

Kendall Square Mobility Task Force Meeting

LOCATION OF MEETING: 600 Technology Square, 3rd Floor, Cambridge, MA

DATE/TIME OF MEETING: April 28, 2015 from 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

TASK FORCE ATTENDEES:

Joe Barr, City of Cambridge – Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department
Chris Barr, Biogen Idec
Kelley Brown, MIT – Office of Campus Planning
Brian Dacey, Kendall Square Association (Co-Chair)
Bob Dorer, Volpe National Transportation Systems Center
Melissa Dullea, MBTA
Tom Evans, Cambridge Redevelopment Authority
Jim Gascogne, Charles River TMA
Scott Hamwey, MassDOT
Ben Lavery, Boston Properties
Patrick Magee, East Cambridge Business Association
Michael Owu, MIT Investment Management Company
Susanne Rasmussen, City of Cambridge – Community Development Department (Co-Chair)
Jeffrey Rosenblum
John Sanzone, Friends of the Grand Junction Path

MASSDOT AND PROJECT TEAM ATTENDEES:

Matthew Ciborowski, MassDOT (Facilitator)
Pete Sutton, MassDOT
Joanne Haracz, McMahon Associates
Christi Apicella, McMahon Associates
Regan Checchio, RVA

PUBLIC:

Tegin Bennett, City of Cambridge
Megan Houdlette, VHB
Steve Kaiser
Cleo Stoughton, City of Cambridge
Andreas Wolfe, MassBike

HANDOUTS:

- Agenda
- Goals Survey

PURPOSE/SUBJECT: Task Force Meeting #1

SUMMARY:

Introductions

Matthew Ciborowski, MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning, opened the meeting at 4:08 PM and invited the Task Force members to introduce themselves (see Attendance).

Susanne Rasmussen, City of Cambridge and Co-Chair, thanked MassDOT for the study. She noted the strong connection between sustainable growth, transportation and livable neighborhoods. She explained that the study will take one year and yield an action guide with productive, vetted solutions. Brian Dacey, Kendall Square Association and Co-Chair, echoed her comments and said the study will identify problems, provide data and come up with solutions over the next 12 months.

Mr. Ciborowski reviewed the meeting agenda and collected the results of surveys that had been distributed to the Task Force prior to the meeting.

Task Force Logistics

He reviewed the logistics of the Task Force and the members. He noted that two Task Force members were missing, Barbara Broussard from the East Cambridge Planning Team and Mark Moses from Newtown Court/Washington Elms Tenant Council. Since these members represent the residential groups, Mr. Ciborowski said that he would check to make sure the meeting time and location would work with their schedules moving forward.

Mr. Ciborowski then reviewed a proposed meeting schedule for the Task Force: April 28, 2015, June 30, 2015, August 25, 2015, October 27, 2015, January 5, 2016, and February 23, 2016. He suggested that future meetings could occur at the Cambridge Innovation Center. There were no objections to this location.

Melissa Dullea, MBTA, suggested moving the August meeting until after Labor Day. Mr. Ciborowski said he would look at that.

Joe Barr, City of Cambridge, suggested scheduling a meeting of the Task Force where members could conduct a site visit around the Kendall Square area. Mr. Ciborowski said that was a great idea.

Mr. Ciborowski said that there would be three larger, community meetings held throughout the process. He targeted September 2015, January 2016 and February 2016 for these meetings. He also shared the URL for the project website¹ and noted that he would be setting up an email list for Task Force members to share information. He cautioned Task Force members that their communications will need to follow Open Meeting Law.

Task Force Purpose & Study Basics

Mr. Ciborowski then reviewed the background of the project and its goals:

- Examine the current conditions of Kendall Square transportation
- Estimate future needs
- Set performance-based goals for transportation initiatives.

The study will recommend policies and outcomes to meet these goals. The policies and projects will be financially prudent and be in multiple timeframes.

¹ <https://www.massdot.state.ma.us/planning/Main/CurrentStudies/KendallSquareMobility.aspx>

Mr. Ciborowski explained that the study structure will follow a familiar model – kickoff; conditions and issues identification; identification of performance-based goals (September 2015 timeframe), alternatives development; development recommendations; and a final report (February 2016). He noted that the three proposed public meetings would be held during the identification of performance-based goals, during the recommendations development, and after the draft report is released.

Ms. Rasmussen said that MassDOT may want to move the second public meeting to November/December because a January meeting might be too late in the process.

Tom Evans, Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA), noted that it may be hard to reach all community groups and suggested that the project team may also want to include briefings in the schedule. Mr. Ciborowski said that MassDOT was very willing to send staff and bring Task Force members to other, smaller meetings to let people know about the project.

Ms. Rasmussen suggested that the study could incorporate an online component to gather feedback. Mr. Ciborowski said that any online component on the MassDOT website must meet web accessibility guidelines. There was a brief discussion about web accessibility.

Mr. Dacey suggested that Task Force members could also gather input from their constituents and bring it back to the larger group. Mr. Ciborowski said that was a great suggestion.

Mr. Ciborowski also identified data needs for the project team and encouraged Task Force members to provide the data, if available. There was a brief discussion of development scenarios to use for the analysis.

Jeff Rosenblum suggested looking at different types of futures and looking at different impacts of different future scenarios.

Mr. Evans asked about the outside time to model. Mr. Ciborowski explained that the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) conducts transportation modeling for MassDOT. Right now, the projected model year is 2040, but the study can graduate recommendations over different timeframes.

Ms. Rasmussen proposed one scenario be based on the Kendall Square/Central Square (K2C2) study, which uses a model year of 2030. She noted that McMahon Associates assisted with analysis of transportation impacts for that process. Mr. Dacey agreed. Mr. Ciborowski said the analysis could compare scenarios to K2C2.

Discussion of Survey Results

Mr. Ciborowski said the survey that had been distributed prior to the meeting was an attempt to tease out pre-existing attitudes and opinions of Task Force members. During the meeting, project team members had summarized the key responses which were shown on newsprint for discussion purposes.

Task Force members were asked to score mobility subjects on a scale of relative importance. Based on the survey results, Commuting/Travel Options, Transit Capacity, Transit Reliability, and Transit Connection were ranked as most important; followed by Bike Facilities, Bike Parking, Financial Programs, New Transit Connections, and Pedestrian Facilities. Subjects that ranked as neutral included Bike Sharing, Car Sharing/Ride Sharing, On Street Parking,

Other Employee Programs (Guaranteed Ride Home), Local Roadway/Intersection Congestion, and Off Street Parking. Local Roadway/Intersection Congestion, received a range of rankings, from Least Vital to Most Vital, indicating that there was not a clear consensus regarding its importance.

Scott Hamwey, MassDOT, said he was encouraged to see these results.

Mr. Rosenblum asked if there was enough diversity among Task Force members as there seemed to be general agreement. Mr. Ciborowski said there was some disagreement about the importance of congestion.

Mr. Dacey said he believed the results showed neutrality on roadway issues because issues like parking are being addressed in the development process. Mr. Ciborowski asked about issues of on-street parking. Mr. Dacey said there is less retail in Kendall Square than in other places. Mr. Ciborowski noted there is likely to be more in 10 years. Mr. J. Barr said that on-street parking has actually been added over the years, and meters have been extended to 8PM. He said the City has been able to keep up with demand to date, but it may grow over time. Ms. Rasmussen said a very important data set to gather will be retail information. She said that the actual percentage of individuals who access retail by car is very low.

Jim Gascgoine, Charles River TMA, said that the responses are driven by the convener of the meeting. The City of Cambridge is doing a great job on many of these other issues, but transit needs should be addressed by MassDOT.

Mr. Gascgoine also noted that the wording of the questions could affect the responses, particularly the wording of "financial programs." Mr. Ciborowski noted that financial programs may be easier to address by businesses and could include an array of options, including federal programs. Chris Barr, Biogen Idec, said in his experience subsidies for T passes, EZRide and Hubway, are highly used. He also said employees like the commuter bus program (provided by Biogen).

Mr. C. Barr said that he was surprised that congestion was marked so low. He said employees have a difficult time getting into the city from places like Winchester during rush hour. He also noted that during the winter storms, congestion was extremely bad. Mr. Evans said that, setting aside the winter storms as a unique condition, there is a peak pulse where congestion is bad. The key would be to spread out the congestion that occurs during the peak. He noted that after 7PM, it is not hard to get out of Kendall compared to other metro areas. He suggested the Task Force look at the temporal nature of the congestion.

Ms. Rasmussen said that is a goal for parking as well. She said that parking cannot be flexed due to the way parking passes are distributed. If there were more flexible systems, advantage could be taken of the existing capacity. Kelley Brown, MIT, suggested MBTA passes with part-time parking passes, instead of full-time parking passes.

Mr. Gascgoine asked MIT what the costs have been to provide flexible MBTA passes to all employees to encourage even occasional use. Mr. Brown indicated that the price was negotiated with the MBTA. He asked what would happen if everyone was an occasional parker. Mr. C. Barr said that the Hubway program tends to shift people from MBTA riders to Hubway users. Mr. Dacey said it is also important to consider other rideshare programs.

Mr. Rosenblum said it is important to demonstrate mode-shift implementation items to achieve goals. He asked how mode-shift incentives will work in the year 2030.

On the survey, respondents were also asked to describe key aspects of their vision for a successful future Kendall Square. Subjects that were mentioned included:

- Volpe redevelopment
- Robust mixed use – continued growth with good urban design
- K2 Master Plan
- Grand Junction Railroad right-of-way
- Reliable Mass Transit that has capacity
- Destination & functional work space
- Urban/24 hour district
 - Retail
 - Residential
 - Vibrant night life
- Neighborhood
- Sustainable transportation
- Global innovation center
- Open space & waterfront access
- Fewer cars – better transit

Mr. Evans said that for Kendall to be an urban, 24-hour center, life needs should be brought to the Square. He noted that for transit, users only have one option, the Red Line, after rush hour. There are few buses late night and weekends. As the neighborhood is created, there will be a need to spread out the transit.

Mr. J. Barr said that people who move to the area tend to be younger, with no children. One member of the couple may work in Kendall Square, and the other works elsewhere. He said that service needs to not just be at peak times, and should serve a variety of destinations. Mr. Ciborowski said he was curious about the different modes people who live in Kendall use versus the people who work in Kendall. Ms. Rasmussen said that there is a high chance they are using sustainable modes. She noted that the City has data on employee trips, but not residential or retail.

Mr. Hamwey asked Mr. Evans about his comments about transit other than the Red Line. Mr. Evans said that preferred destinations could be places like Inman Square and North Station. Mr. Hamwey asked about bus connections further up the line. Mr. Gascione asked if the extended Green Line or Orange Line, once NorthPoint is built out, will provide more connectivity for Kendall. Mr. Evans asked where connectivity will be measured from. Mr. Gascione said that last mile service is very important.

Mr. Ciborowski asked the Task Force how they would define Kendall Square. He encouraged them to draw what they considered boundaries on maps provided by the project team.

The survey also asked respondents to note locations that they considered to be important for Kendall to connect to. The following locations were noted as important:

- Cambridge
 - Lechmere/NorthPoint
 - MIT

- Alewife/Route 2
- Regional Destinations (Regional travel through local connections)
 - Financial District
 - North Station
 - South Station
 - Somerville (GLX)
 - Seaport
 - Longwood Medical Area (LMA)
 - Allston/Harvard
 - Logan Airport
- Neighborhoods
 - Allston/Brighton
 - Cambridge/Somerville
- Regional Connections
 - N. MA (Lowell)
 - Rt 128
 - Metrowest
- Other – East Cambridge

Mr. C. Barr said that he would put Back Bay and Fenway high on the list. Mr. Ciborowski noted that there are only one or two ways out of Kendall to the south, and the river provides a barrier.

Mr. Hamway said that he considered Back Bay and Copley as important connections.

Mr. Dacey said that he believed Kendall to be more connected to downtown Boston (Financial District) than ever.

Ms. Rasmussen said that the City has data from taxis and Uber for commute trips, but they do not have the data about trips made for other purposes. Mr. Ciborowski also discussed the possibility of “ghost trips”- trips that are not made because they are too difficult.

John Sanzone, Friends of the Grand Junction Path, said it was also important to recognize that some people who come into Kendall can be temporary and looking for reliability for that last mile of service. He said that it is important to consider the human scale experience and what it is like to get around.

Other observations that were noted on the survey included:

- Employee subsidies
 - 80/20 split on Origin/Destination (O/D) trips - 80% should be non-auto
- Progressive local planning as model for region
- Pleased MassDOT is leading effort with broad stakeholder group
- Red Line important – weather issues

Public Comment

Steve Kaiser said that a traffic and transit report showed a wide range of intersections in the traffic impact area. He suggested that the Existing Conditions section of the report is very valuable as a test of computer models and it also looks at scenarios 10 years out.

Mr. Kaiser also said that the report noted that the key issue is bottlenecks, particularly Land Boulevard/O'Brien Highway backing up into Leverett circle. The existing condition bottlenecks could get 20-38% worse in the future. He said the report also says the Red Line is 1/3 empty, which he said shows there are opportunities in modal shift to transit.

Mr. Kaiser said that 45% of Kendall employees arrive by car, and that should be reduced. He said the Volpe plan calls for 1300 parking spaces for 1300 employees.

Conclusion

Mr. Ciborowski said he will confirm the date, time and location for the next Task Force meeting during the week of May 4.