

City of Cambridge Cycling Safety Ordinance Advisory Group

Summary of September 26, 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 sixth meeting of the group was held as a hybrid meeting on Zoom and in person at the City Hall Annex. There were 20 members in attendance (Appendix A).

This meeting summary captures the key discussion points and advisory group feedback, and actions identified during the meeting. Presentations with additional detail may be found on the 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:

- Learn more about the City's Economic Impact Study of the CSO and address AG questions;
- Review and refine the AG's guidance and best practices regarding outreach and engagement, to serve as an ongoing reference for CSO and other City processes.

Action items

- Upcoming CSO AG meetings will be on November 28 and January 30.
- Proposed topics for upcoming meetings include evaluation criteria, phase 4/post implementation, and development of a distilled version of July meeting presentation on design considerations.
- CSO AG members:
 - Share feedback on the engagement best practices memo.
 - Let Elizabeth know about any concerns with recording meeting presentations (discussion following presentations will not be recorded).
 - Follow-up with entities that have not yet responded to a business survey.
- City:
 - Post July summary on the CSO AG website.
 - Update the best practices for engagement memo and post it on the website.
 - Confirm if the LEHD data covers seasonal employment (e.g., students).
- CBI:
 - Adjust meeting structure to hold questions and discussion to the end of each presentation for recording purposes, and to have meetings held every other month.

City Updates

The City of Cambridge gave a brief update on the following:

- Safety improvement projects including quick-build separated bike lanes on Brattle Street, Hampshire Street, Main Street, Mt. Auburn Street at Aberdeen Ave.
- Improvement projects to Harvard Square on Massachusetts Ave, Huron Ave and Cushing Plaza, Inman Square, and River Street. These projects include fully-constructed separated bike lanes.
- Partial construction project on Massachusetts Ave. This project will include quick-build separated bike lanes, but the City will undertake some construction that aren't included in other quick-build projects (for example, to remove parts of the median and add new crossings).

Find the project webpages for these projects at

www.cambridgema.gov/streetsandtransportation/policiesordinancesandplans/cyclingsafetyordinance/projects.

One CSO AG member requested an estimate of how many people participated in the Main Street ice cream social. Elise Harmon-Freeman, communications manager in the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department, shared that there were approximately 100 groups of people, and 250 ice creams distributed. One CSO AG member asked if Inman Square will have more street painting. Elise shared that there is a small amount of painting work left, mainly to indicate that bikes should not be ridden on sidewalks.

Economic Impact Study

Pardis Saffari, Director of Economic Opportunity and Development, presented information about the CSO Economic Impact Study. The originating policy order calls for a study on business impacts from separated bike lanes during installation and one year following it, for a total of six to seven years. The study will provide information that could help shape future policy and identify opportunities to mitigate potential issues. The Cambridge Community Development Department (CDD) is working with Volpe National Transportation Systems Center (Volpe) on the study. The study structure was presented to City Council in Fall 2023. Further details on the study methodology, data, and preliminary findings are available in the [meeting slides](#).

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

- Does the City have data on the effects of the pandemic on businesses, such as business closures?
 - The City tracks vacancies and businesses that open and close, and this was incorporated into the study. The 2019 business survey was used as a snapshot in time in areas where separated bike lanes were not yet installed. For areas that had separated bike lanes prior to the 2019 business survey, businesses were asked about their sales years prior to 2019.
- Does this study attempt to disentangle the effects of COVID-19 from the effects of bike lanes?

- To address effects of COVID-19 and other variables over time, the study compares CSO corridors with non-CSO corridors (i.e. corridors without bike lanes.)
- Does employment data consider seasonal employment? How would student workers appear in this dataset?
 - Employment data is gathered quarterly, so seasonal employment should appear. Some follow-up on the student worker question may be needed. (Follow-up: student workers will not appear specifically in this dataset)
- Does the transportation data cover public transit? Many people have stopped taking MBTA due to bad service.
 - Volpe is using City-provided data (vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle counts, parking spaces gained or lost, and parking utilization studies). Public transit data can be obtained from MBTA directly.
- Does the study look at meter data and turnover to understand parking space usage? This may be useful data to consider.
 - The City has revenue data and parking app usage. This data reveals the amount of time a user pays for, not the actual time used. It could reveal turnover at a zone level, not a parking spot level. We decided not to use this due to the disconnect between occupancy and revenue.
- Is there data that compares the usage of parking spaces for loading versus tow zones?
 - No. The City does not charge for that so there is not a way to track it at the moment.
- The prior Volpe presentation said that parking information was available. Is that accurate?
 - Volpe is using the limited amount of City-conducted manual studies to check parking utilization. This is different from parking app data.
- Does the study look at construction impacts on parking? Construction around Harvard Square limits parking.
 - The study looks at permanent parking only and does not look at parking temporarily lost to construction.
- How is the summer customer survey data different from the regularly conducted intercept surveys? Do surveyors stand in the same locations?
 - The summer survey has fewer questions and focuses on mode of transit. The customer intercept survey focuses on shopping. The customer intercept survey has surveyors standing near bus stops or intersections, whereas the summer survey had surveyors all along Massachusetts Ave to look at effects of separated bike lanes.
- There are a number of restaurants and cafes that have installed outdoor dining, which has led to a loss of parking. Do the surveys ask about outdoor dining's effects on curb access?
 - This comes up in open-ended responses. We hear both complaints about parking loss and the importance of outdoor dining options to keep businesses alive.
- When will the business survey end?
 - The City will conduct this survey for the next six years. The 2023 survey will close at the end of October or November after running for five months.
- Are religious institutions included in the business survey?
 - Yes, though there are a few that still need to be contacted.

- Which calendar year will the business survey be conducted on?
 - Business years, i.e., July to July. The final reporting will likely occur each fall.

Communication and Outreach Best Practices

Facilitator Elizabeth Cooper requested input on the draft communication and outreach best practices memo that was shared in advance of the meeting. The memo is a living document that can be updated as needed, and it will be posted on the website. Elise shared that the memo can be shared with new staff members and consultants to clarify engagement expectations. One member suggested that the memo clarify which departments in the City are being referred to when the memo says “the City.” One member shared that each CSO AG agenda topic should indicate if the CSO AG can influence decision-making.

CSO AG Discussion

One CSO AG member requested that meetings be recorded so that those unable to attend can watch later. Barring any concerns shared following the meeting, the CSO AG agreed to record the presentation portion of meetings but not the discussion. As such, non-clarifying questions will be held until the end of each section rather than interspersed throughout.

The CSO AG agreed to meet every other month. This schedule will allow for material development from the City for the Group to review. This coincides with the winter when there are fewer project updates.

One CSO AG member asked for more information on the July presentation on the mid-Cambridge area design, as they were unable to attend the meeting. The member asked if any unintended consequences, such as delivery trucks having nowhere to park, were revealed. Brooke McKenna, Transportation Commissioner, shared that the parameters of separated bike lanes and fixed street width limit the types of adjustments or solutions that can address these challenges. Over time, behavior change and adjustments to how people use the roads can improve problems like illegal parking. The City cannot add parking back in, but it can reconsider small design changes such as transitioning metered parking to loading zones. One CSO AG member requested creative problem solving such as non-structural interventions to address some of the challenges encountered.

One CSO AG member shared that street users are unaware of parking changes. Brooke shared that this will hopefully be less likely for future projects given outreach guidance from CSO AG members, and that the City is open to ideas for improving outreach.

One CSO AG member voiced the importance of evaluating work thus far to identify solutions and avoid making the same mistakes in the next phase of project construction. Brooke emphasized the value of CSO AG members engaging in the design process so their needs can be incorporated into street design. She also reiterated that the CSO as a policy is a significant reprioritization of street usage, and not all problems will be able to be solved with design adjustments.

Public Comment

Patrick Magee, president of East Cambridge Business Association, asked if this CSO Advisory Group is the venue to discuss challenges created by the CSO (e.g., loading for businesses) and brainstorm solutions.

The meeting was adjourned at 6 PM.

Appendix A: Meeting participants

AG members:

1. Mercedes Evans
2. Denise Jilson
3. Kaleb Abebe
4. Mark Boswell (on zoom and in-person)
5. Diane Gray
6. Amy Flax
7. Angela Hofmann
8. Jenny Turner-Trauring
9. Michael Monastime
10. Jennie Song
11. Jason Alves

City staff:

1. Elise Harmon-Freeman, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation
2. Brooke McKenna, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation
3. Chaimaa Medhat, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation
4. Stephen Meuse, Traffic, Parking, and Transportation
5. Andy Reker, Community Development
6. Pardis Saffari, Community Development
7. Cara Seiderman, Community Development

Facilitation:

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

Appendix B: Meeting agenda

- 4:00 PM Welcome
- 4:10 PM City updates
- 4:20 PM Economic impact study
- 5:10 PM Next steps
- 5:50 PM Public comment
- 6:00 PM Adjourn