**