



City of Cambridge  
Department of Public Works

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November 18, 2015

**To:** Richard C. Rossi, City Manager  
**From:** Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development  
Katherine Watkins, City Engineer  
**Re:** *Council Order 8, dated Sept 28, 2015 & Council Order 13, dated Oct19, 2015  
Cambridge Common Message Board and Traffic Patterns*

**Project Overview**

The Cambridge Common is both a National Historic Landmark and one of the city's major parks. It contains a popular, recently reconstructed tot lot, youth soccer and other passive activities on its 16 acres. The Common underwent its last significant reconstruction in 1974. The current Cambridge Common and Flagstaff Park project aims to rehabilitate all aspects of the Common, improve conditions for those travelling along this section of Massachusetts Avenue, and unify the historic landscape.

Planned improvements include: replacement of all pathway surfaces with accessible granite-edged bituminous paving, replacement of all benches and waste receptacles, planting of over 100 trees, removal of older under-story plantings, improvements to drainage and turf surfaces, upgrading the lighting system with LED fixtures, and a new two-way multi-use path along Flagstaff Park connecting Harvard Square and Massachusetts Avenue northbound.

The Cambridge Common project is funded by monies provided by the City, the State and the Federal Government. The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) is the contracting party with the contractor, Newport Construction, and is responsible for all of the construction management associated with the project. The City, through the Department of Public Works, provides oversight on behalf of the City but has no contractual relationship with the contractor. DPW staff work closely with MassDOT to ensure that issues of concern to the City are addressed.

**Construction Information**

The Department of Public Works maintains a website specific to the project; providing updated schedules and addressing anticipated community impacts in the weeks ahead. The web page is available here:

<http://www.cambridgema.gov/theworks/cambridgecommonproject>

Information about the project including schedule updates and contact information is posted on five A-frame project boards at the major entrances to the Common and on the notice board in the tot-lot. In addition, there are two semi-permanent sign boards showing the design plan.

## Staging Area

The contractor maintains a staging area for vehicles, equipment and materials in the Common. The area is fenced off for security and maintained by the contractor. While Newport Construction has a number of other construction projects that are on-going in the City, both the City and MassDOT have worked to ensure that the staging area in the Common is not used for staging or storage associated with any other projects.

Contained within the staging area is stockpiled soil, which is primarily associated with top soil that has been removed from the grassed areas in the Common. The contractor is presently hauling away soil judged to be in excess of what is necessary during restoration. The bare earth areas of the site are watered on a consistent basis throughout the project. The contractor employs a truck with a water spray to provide additional watering. The stockpiles have been covered with tarp to further alleviate any concerns associated with dust.

## Minimizing Conflicts between Cyclists and Pedestrians

The Cambridge Common paths provide access for many pedestrians and cyclists. Signage will be posted along the paths of the Common asking users to “keep right”



on paths and for cyclists to yield to pedestrians. In order to keep as much of a simple and

historical feel to the Common as possible pavement markings were not included on the paths. Minor widening was completed to make paths a consistent width and eliminate pinch points.

### **Guidance to Cyclists using Flagstaff Park**

In response to concerns about the operation of the new Flagstaff Park for cyclists heading north to Massachusetts Avenue, the design and construction team met on site to review the signal operation and developed several measures to improve conditions. These include new and relocated signs making cyclists aware that they should obey the regular walk / don't walk indications when crossing the bus tunnel and traffic lanes. The bicycle signal heads have also been rotated so cyclists will only see them once they have reached the traffic islands.

### **Project Schedule**

The contractor anticipates the completion of all pathways and plaza areas, pathway lighting, perimeter curbing and cobblestone pavement, post and rail fence, parking meters, perimeter tree planting, and the installation of benches, bicycle parking, and trash and recycling receptacles this fall. The kiosk and signage, as well as remaining tree planting, irrigation, and lawn seeding, is anticipated to be completed in spring of 2016.