

City of Cambridge Committee on Public Planting

Meeting Minutes – June 11, 2025 - 5:30-7pm

Hybrid Meeting via Zoom & at DPW - 147 Hampshire St.

Attendance (* indicates virtual attendance)

CPP Members: Ahron Lerman*, Cindy Carpenter, Gretchen Friesinger, Maggie Booz*, Robb Johnson, Sandra Fairbank*, Sara Cohen, Sophia Emperador [*Members not in attendance: Angela Zhong, Archana Venkataraman, Chantal Eide, Cynthia Smith, Ray Fahrner, Tracey Orr*]

DPW/City of Cambridge: Abby Bentley, Kevin Beuttell*, David Lefcourt, Andrew Putnam, Rose*, Tenly, Courtney Kirk (CDD)

Guests & members of the public: Eva Tine

Meeting notes submitted by: Sara Cohen

Agenda Items:

- Review Agenda
- Meeting minutes
- Updates from Urban Forest team (Abby & Kristen)
- Design Updates
- CPP Updates
- Current and upcoming events
- Other business & announcements
- Public Comments

1) Review prior meeting minutes

- a. Cindy Carpenter went over the agenda and time allotments for each topic.

2) Review prior meeting minutes

- a. Cindy Carpenter reviewed attendance for last month's meeting; Johnson Robb and Sara Cohen were not in attendance. Review of the May minutes delayed until July; CPP members to send comments on May minutes before the July meeting for inclusion.

3) Update from City Arborists

- a. Summary: Abby Bentley reviewed spring tree planting and forestry updates. Kristen was not in attendance.
- b. DCR reviewed and approved all the locations proposed by the City. 120 trees will be planted on DCR land this season, starting with Alewife Brook Parkway.
- c. 100 trees were planted at Danehy, fulfilling a PB 9 approved proposal.
- d. Lahey is currently planting throughout the City.
- e. Urban Forestry has 2 tree inventory interns, all Cambridge residents and recent college graduates. They are inspecting recently planted trees first and then will move to older trees.

CPP Comments:

- Cindy Carpenter: Why was this planting held up? Abby Bentley: Needed state approval to plant due to methane concerns. Methane had to be monitored throughout planting.
- Gretchen Friesinger: What qualifies as recently planted for trees? Abby Bentley: any trees being watered, which is a tree less than 5 years old.
- Robb Johnson: Are the warranties for all trees planted the same? Abby Bentley: Only trees planted by outside contractors are given a warranty, which is 2-years.
- Gretchen Friesinger: Was there ever any consideration for making a 3-year warranty? David Lefcourt: Yes, but a review of added cost for the extra year made it less desirable. Andrew Putnam: It's a renewed contract with outside contractors, which makes it hard to change.
- Cindy Carpenter: Have we had inventory interns before? David Lefcourt: DPW has had interns for 10+ years; usually 2 per year; This allows for updating information on neighborhoods every 2-3 summers.
- Gretchen Friesinger: These are different from the water by bike brigade? Andrew Putnam: Yes, there are 8-9 interns with a supervisor.
- Cindy Carpenter: How have the City's trees been doing with this rain? Abby Bentley: We haven't completed the full inventory; anecdotal information only on the trees right now, but we will know better with the inventory. David Lefcourt: Rain in the spring means some more leaf disease than normal, but good for the roots.
- Gretchen Friesinger: What are the curled up leaves on the elms? David Lefcourt: most likely Wholly elm aphid; aesthetic than detriment. Pruning it will not make a difference.
- Cindy Carpenter: How is DPW doing on the planting targets? Abby Bentley: We have ordered enough trees to meet our goals, but planting is weather dependent.
- Cindy Carpenter: Is it possible to highlight with signs the City sponsored tree plantings on state land? Abby Bentley: We could add Forest Friends tags, but there is no other signage planned right now. Cindy Carpenter: It would be nice to do more to raise awareness.

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4) Design Updates

- a. Summary: Cortney Kirk gave an update on the Grand Junction Connector Project, which had a kick off meeting on May 21 at Millers River Apartments. This is a CDD and Dept of Transportation collaboration. Cortney Kirk and Charlie Creagh are the main contacts. The City received grant funding from the Mass Gaming Commission to connect Gore Street to the Somerville community path. The connection has shared use and off street stipulations. The project is in the planning phase, with no construction funding allotted at this time. No further community outreach events scheduled. CDD will reach when dates and times are available. CDD will give further updates and development progress as it happens. There are many stakeholders with the goal to connect to the City of Everett. Current discussions revolve around the best route around or through Twin City Plaza to

reach Monsignor O'Brien Highway proposed crossing to reach the community path connection at grade. Right now, the project is trying to grab as much neighborhood information as possible to help determine the best route.

CPP Comments:

- Gretchen Friesinger: Are there new tree opportunities? Cortney Kirk: Yes, the Somerville Community Path Friends underestimated how much the Gold Star Mother's Park is used already. The routes will have to consider the best way to protect existing trees.
- Sara Cohen: Was there a good neighborhood turnout at the first meeting? Cortney Kirk: Decent, 30+ people with a good cross section of residents.

5) CPP Updates

- a. July Meeting
 - i. Date & Time: Wednesday, July 9 from 5:30-7pm.
 - ii. Location: Danehy: Meet at Sherman side - 99 Sherman Street. **NO VIRTUAL OPTION.**
 - iii. Topics: Miyawaki forest, new trees, pollinator plantings.
- b. Gretchen Friesinger: Native Plant Community Gardeners are planting a pollinator planting demonstration garden at Danehy on Sunday June 15. DPW worked with the group to get the site prepped. Kevin Beuttell: DPW helped prep the site, coordinating with DHSP for planting, which had the same methane constraints as the tree plantings. It is near the Miyawaki Forest. The City is funding it with Native Plant Community Gardeners providing labor and some plants. Operations at Danehy has been helping, including water supply and access.
- c. Andrew Putnam: The Urban Forest Master Plan update will kick off in September.
- d. New Members
 - i. David Lefourt: New Member applications are coming in from advertisements at City Hall.
 - ii. Are there any specific questions that CPP would like to be asked during the interviews? Anything more about plants beyond trees? Maggie Booz: Have you chosen based on what plants people like? David Lefourt: No, just tend to be a tree bent on our questions. Robb Johnson: Perhaps just put emphasis on our review/interest is more than just trees during the interviews.
 - iii. David Lefourt: There seem to be applicants from new neighborhoods. Does CPP have a list of neighborhoods represented already? Sophia Emperor: Yes, we can share.

6) Current and Upcoming Events

- a. Fresh Pond Day - CPP will not be represented at this event
- b. Cambridge Arts River Festival - Saturday June 21, 2025 - Pollinator network was looking for a CPP representative. No one volunteered at the meeting.
- c. Goodbye Raymond Park - Saturday June 21, 2025 - Tracy Orr has volunteered to table.

- d. Boston Urban Forest Friends Symposium - Saturday June 21, 2025 - No one volunteered at the meeting.
- e. First fall CPP meeting - September 10, 2025
- f. Danehy Park Family Day - September date TBD - CPP representatives at this event would be great to expand our exposure.

7) Other Business & Announcements

- a. Sandra Fairbank: Ellen Coppinger's plantings and their biodiversity need to be showcased more.
- b. Gretchen Friesinger: Linear Park was on the City Council's agenda for June 9, 2025 to add another entrance from Wesley Ave. There will be tree impacts with this connection. Cortney Kirk: It is too soon to know how this will impact the plans as the project is currently out to bid.
- c. Gretchen Friesinger: How can we make CPP more effective in advocating for issues important to the Committee? Could we form a subcommittee to research our charter and potential changes?
 - i. Robb Johnson: For the charter reform, are you referring to our exposure/outreach or importance in affecting changes in project reviews? Gretchen Friesinger: Not fully sure which is why it would be nice to have a subcommittee.
 - ii. Sara Cohen: What are the logistics of a subcommittee meeting? DPW/CDD: Prepare an agenda, 48-hour posting, meeting has to be public, minutes have to be prepared if requested. It is not easy and requires a fair amount of administrative work on the City's behalf.
 - iii. Sara Cohen: We can individually do research and return to the committee to present our findings, correct? DPW/CDD: Correct.
 - iv. Sara Cohen will research other committee charters and present at the July meeting.
 - v. Gretchen Friesinger: will review CPP priorities and present at the July Meeting.

8) Public comments

- a. No public comments made.

Cindy Carpenter motioned to end the meeting, Sara Cohen seconded. Meeting adjourned.

Next meeting: Our next Zoom meeting will be held on September 10, 2025 at 5:30pm and will be advertised to the public in advance.

NOTE: The foregoing represents our understanding of the discussions and decisions made during this meeting. The CPP requests permission to quote or reference these notes.

Attachments: CDD Presentation on Grand Junction Connector

City of Cambridge

Community Development Department &
Department of Transportation

Grand Junction Connector to the Community Path

Community Meeting

May 21, 2025



**CITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Department of
Transportation





Introductions

City of Cambridge

Community Development Department

Cortney Kirk, RLA, ASLA

Drew Kane, AICP

Lev McCarthy

Department of Transportation

Charlie Creagh, AICP

Bill Deignan

Department of Public Works

Cambridge Arts

Design Team

VHB

Rob Cahoon, PE

Welcome

Purpose & Objective

Meeting attendees will:

- Learn the background of the project.
- Understand the elements that are beyond the control of this project yet are essential to make the full connection.
- Take a walk with City staff to think about connection ideas.

Process

Digital slide deck presentation with time for Q&A and general discussion. Then a group site walk from Millers River towards Rufo Road.

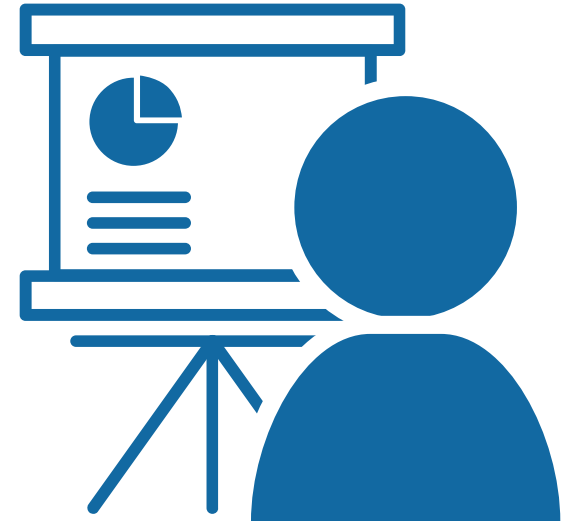


East Cambridge, Twin Cities Plaza, and Gold Star Mothers Park.



Meeting Agenda

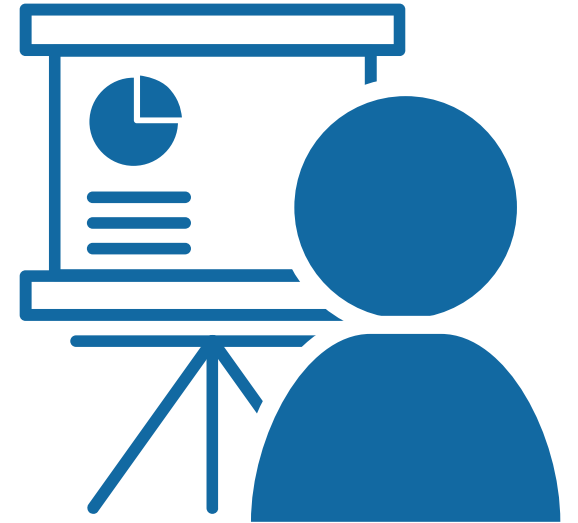
1. Project Area & Stakeholder Plans
2. Other Projects
3. Opportunities & Challenges
4. Outreach & Engagement Schedule
5. Q&A
6. Site Walk





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Project Area



2020 Community Path Extension (CPX) Feasibility Study



Friends of the
**Mystic to
Charles**



TWO FEASIBILITY STUDIES OF REGIONAL TRAIL LINKAGE TO THE COMMUNITY PATH EXTENSION (CPX)

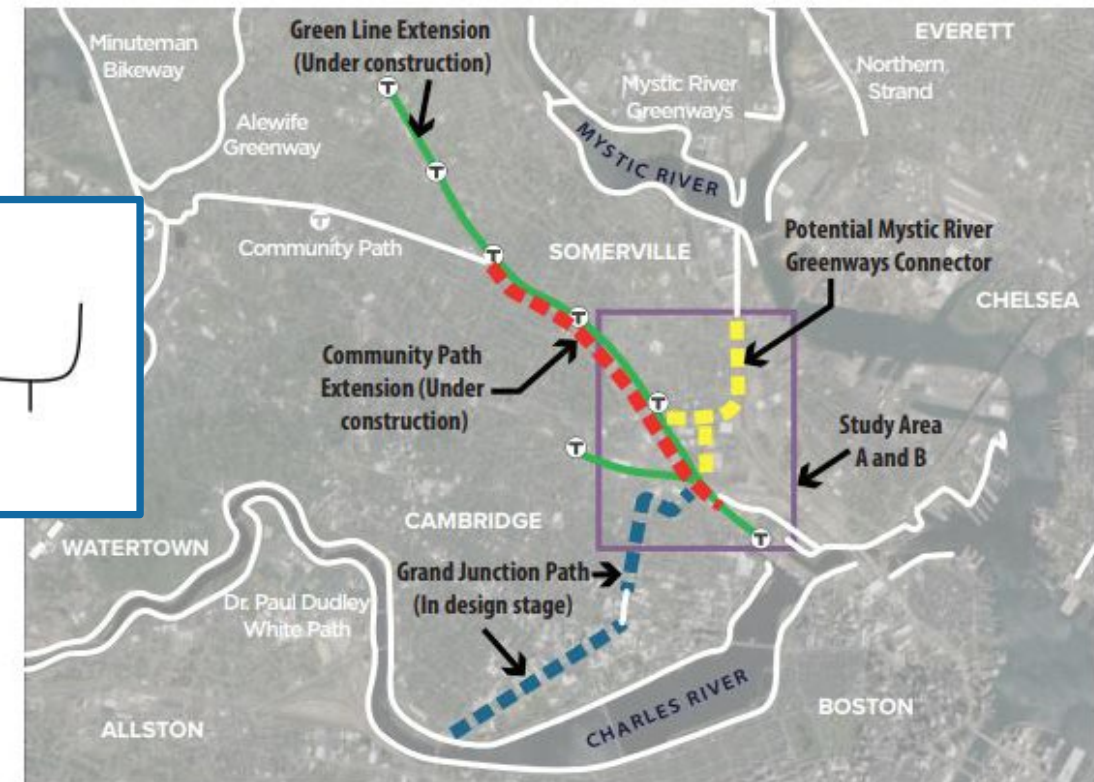
FEASIBILITY STUDY A:

COMMUNITY PATH EXTENSION: CONNECTION TO THE GRAND JUNCTION PATH

FEASIBILITY STUDY B:

COMMUNITY PATH EXTENSION: CONNECTION TO THE MYSTIC RIVER GREENWAYS AT ASSEMBLY SQUARE

JUNE 1, 2020

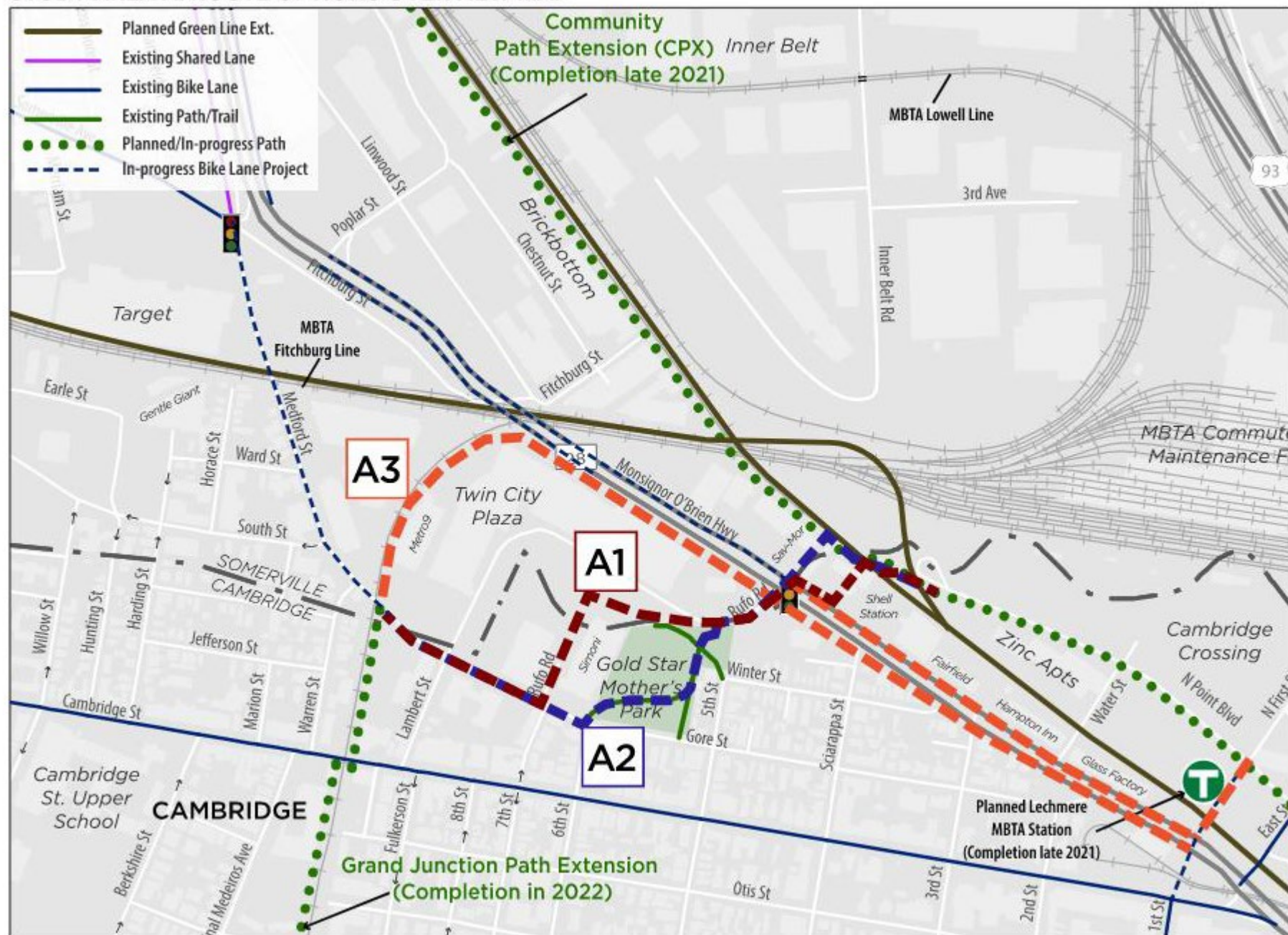


[Please use this link to see the feasibility study titled “Community Path Extension: Connection to the Grand Junction Path”](#)

The 2020 Feasibility Study
Reviewed 3 route options.

Image taken from
2020 Feasibility Plan

STUDY AREA A: ROUTE OPTIONS OVERVIEW MAP

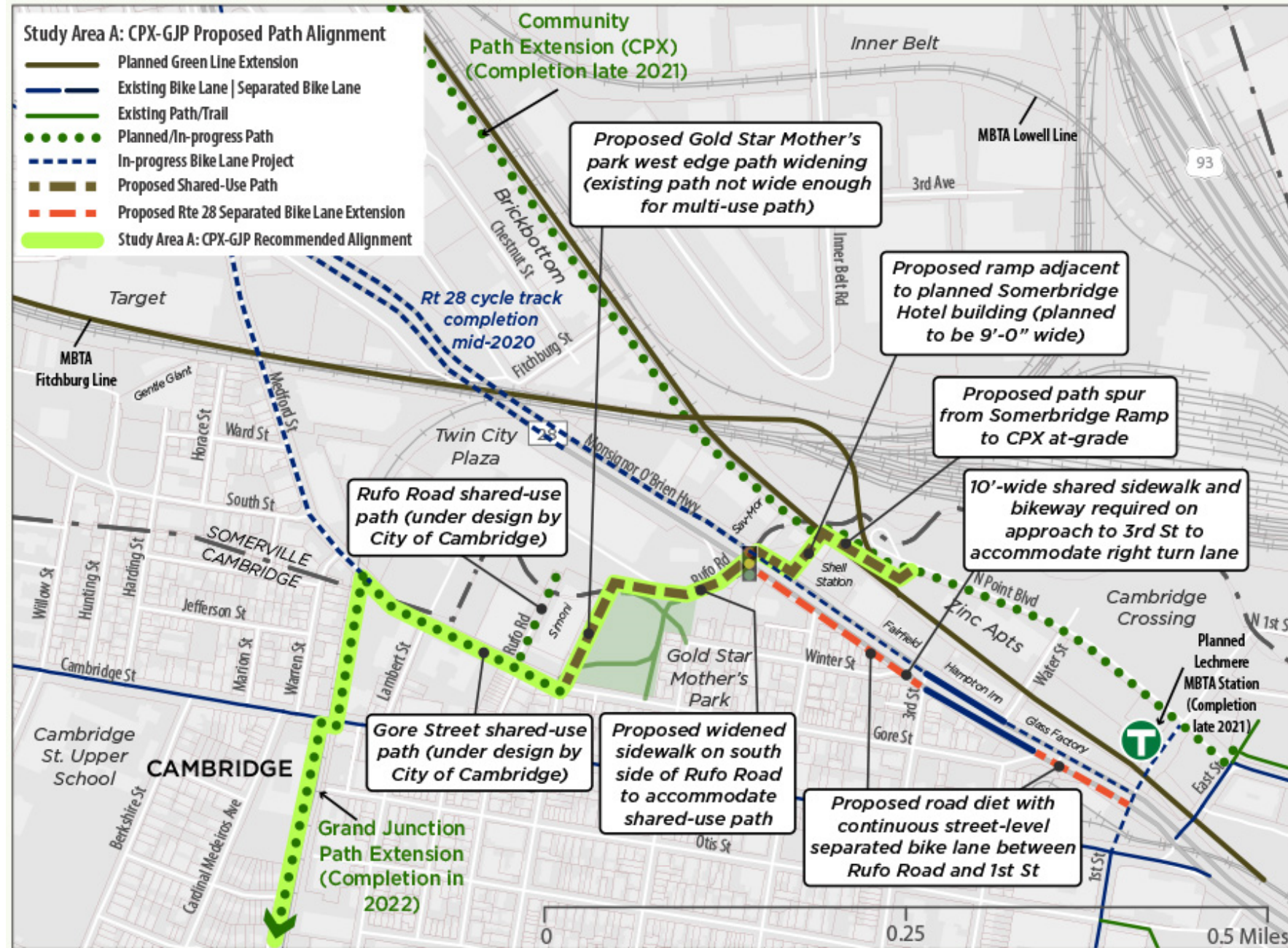


Friends Groups Recommended Route through Park

- Widening the path adjacent to Simoni Rink and going behind the baseball backstop towards Rufo Road.

Image taken from 2020 Feasibility Plan

STUDY AREA A: FINAL RECOMMENDED ROUTE MAP



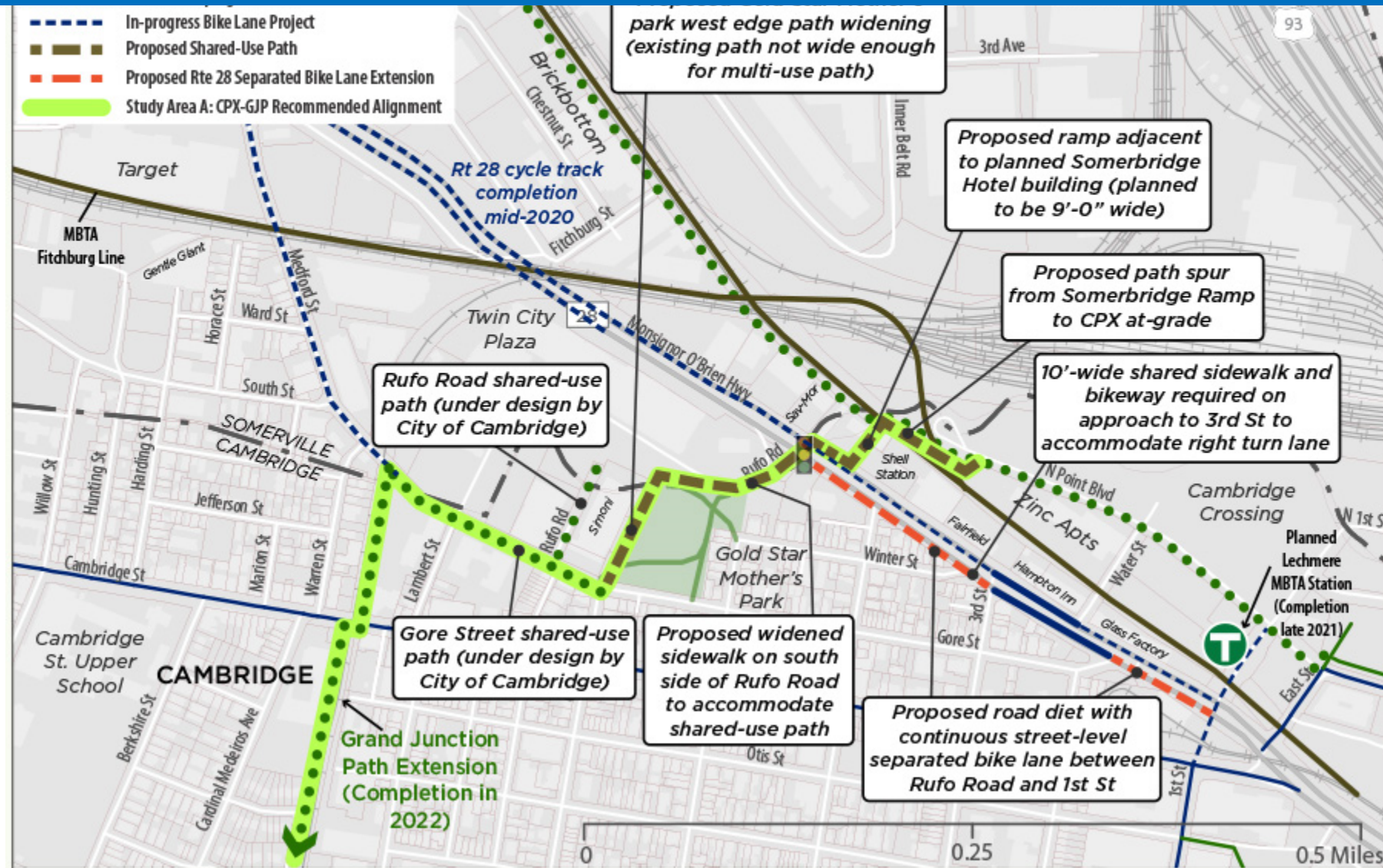
Let us know your input on the 2020 Friends Groups study?

Do you agree with their recommendation?

Do you prefer a different route?

Tell us your input.

*Image taken from
2020 Feasibility Plan*

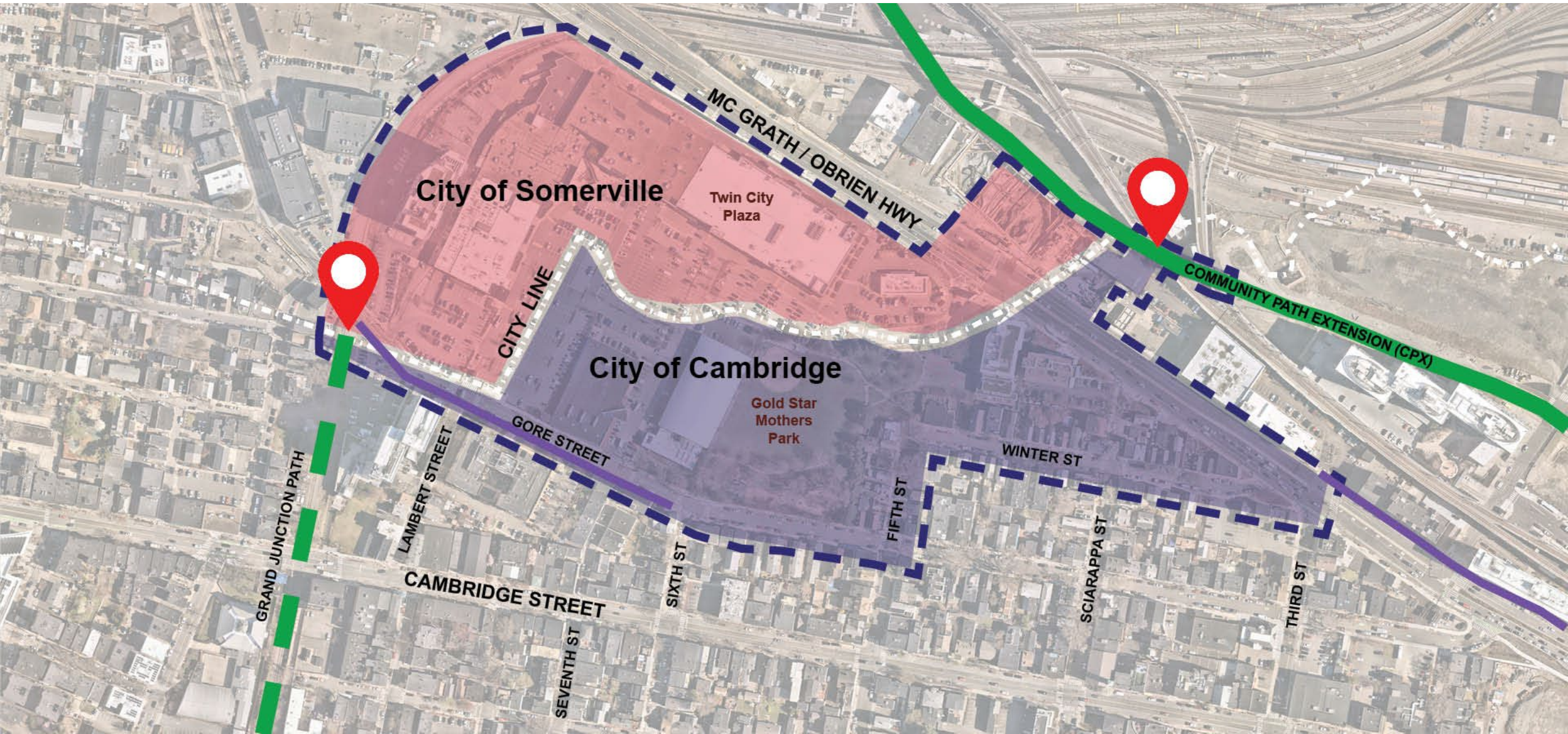




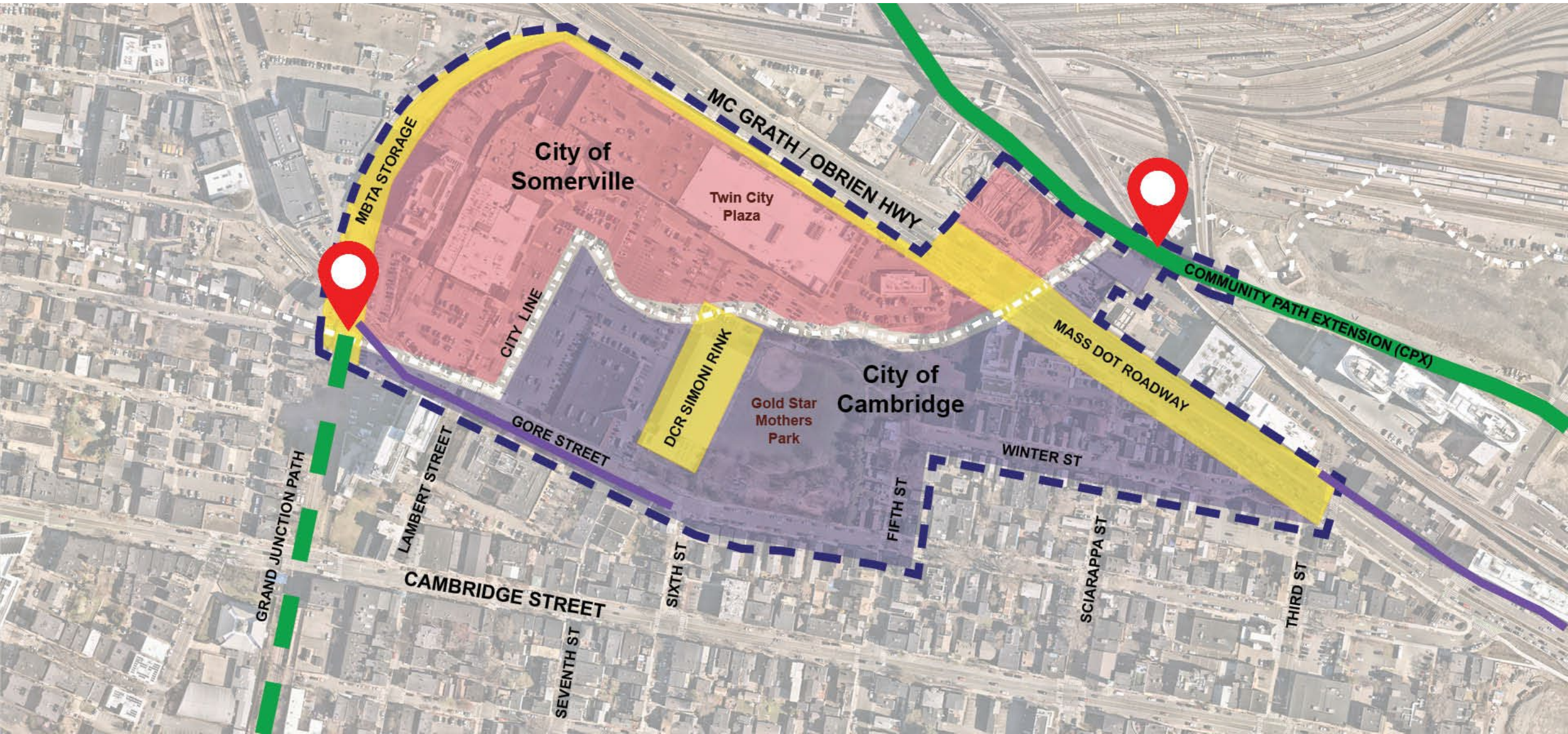
Project Area Control



Project Area Control – Cambridge & Somerville



Project Area Control – MBTA & MassDOT



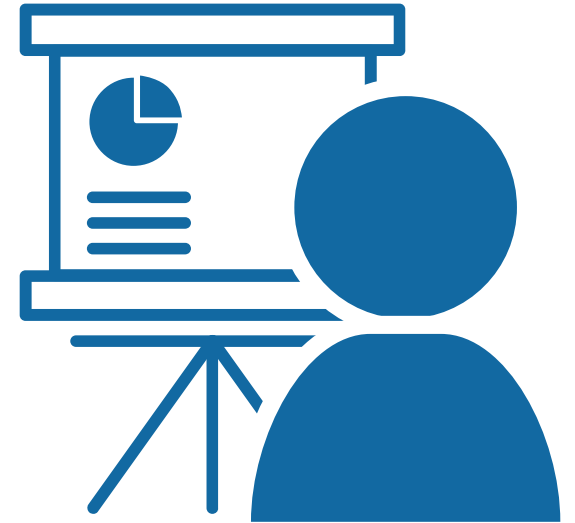
Your feedback matters to develop the best route for the neighborhood





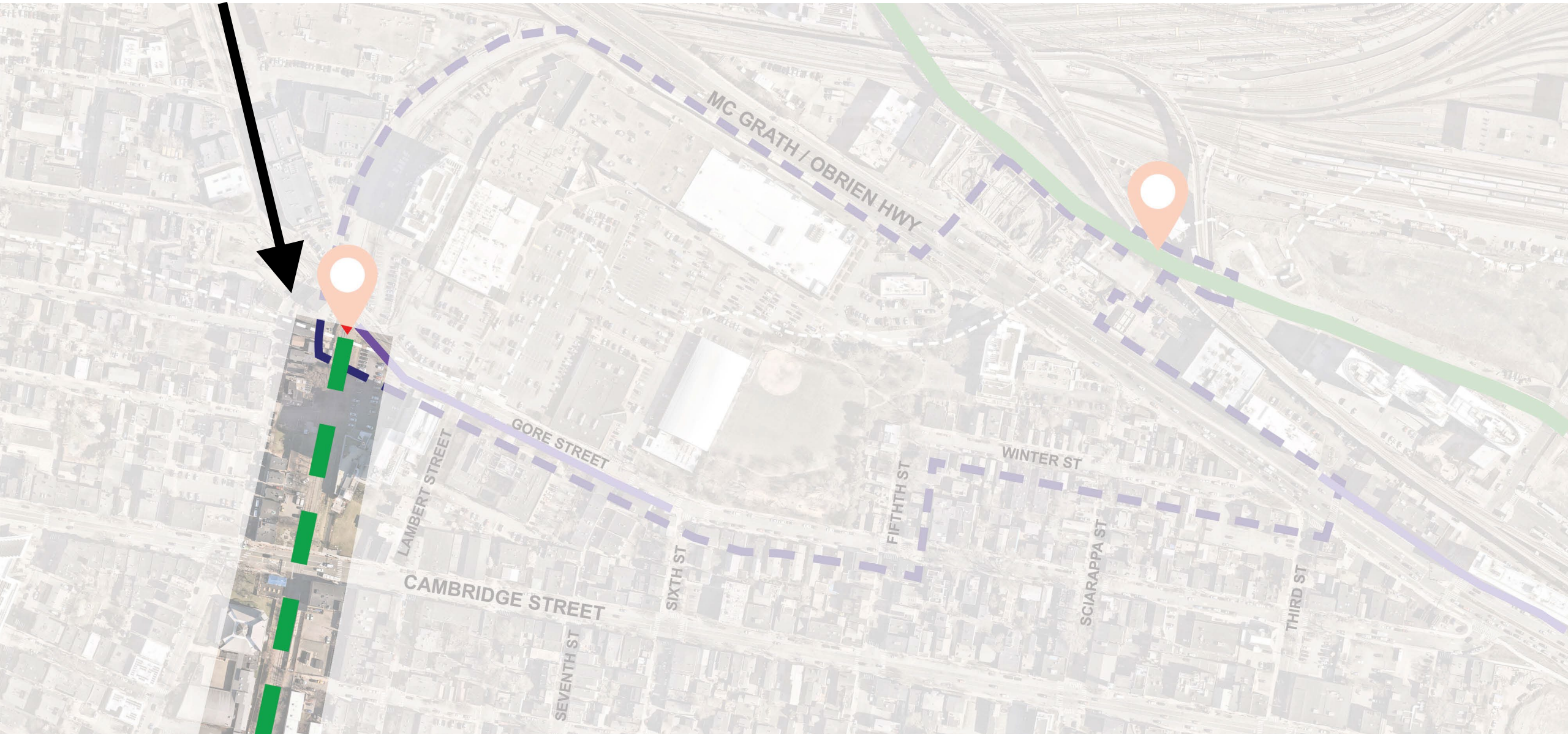
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Grand Junction Path



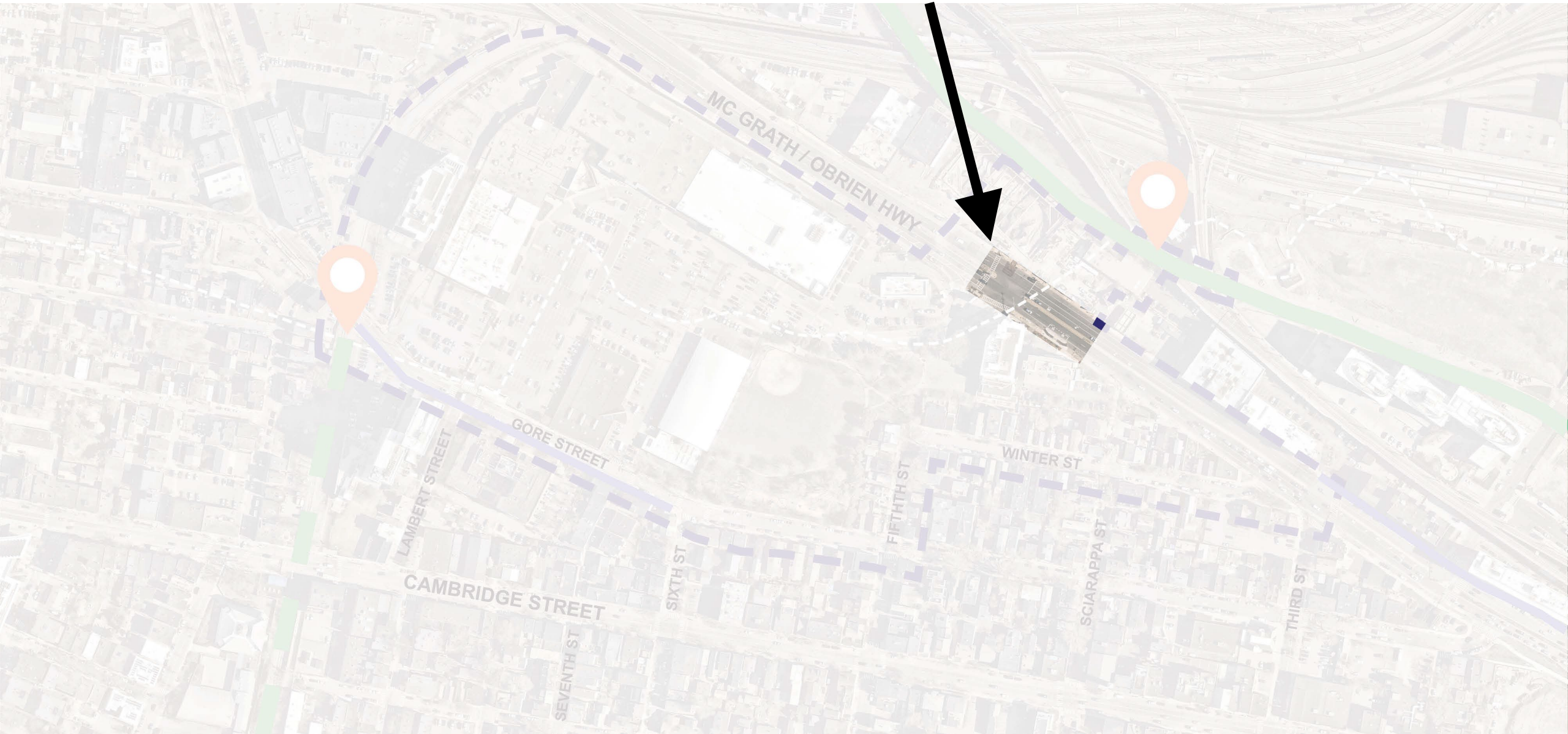
Grand Junction Path

- Working through some design issues with MBTA and MassDOT.
- Area beneath the path surface will have a high voltage electrical line.
- We will begin path construction after the electric line work is complete.



Map of the Grand Junction path area in Cambridge.

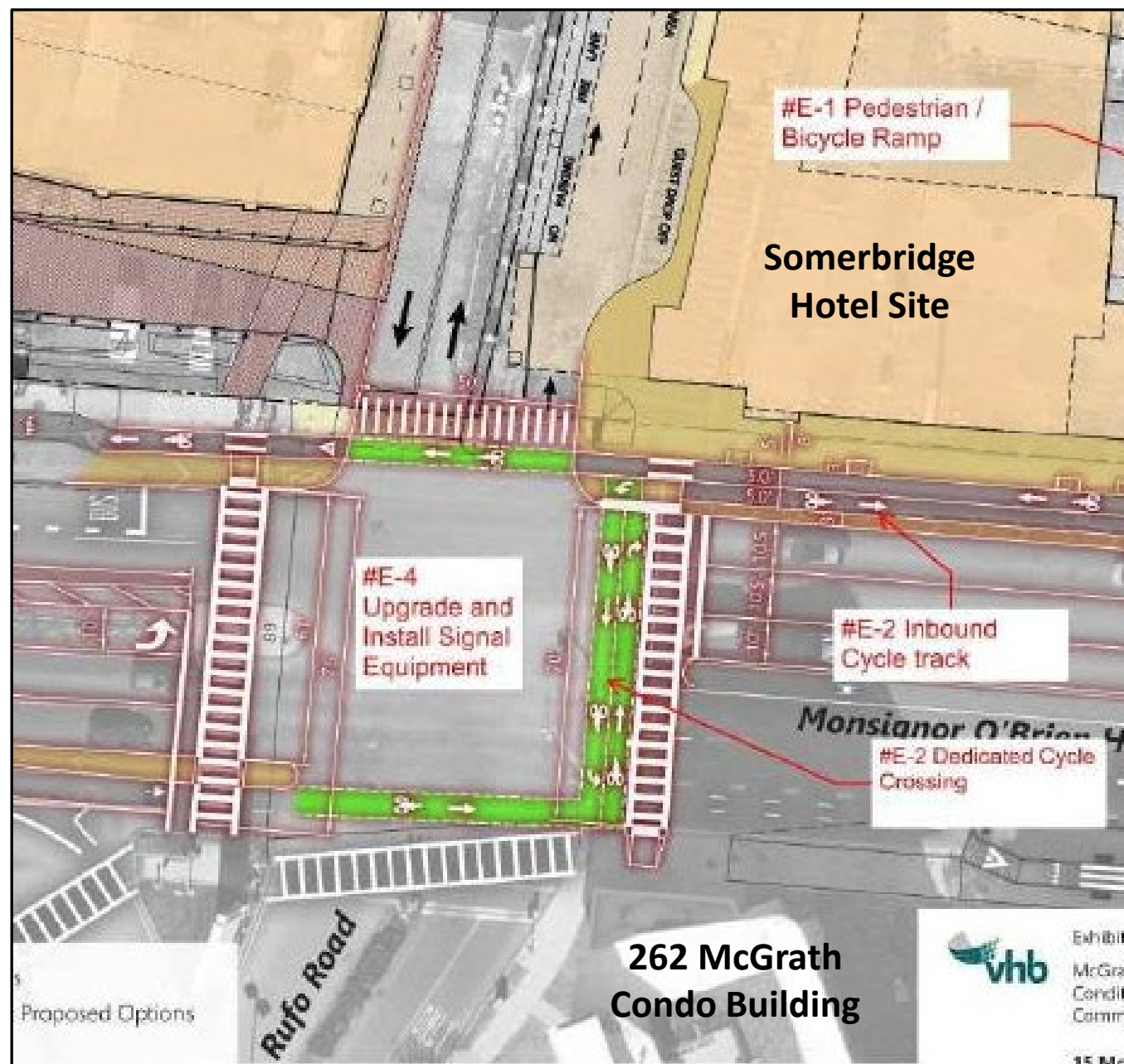
MassDOT Route 28 Repaving + Developer Work



Route 28 Repaving + Developer Work

- Coordinating new shared driveway at Rufo Road signal.
- New crosswalks & Bicycle crossing to connect across Route 28 to Rufo Road.
- Two-way bicycle facility on north side of Route 28 to connect to hotel ramp.

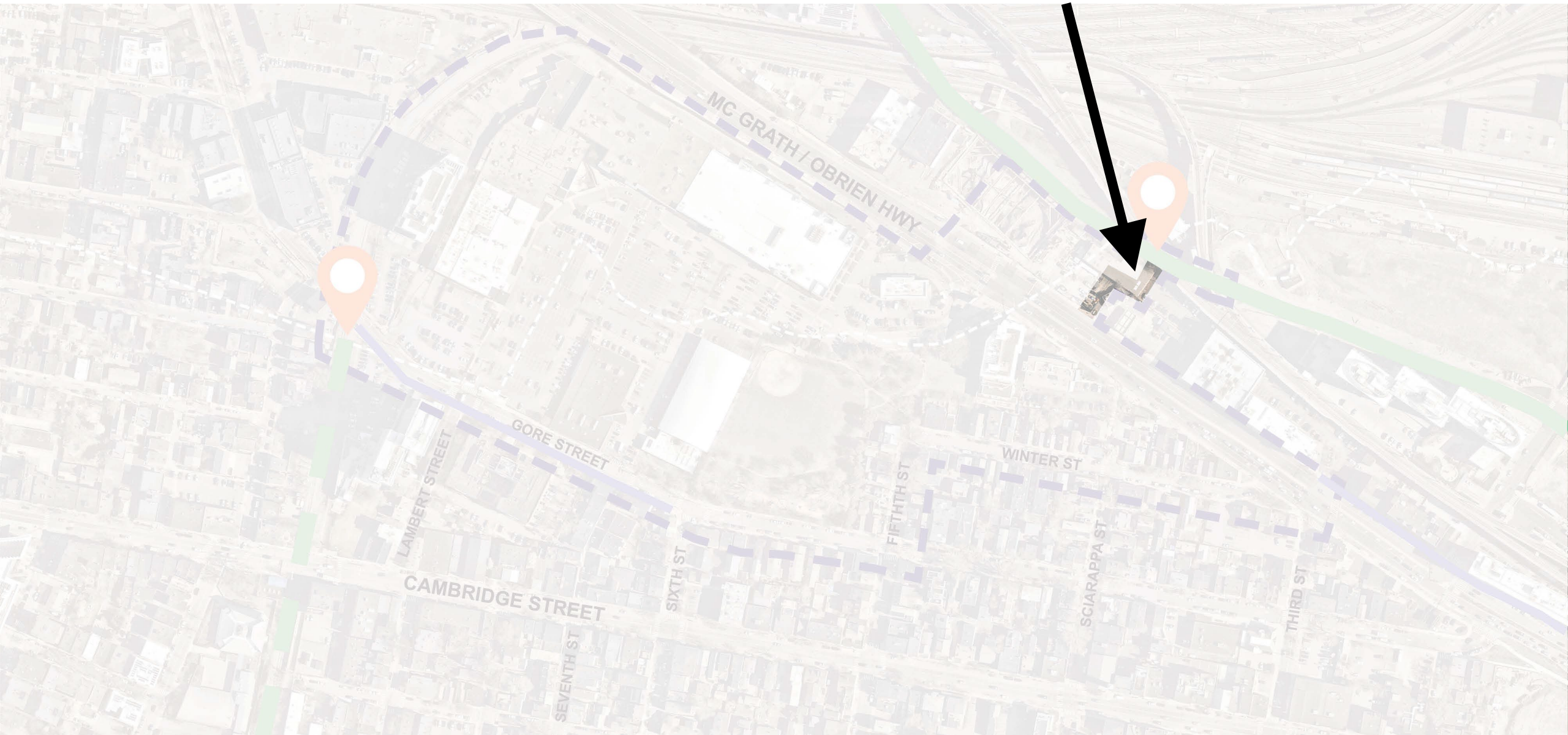
[Please use this link to visit the Grounding McGrath project webpage.](#)



Concept design showing conditions after the construction of the private properties.



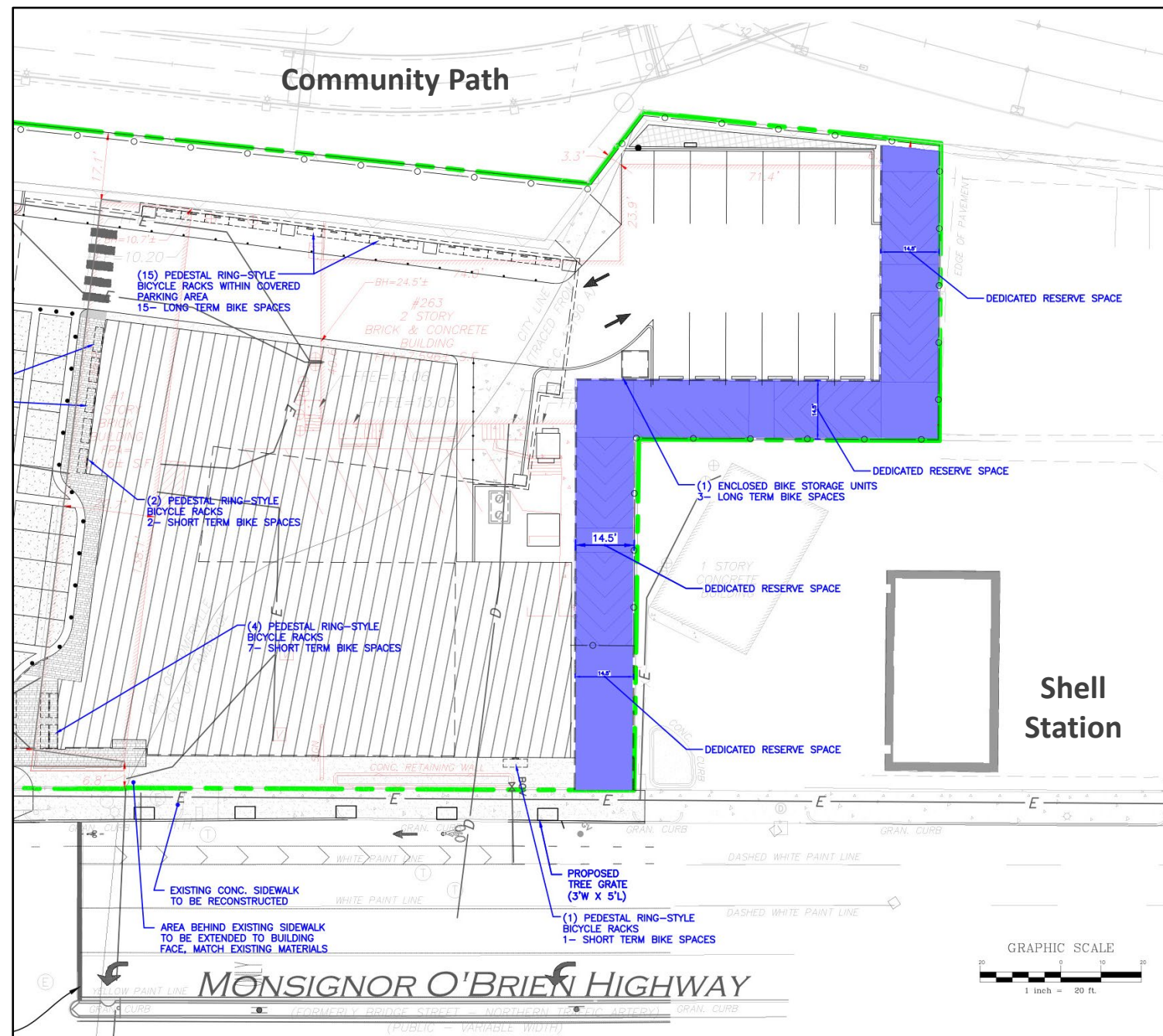
Somerbridge Hotel Ramp



Somerbridge Hotel Ramp

- Permitted hotel planned to include a bicycle and pedestrian ramp between the hotel property and the Shell station.
- Rises the grade difference from Route 28 to the area underneath the Green Line and Community Path Extension.

[Please use this link to visit the Planning Board documents for this hotel project in Somerville and Cambridge.](#)

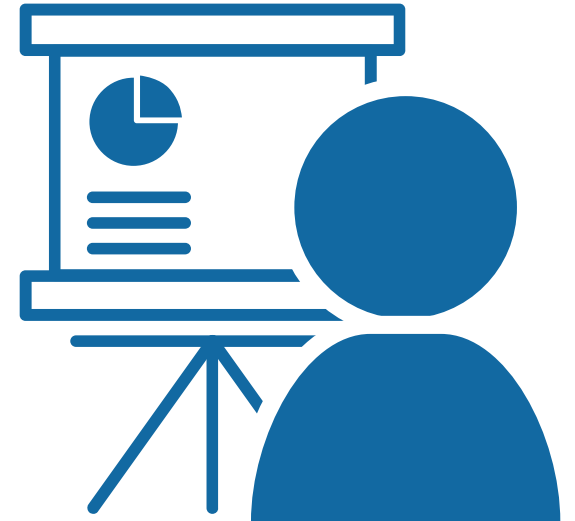


The future Somerbridge Hotel pedestrian-bicycle ramp shown in blue.



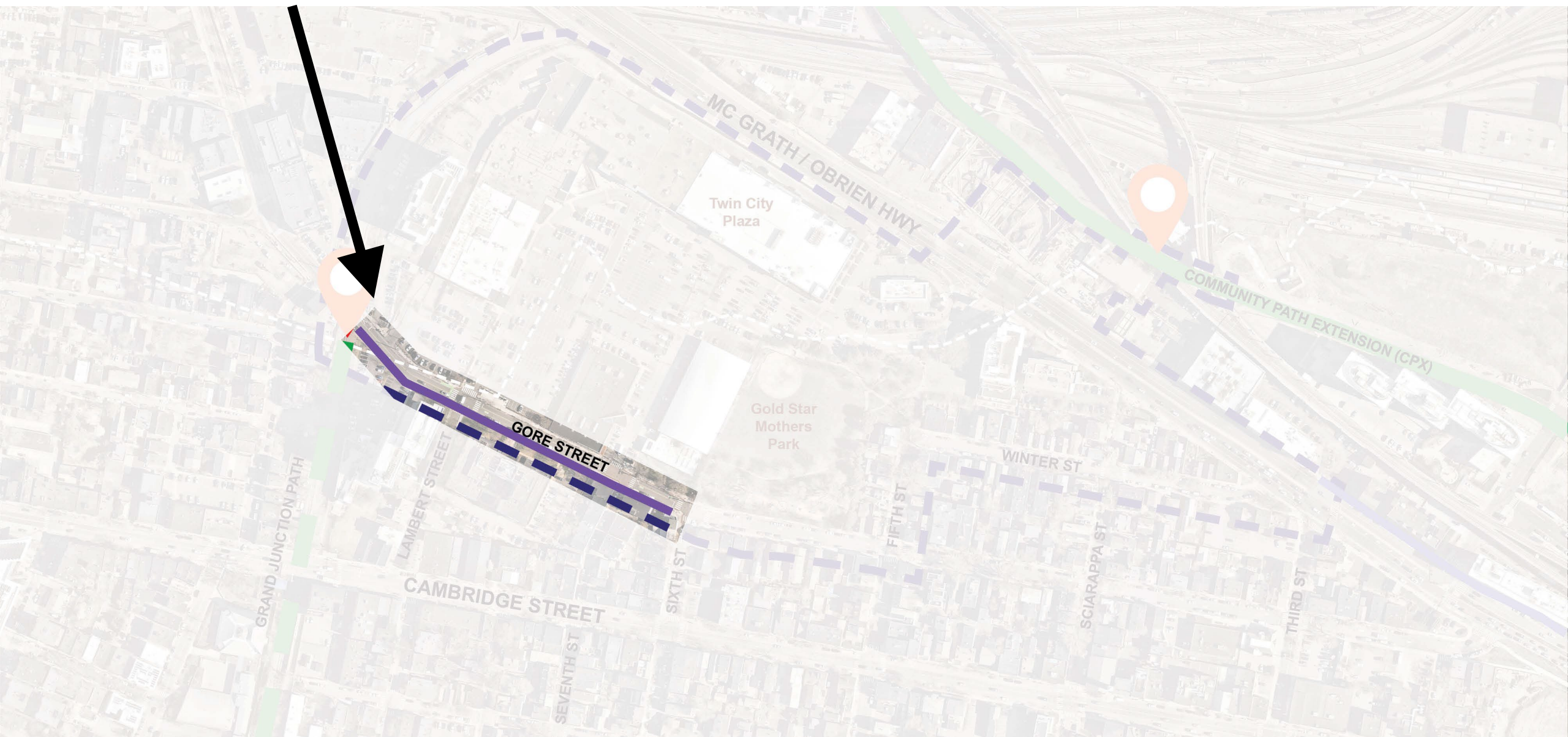
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Gore Street Path



Gore Street Path

- From end of Grand Junction path, the Gore Street two-way multi-use path continues along the south side of Gore Street from Warren Street to Sixth Street.
- Path users cross Gore Street at the signal at Sixth Street towards Gold Star Mothers Park.

Photo facing east



Side path along Gore Street will enable Grand Junction Path users to reach the path extension.



Gold Star Mothers Park



Gold Star Mothers Park

- **Oasis in East Cambridge-** This is an active, well-loved park and green space in a dense neighborhood.
- **Established Tree Canopy** - There are many large trees with established roots. Various route ideas may have more or less impact on trees.
- **Balance perspectives-** Critical to ensure that path users know this is not a quick, unimpeded through route.

Photo facing north



Existing pedestrian path through Gold Star Mothers Park.

Gold Star Mothers Park

- The basketball court area is currently under reconstruction and includes a new court, shaded seating areas, and new landscaping.

Existing Conditions

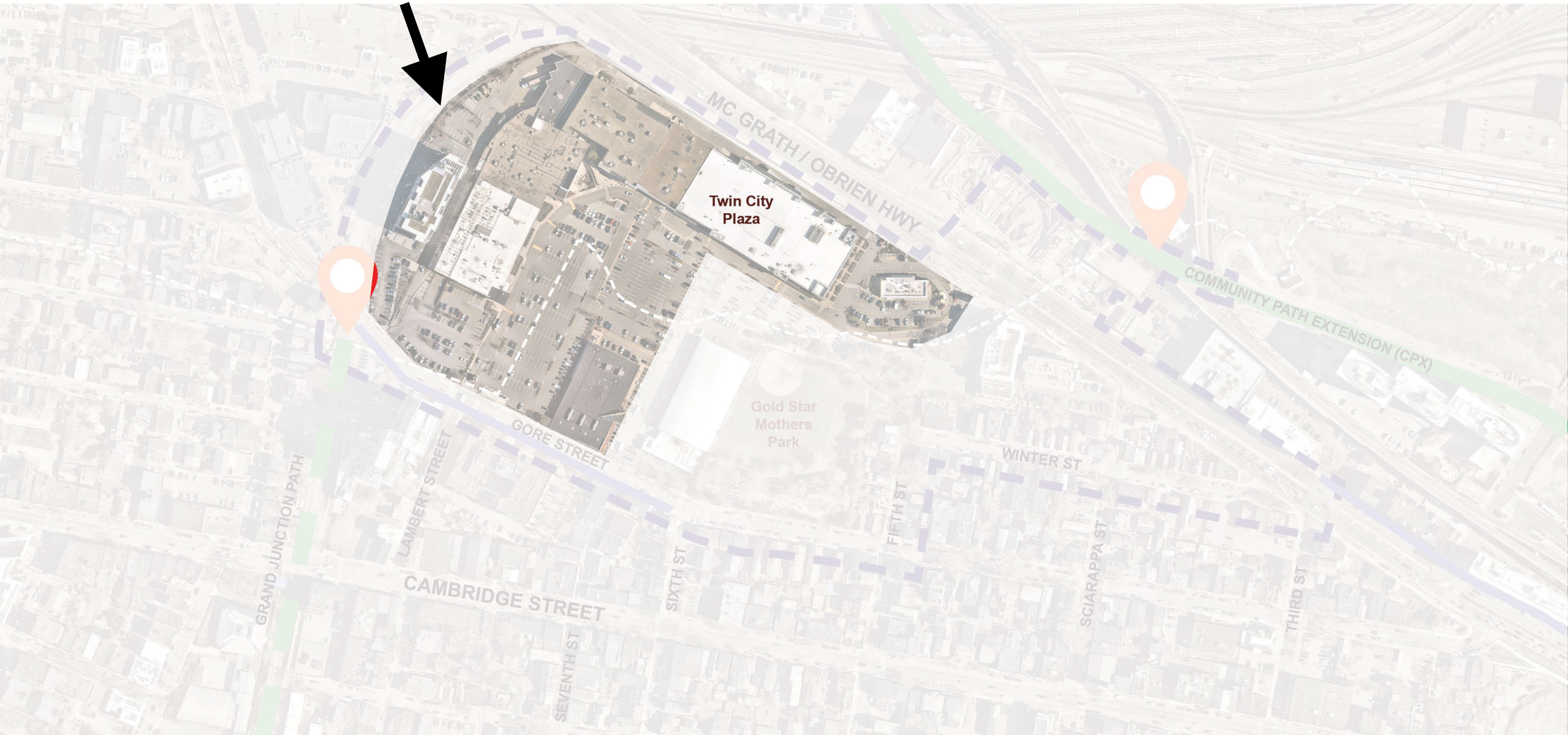


Gold Star Mothers Park – Basketball Court Renovation Project





Twin City Plaza



Twin City Plaza

- Private property.
- Look at possibilities to route the pathway through the edge of the parking area.

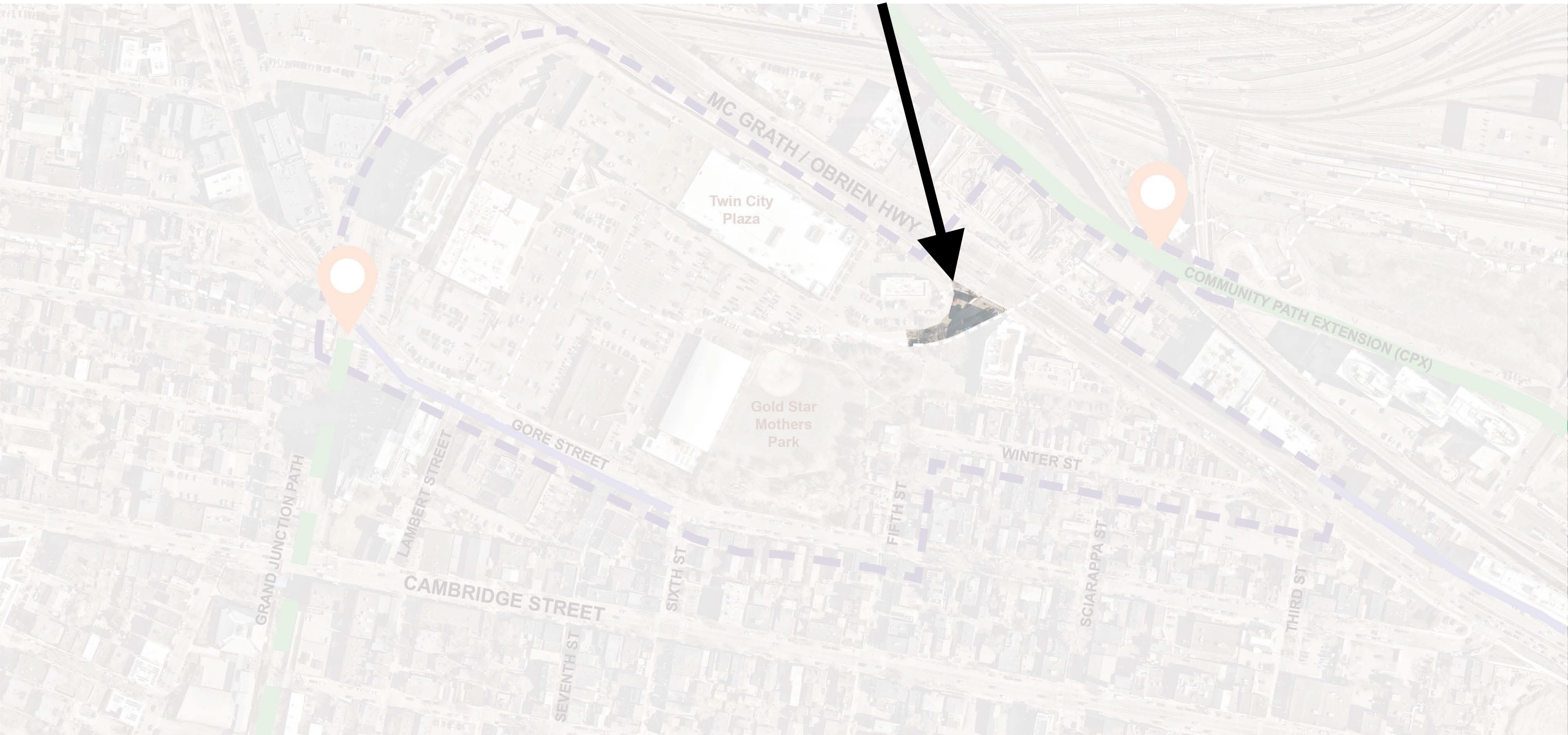
Photo facing west



Twin City Plaza parking with evergreen trees separating parking from the park.



Rufo Road



Rufo Road

- Eastern parts of Rufo Road and some sidewalk are private property.
- Review widening of sidewalk leading up to MA-28 for a grade separated multi-use path.
- Review possibilities of taking roadway space for widening in selected areas if needed.

Photo facing east

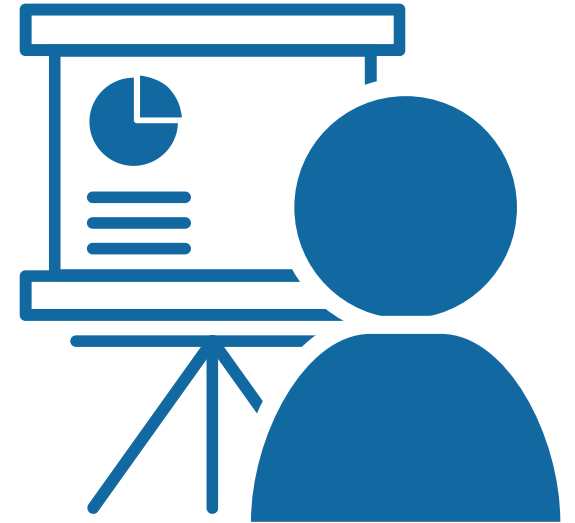


Rufo Road, with Twin City Plaza in the background. A portion of the existing sidewalk shown may be on private property.



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Outreach & Engagement Schedule

Project Phases

Phase 1
Spring + Summer 2025

- ✓ *Kick-off the project and community engagement.*
- ✓ *Share information, explore routes through the neighborhood, voice feedback.*

Phase 2
Fall 2025

- ✓ *Establish neighborhood goals.*
- ✓ *Evaluate design alternatives.*
- ✓ *Discuss feedback.*
- ✓ *Build consensus on an ideal path or paths.*

Phase 3
Winter 2026

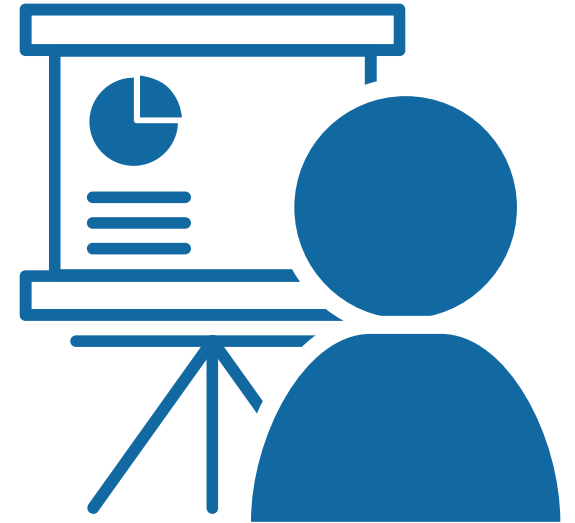
- ✓ *Confirm the ideal path or paths.*
- ✓ *Establish funding sources for future construction.*



Each phase will include at least one community meeting in addition to other engagement opportunities.

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Q&A

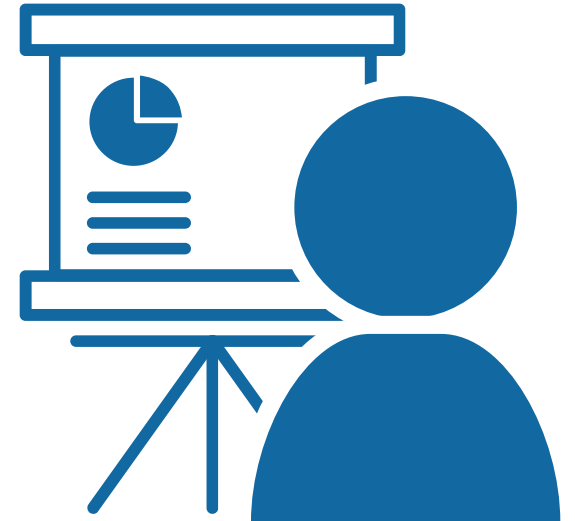
- What ideas do you have for routing a walking and bicycling path?
- What things would you like more information on at the next meeting?



East Cambridge, Twin Cities Plaza, and Gold Star Mothers Park.

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Site Walk Map





Contact Info

City Staff

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Ckirk@cambridgema.gov

Charlie Creagh, AICP
Ccreagh@cambridgema.gov

Webpage

Camb.ma/grandjunctionconnector

Newsletter

Visit the webpage using the URL above or scan the QR code with your smartphone to sign up for the e-newsletter.



**CITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Department of
Transportation



Thank You