

# City of Cambridge Cycling Safety Ordinance Advisory Group

## Summary of June 27, 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 fourth meeting of the group was held as a hybrid meeting on Zoom and in person at the City Hall Annex. There were 16 members in attendance (Appendix A.)

This meeting summary is intended to capture the key points of discussion and input from the group, and to record 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](http://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 project to glean lessons learned for future
- Gather feedback from AG on how to evaluate CSO projects
- Discuss next steps for the AG

### Action items and next steps

- City to share the high comfort, low volume, low speed graphic with the AG
- CBI to draft a meeting summary from this meeting to be shared with the AG
- 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

At the request of AG members, the City gave a brief update on the following projects:

- Brattle Street
- Hampshire Street
- Huron Ave and Cushing Plaza Improvements
- Maine Street
- Mass. Ave Patrial Construction Project
- Mt. Audubon Street at Aberdeen Avenue Intersection Safety Improvement Project
- River Street Infrastructure and Streetscape Project

CBI made updates to the CSO AG Charter to reflect clarification of the group's priority topics, and the new version will be sent to members and posted on the project website.

In response to a question, Elise Harmon-Freeman, Communications Manager in the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department, noted that should members of the public want to leave feedback for any ongoing projects such as the Hampshire Street Project, they should email the Project Manager whose email can be found on the City's website along with project plans and timelines.

### Learning From Design and Implementation of Completed Projects

Leading up to this AG meeting, several members sent questions related to the Garden Street and -Mid-Mass. Ave projects. Brooke McKenna, Transportation Commissioner, gave a presentation on these projects. She started by giving context for the review process on past projects, and then specifically addressed questions raised by the AG members. She then discussed the following topics related to the two projects:

- Garden Street
  - Why Garden Street and how does it fit into the city's larger transportation plan?
  - What were the impacts on traffic and access in the surrounding neighborhood and after project analysis?
  - Impacts on school pick up and drop off
  - Future changes to the project
- Mid-Mass. Ave.
  - Availability of loading zones for delivery trucks and the overall impact on traffic
  - Parking enforcement
  - Impact of limited parking on customers and businesses

In response to her presentation on Garden Street, AG members asked for more information about how many crashes involving bikes were reported before the implementation of the bike lane. Brooke noted that most of the evaluation work has not focused on a particular project, but on the overall crash rates. She added that some projects were selected to support the overall network, not to address specific safety issues on that street. Elise added that between 2019 to early 2022 they reported 19 crashes along the project area (3 were driver/pedestrian, 4 involved cyclists, 3 were driver and object, and 9 were between two cars). One member suggested trends in crash data should be evaluated after each project is complete. They added that included in the evaluation process for projects, the City should ask street users if their comfort level using the project streets has changed after construction. Another member suggested the City evaluate if local school children have changed their mode of transportation after a project was complete, and noted that transportation surveys administered by the schools could possibly be a source of data for this question.

One member noted that there is no protected bike lane once you get off Garden Street and does not connect to Danahy Park. Brooke explained that the goal is to have a high-comfort, low volume, low-speed route for bikers, but this does not always involve a protected lane. Cara Seiderman, Transportation Program Manager in the Community Development Department, added that there is a set of criteria a street must meet to be considered high comfort, low volume, low speed, which she will share with the group. Over time, Garden Street and other corridors for which this is the goal will need to change to become "high comfort, low speed."

In response to the presentation about Mid-Mass. Ave., one member noted several issues they had experienced on the street including illegal parking, trouble with deliveries, customers' access to stores, and enforcement of the new parking and loading zone rules. One member wondered how the City will pivot when certain projects cause unintended issues, and emphasized the importance of data and

project evaluation as an avenue to solve problems and address stakeholder concerns. Members specifically mentioned the impact on businesses and noted concern about continuing work on Mid-Mass. Ave. without solutions to these problems. They wanted to see elements incorporated into future projects to mitigate the negative impacts local businesses have observed. One member suggested that for congested corridors such as Harvard Square, they create a bike path a few blocks over where there is less congestion.

Other members noted that they have seen contrary evidence to the claim that bike lanes are hurting businesses, and one member noted that they have started traveling around Cambridge and frequenting shops because of the bike lanes. One member suggested the City create a website or QR code where the community can give feedback on what is working well or not on specific corridors.

One member suggested that north of Porter Square where Rindge and Mass. Ave. come together, the City should create a green zone (lead bike interval) where the pedestrians are able to walk across Rindge before the Mass. Ave. traffic continues. This would create a safer cross for bikers.

The group agreed that at the next meeting, the City would present in more detail how design options and tradeoffs were considered for the Mid-Mass. Ave. corridor to help explain the process to the group. In response to a question, Brooke noted that people should speak to the traffic department if they have any requests about getting a loading zone in front of their property.

### Data collection and evaluation of projects

Elise Harmon-Freeman, Communications Manager in the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department, then shared a review of 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

The group was invited to share their thoughts on what criteria should be included in a standard evaluation process for CSO projects, with a goal of creating a consistent method of evaluating CSO projects. The City agreed to take the feedback received and begin to prepare a straw proposal for this core set of criteria. The group will continue this discussion in future meetings

Group members shared their thoughts of what other questions should be considered in the evaluation and strategies for community engagement (*Direct responses from City staff are in italics*):

- Ask specific questions about the business environment and occupancy levels, and word the questions so they would not apply to residences. Engage directly with the business owners to hear their solutions to address concerns they might have cited.
- Like the idea to have different questions for different corridors
- Evaluate how many people feel comfortable accessing streets in the project network, and look at the different ways mobility devices are used.
- Evaluate crashes both in the intersections and between the intersections (and delineate the difference between them).
  - *While the City can look closely at crash reports, it can be difficult to get to that level of nuance in the open data portal.*
- Can the City put the nuanced data that is cleaned up and evaluated back into the less granular open data portal?

- *City staff can explore if the technology is able to do that, or if there is other technology that could do something similar.*
- Capture the growing number of scooter riders, specifically on Garden Street.
- Investigate if there is a way to evaluate if the cyclists that feel more comfortable on these corridors are more likely to be customers and if their patronage increased.

## Public Comment

No public comments were shared.

The meeting was adjourned at 6 PM.

## Appendix A: Meeting participants

AG members:

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

Facilitation:

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

## Appendix B: Meeting agenda

- **4:00 Welcome**
- **4:15 City updates**
  - Brief Q&A
- **4:25 Learning from design and implementation of completed projects**
  - Garden Street
  - Mass. Ave (near Dado Tea between Central and Harvard)
- **5:15 Discussion of data collection and project evaluation**
  - What other questions should evaluation efforts address?
  - Are there other sources of information that could be included?
- **5:45 Next steps**
  - Future agenda items
- **5:50 Public comment**
- **6:00 Adjourn**