City of Cambridge Cycling Safety Ordinance Advisory Group

Summary of November 28, 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 (CSO), a policy to build a network of bike lanes and safety improvements on roads in the City. This CSO Advisory Group (AG) hybrid meeting was held on Zoom and in person at the City Hall Annex. There were 12 members in attendance (Appendix A).

This meeting summary captures the key discussion points and advisory group feedback, and actions identified during the meeting. The presentation slide decks and recordings may be found on the CSO 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 and discuss CSO updates, hear an update on the Bicycling in Cambridge Data Report, review and refine draft evaluation criteria, and plan for upcoming AG discussions.

Action Items

- All:
  - Share ideas for outreach materials.
  - Share comments on the engagement memo.
- Jason: send ideas to Brooke re: outdoor dining.
- City:
  - Ask the Police Department how accidents with wheelchair users are classified.
  - Update engagement memo to incorporate feedback.
  - Post presentation and recordings on project webpage.
  - Post the catchment areas of who receives postcards on project website.
- Proposed topics for upcoming meetings:
  - Phase 4 post-implementation outreach
  - Developing a design considerations presentation tailored for community meetings
  - Parking study findings

City Updates

Elise Harmon-Freeman, Communications Manager for the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department, shared updates on the completed installation of the Hampshire Street Safety Improvement Project and kick-off of the Safety Improvement Project on Cambridge Street. Elise gave brief status updates on other separated bike lane projects, include Harvard Square Mass Ave improvements, Huron

Ave and Cushing Plaza improvements, Inman Square intersection reconstruction, Main Street Safety Improvement Project, Mass Ave Partial Construction Project, Mt. Auburn Street at Aberdeen Safety Improvement Project, and River Street Reconstruction Project. Lastly, she gave an update on the plan to accommodate on-street dining and separated bike lanes.

AG members discussed an email sent by Patrick Magee regarding the Cambridge Street project outreach. AG member discussion on his comment included the following. Clarifications and responses from the City are included in italics in sub-bullets.

- The letter highlighted that shortened pedestrian crossings and bump out reconstruction are touted as a benefit of the CSO, but that bump out construction was occurring before the ordinance.
    - *The City uses the opportunity presented by the CSO to make additional quick-build safety improvements on the streets – that's why we call them safety improvement projects rather bike lane projects. Bump outs are one of the features incorporated into safety improvement projects. Pedestrian crossings are shortened with the addition of bike lanes, because bike lanes result in fewer vehicular lanes, and thus decrease the time pedestrians are exposed to vehicular traffic. The City now incorporates additional accessibility features such as reconstruction curb ramps into CSO project design phase, whereas for previous projects, they were incorporated into the design later on.*
- The impact of parking loss should be clear on signage about projects.
    - *This feedback has been incorporated, and signage includes a clear explanation of parking changes/loss.*
- In outreach efforts, the City should be clear about parking loss, but the focus/hierarchy of detail should reflect the purpose of the project and the benefits it provides, namely increased safety.
- The new signs are white and the older ones were neon and more eye-catching.
    - *The City rotates sign colors, but perhaps could stick with neon.*
- The outreach has been good; people know about the project.

The following questions were asked by CSO AG members. Clarifications and responses from the City are included in italics in sub-bullets.

- What accessibility improvements were made to bus stops on Hampshire Street?
    - *The City changed the bus stop locations to spots where it's easier to deploy accessible ramps and for people to board, improved previously sub-standard sidewalks, and added ramps and tactile strips at crosswalks. The City also included more accessible/disability parking spaces than had been in the project area previously.*
- Was a bike signal considered at the Hampshire and Broadway intersection? The road design is hard to navigate and thus bad for businesses. Car users should be able to easily park in the One Kendall garage. Consider better wayfinding for parking and delivery.
    - *The City looked at design options because they understood the challenge for vehicular circulation. Room for both a turn and a through lane would be needed to separate out the right turn lanes, and with a separate bike lane there is not enough space.*

Additionally, a bike signal would delay all traffic at the intersection. The City will look further at this intersection to see if adjustments are possible and improve wayfinding.

- It is good that the City found a solution for outdoor dining that keeps dining and bike lanes. There are likely other solutions that would remove fewer parking and loading spaces. Every parking and loading space is valuable. We need more design options to consider.
- What is the catchment area for who receives a postcard notification about a project?
    - *The City looks at zip code maps and estimates a best fit area within the zip code that covers the project. There is not a set list.*
- Were the streets that have outdoor dining and bike lanes determined by the ordinance?
    - *There are no limits on outdoor dining except licensing and site-by-site limitations, e.g., parking spaces.*

Bicycling in Cambridge: 2023 Data Report

Elise Harmon-Freeman presented the 2023 Bicycling in Cambridge Data Report, which includes updated data from the 2020 bike plan. The report presents data from citywide bike counts, automated counters, Bluebike data, American Community Survey data, Cambridge Police Department crash reports, commercial district customer intercept surveys, and parking and transportation demand management reports. Elise noted that it is challenging to disentangle impacts of the bike lanes from impacts of construction and COVID-19 on the data gathered in recent years.

Elise presented City goals relevant to bike lanes, the policies and plans in which those goals are listed, and data used to measure each goal. Key takeaways from the bike report include that crash rates and serious injuries are declining, bike ridership is increasing (though there was a dip in total riders at commuting hours since the pandemic), and people feel more comfortable biking in separate bike lanes.

The following questions were asked by CSO AG members. Clarifications and responses from the City are included in italics in sub-bullets.

- How do you calculate million bike miles traveled?
    - *The City looks at bike counts (periodic counts from 16 locations and the 24/7 counters) and extrapolates the number of people biking over a year considering seasonal variation (which can be seen on the 24/7 counters). We then look at how far the cyclists are traveling and determine the million bike miles traveled. There is more information on this calculation in the report.*
- How do you factor in seasonal variation?
    - *The 24/7 counter and Blue Bike data are collected continuously and thus show seasonal variation. We see more people riding in warmer winters, and fewer people riding on rainy summer days.*
- The Census American Community Service (ACS) indicates 9% of commuter traffic is by bicycle (which is quite high for a city in the United States), but this does not represent the full picture. Ideally, Cambridge would conduct its own ACS-type survey to have more accurate information.

- Are crashes between bicycles, micro mobility devices, and accessibility devices counted? Are wheelchair users considered pedestrians in crash reports? I'm curious about micro mobility users in bike lanes, and hypothesize that motorized wheelchairs will use separated bike lanes since they will be easier to navigate than some sidewalks.
    - *The City uses Cambridge Police Department crash data. If a crash is not reported, the City does not count it. Of course, many crashes do not get reported. The Police Department accident report only has bicycle and pedestrian categories. Occasionally the written narrative will have more detail that can be considered. Very few bike-bike or bike-ped crashes are reported. A few years ago a wheelchair user was killed in a crash with a motorist.*
- Regarding manual counting, does the City count users coming from both directions on both streets? For example, if you are at the Bow and Mass Ave intersection, do you count bikers on Bow and Mass Ave?
    - *Manual counting involves noting which street a user came from and to which street they went, which helps routes. With bike lanes, the City has noticed fewer bikers traveling against traffic, which was previously an issue.*
- Regarding the increase in micro mobility users, have those users always been counted? If so, were they previously counted as bicycles?
    - *The City did not previously count micro mobility users. National data show an uptick of users in the last four to five years, which pushed the City to count them. We do not separate types of micro mobility users (e.g., segway riders, scooters) but, anecdotally, most are scooter users.*
- Does the City distinguish between intersection and non-intersection crashes? If so, are they both decreasing at the same rate?
    - *The City has not done this analysis, but will be able to make more conclusions the longer bike lanes are installed.*

Quick-build Project Evaluation Framework

Elise Harmon-Freeman presented the draft quick-build project evaluation framework, which details what the City tracks and plans to report for each project. For each project type, the framework identifies data that should always be reported, and supplemental data that could also be evaluated as applicable.

The following suggestions and comments were shared by CSO AG members. Clarifications and responses from the City are included in italics in sub-bullets.

- Use intercept surveys as a tool for *all* evaluation processes. Face-to-face interactions are beneficial.
    - *Intercept surveys are listed as optional because they are challenging to conduct in areas with low pedestrian volume. The memo could specify that some of the supplemental data will be used when it is applicable, e.g., intercept surveys in business districts and MBTA travel time near bus or train lines.*
- Include origin-destination survey questions in CSO intercept studies.

- Conduct a targeted count and/or intercept survey for after school hours, which will be different from vehicle peak hours.
- Include a QR code for intercept surveys so people could answer the survey at a later date.

The following questions were asked by CSO AG members. Responses below are from City staff.

- Would the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation post-project survey be sent to the mailing list?
    - *Yes, part of the planned evaluation includes a post-project survey on how behavior has changed as a result of the project. This would be sent to the email list,posted on street poles, and shared in other ways to get as wide a response as possible.*
- Are crashes with people who use wheelchairs tracked? It would be helpful to track how many people who use wheelchairs transition to bike lanes, and if any safety issues arise.
    - *This would appear in crash reports, but if police officers do not specify the user's mode it will not get tracked.*
- What is the appetite for using automatic counters for evaluation studies? Placing automatic counters at intersections that are included in the annual count would be great.
    - *The City would support using automatic counters if it can identify a suitable technology. The City uses eco-totems, and is looking at traffic cameras that theoretically count pedestrians and bikers. The City is comparing annual count data with these technologies to determine accuracy.*
- Do you find that BlueBike counts function as an "indicator species" or predictor of biking counts?
    - *BlueBike data illustrates biking trends at a high-level, but not in a statistically-significant way. Anecdotally, we hear stories of people using BlueBikes, getting excited about biking, and then purchasing a bike.*
- Can you tell where cyclists are traveling from and to? Understanding this would help determine if riders are staying local or traveling across town to visit businesses.
    - *These are called origin-destination surveys and are easier to do with cars (because you can monitor license plates) than bikes. The City doesn't capture this information now. There are emerging methods for determining this for bikers using cell phone data.*
- Do peak hour studies capture the time when school releases and thus students biking to after school activities? Are vehicle peak hours the same as other mode peak hours? Conducting surveys around school ending times would help look at riders on Garden Street heading towards Danehy Field.
    - *The City conducts surveys of how students get to school through school or health departments. Past data through the City Smart Program showed that bike riders took more trips per day than car users. Conducting a targeted count and/or intercept survey for after school hours could be considered.*
- Is the City tracking loading challenges for businesses? Could that be added?
    - *The Economic Opportunity and Development Department is developing a business survey that asks about parking and loading configurations. We do not need to wait for that survey if there are specific challenges that could be fixed with a sign change.*

Public comment

- No public comment

Appendix A: Meeting participants

AG members:

- Kaleb Abebe
- Jason Alves
- Mark Boswell
- Mary Devlin
- Amy Flax
- Debby Galef
- Diane Gray
- Angela Hofmann
- Denise Jilson
- Stephen Meuse
- Jennie Song
- Jenny Turner-Trauring

City staff:

- Elise Harmon-Freeman, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation
- Brooke McKenna, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation
- Chaimaa Medhat, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation
- Jeff Parenti, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation
- Andy Reker, Community Development
- Cara Seiderman, Community Development
- Jim Wilcox, Public Works

Facilitation:

- Elizabeth Cooper, Consensus Building Institute
- Abby Fullem, Consensus Building Institute

Appendix B: Meeting agenda

- 4:00 PM Welcome
- 4:10 PM City updates
- 4:40 PM Bicycling in Cambridge Data Report
- 5:10 PM Evaluation Criteria
- 5:40 PM Next Steps
- 5:50 PM Public comment
- 6:00 PM Adjourn