



## WORKING GROUP MEETING #7

Tuesday, November 9, 2021

5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Zoom Virtual Meeting

### Attendees

Working Group Members Present	City Staff	Public
Robert Ricchi	Bill Deignan, CDD	Ron Hoffman
Kathryn Brown	Andrew Reker, CDD	Michael Bellomo
Miguel Perez-Luna	Jerry Friedman, DPW	Amelia Sorensen
Jason Alves	Charlie Creagh, CDD	Kevin Moses
Bill McAvinney	Drew Kane, CDD	Paul Morgan
Nicolas Dard	Lillian Hsu, CAC	Laura Cohen
Christopher Cassa		Lino Becerra
Amy Flax		Robin Elices
Caroline Lowenthal		Edward Lau
Rebecca Bowie		Karl Alexander
Michelle Lower	<b>Consultants</b>	Debby Sommer
Jose Luis Rojas	Brian Montejunas, Kleinfelder	Jessica Polka
	Kaki Martin, KMDG	Devin Mackoff
<b>Working Group Members Absent</b>	Michelle Danila, Toole Design	Chris Devers
Ambar Johnson	Kate Ackerson, Kleinfelder	Christos Maravelias
Dalila Salcedo	Brendan Linard, McMahon	Joseph Higgins
Diana Prideaux-Brune		Kaleb Abebe
Florence Toussaint		George Schneeloch
Joseph Aiello		Jon Alvarez
Kathryn Brown		Tom Kowalski
Katrina Sousa		Robbie Lewis
Nicolas Dard		Christian Cole
Sarabrent McCoy		Jim Gray
Tom Evans		Jason Stockmann
		Lynn Weissman
		Mike Gerhardt
		Nicole Bernabei
		Luis Mejias
		Viola Augustin
		Matt Fulton
		Rachel Burckardt

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		Devin Chausse
		Phil Kriger
		Kritsen Solberg
		P. Michael
		S. Lee
		B. Kimmerman

**Key:**

**CDD = Community Development Department**

**TP&T = Traffic Parking & Transportation**

**DPW = Public Works**

**CAC = Cambridge Arts Commission**

The following is a meeting summary of the Working Group Meeting #7 for the City of Cambridge's Grand Junction Multi-Use Path and Conceptual Transit Design Project. For more information see <https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/Projects/Transportation/GrandJunctionPathway>

**Introductions and Welcome**

The meeting was initiated by Andy Reker, Transit Planner, City of Cambridge, who opened by reviewing the virtual platform, the purpose of the meeting, and the ground rules of the meeting. The ground rules described were that Working Group members would be given an opportunity to ask questions and comment throughout the presentation, while members of the public were asked to submit questions in writing or wait until the public comment period at the end of the meeting, if time allowed. Bill Deignan, Transportation Program Manager, City of Cambridge, then introduced city staff and consultant design team members, before reviewing the agenda for the meeting.

**Project Updates**

Bill continued by discussing the project schedule. He reviewed the most recent public and working group meetings. He noted that later in the winter there could potentially be another public meeting, with perhaps another working group meeting being scheduled before then. He also noted that the construction start time of 2022 is highly contingent on the state and their involvement in the project. The City is actively working with MassDOT on the design and various licensing issues, as well as with MIT, as the path is on their property at certain points.

**Eversource**

Bill then introduced Jerry Friedman to discuss the impacts to the project from potential work by Eversource. Jerry shared excerpts from public presentations made recently by Eversource, which is studying interconnections for power lines between area substations. Eversource is working to come up

with a universe of routes, including two alternate routes for each connection they need to make. Jerry described these potential routes. For the most relevant connection to the project area – between the Union Square area to the Kendall Square area, one route runs on city streets, while another uses the Grand Junction corridor. The City has recommended the latter, as it would avoid major intersections, and the utilities could be co-located under the path. The City is working with Eversource on the timing of these projects, and Eversource is currently toward the beginning of a lengthy permitting process, which would take them until between 2024 and 2028 for construction.

### **Connectivity – Fort Washington Park**

Bill then introduced Kaki Martin to discuss the Fort Washington Park Connection. Kaki discussed the existing conditions of the park, including the surrounding streets. Both Talbot and Reardon Streets dead-end into the path. There is also a crossing of the tracks between the streets, which is well used. The sidewalks differ in materials on the streets surrounding the park.

Of note is Anglim Street, which is a public right-of-way currently used by DPW as storage. This street presents an opportunity to improve connectivity to the path. The proposed condition, as described by Kaki, makes use of Anglim Street. In the proposed condition, the existing crossing of the tracks remains, and path entrances are made at the ends of Talbot and Anglim/Reardon Streets. This would also include gateway and signage markings, adjustments to the planting strategy on the outsides of the park (not altering the park itself). The brick pathway already present on certain sidewalks would wrap the entire perimeter of the park.

Bill mentioned that the park is part of a historic district, and any plans would need to go to the historic district for review. Kaki noted that they have worked with Charlie Sullivan to help coordinate on this front.

Kaki then introduced Michelle Danila to review the intersection of Anglim, Erie, Waverly and Albany, which may be looked at as part of the project. Michelle described the current intersection, including the current Waverly path, which could be oriented to connect to the Grand Junction path. Michelle then introduced the proposed configuration, which creates a T-style intersection and removes the channelized right turn. They are also proposing to raise the intersection and create an all-way stop, which would help traffic calming. The configuration also includes the potential of adding a crossing of Erie Street at the end of the Waverly Path, which would connect to a large BlueBikes Station.

Bill noted that the sidewalk would be expanded and landscaping would be added. Bill then asked for questions from the Working Group.

- Bill McAvinney asked for clarification that there would be no signalization. It was confirmed that the proposed intersection would be a three-way stop, although Bill D. discussed that it is not set in stone. Bill M. said he believed that it would be dangerous if any approach to the intersection did not have a stop control.

Bill D. mentioned that the intersection evaluation is an add-on to the project overall and that once there is a firmer grasp of the budget, the City would need to look into additional funding, phasing, and whether these improvements would need to be part of a different contract.

- Chris Cassa commented that he thinks the three-way stop is a good idea.
- Rebecca Bowie mentioned that the last time the use of Anglim Street was discussed, it was thought that it might not work because of potential MIT development in the area. Bill said that since it is city property, it would not necessarily be difficult. He clarified that MIT has discussed in the past that its land might be easier to develop if there was a land swap and the path took a different direction, but in recent discussions, MIT has indicated that there are no plans soon to do any development there.
- Jose Luis Rojas asked whether there could be a pedestrian on-demand button to cross at the intersection. Bill said that was not part of the current plan, as there is full stop control, but it could be looked into.

### **Connectivity – Linden Park Neighborhood**

Bill then proceeded to discuss the Linden Park neighborhood design considerations, reviewing the current challenges in accessing the path without a connection through the Linden Park neighborhood. Bill mentioned that the Linden Park Neighborhood Association expressed concern with the two access points that were planned, asking them to reduce it to one, and investigate other connections. The connection suggested on Alexandria Real Estate (ARE) property was deemed not physically possible, and the connection from the St. Anthony Church's property was not recommended either, as the Church was not interested due to large landscaping and circulation changes that would need to be made. Because of this, the connections in Linden Park were the only ones on the table. Bill said they would be discussing the pros and cons of one versus two entry points.

Bill briefly reviewed the pros and cons and then passed off to Kaki Martin, who discussed the existing conditions at the potential access sites, some designs that had been proposed, and what additional changes might be made in the area.

Each of the potential designs for the access points would involve removal of a portion of fence, augmentation of plantings, and the introduction of a metal, wood or granite pier, which would mark the entrance and serve as wayfinding. Additional plantings would be made strategically along with the connector to improve the planted edge.

Bill then took some questions from Working Group members.

- Amy Flax said that the idea of one entrance is a disappointment for some, but that more entrances to a path can create additional problems. One entrance might be more congested but with less friction. Amy liked the planting strategy.

- Michelle Lower mentioned that with the tall fence remaining and the trees, the cross-section is somewhat tight, so the City should look into the safety of bikes entering with pedestrians crossing as well, as the sight lines are limited.
- Rob Ricchi stated that he thinks the project should pursue the two entrances. It is a dense urban area and it will make the path more useful for bicyclists, pedestrians, etc.
- Chris Cassa asked whether a crossing of the train tracks could be studied, and whether one of these concepts would be better for such a crossing. Chris also supports two entrances. He said there are currently holes in the fence and evidence indicating that these crossings would be used.
- Jason Alves also asked whether a crossing was evaluated here, and echoed Chris's question of whether such a crossing should be Cornelius Way or at Michael Way. He noted that Michael Way connects to Hardwick Street, which connects to Donnelly Field, which would create a stronger connection between open spaces. He said it could be an opportunity to move kids between parks and schools without leaving neighborhood streets.

Bill D. noted that the state is very resistant to at-grade crossings and that the Linden Park Neighborhood favors Cornelius Street.

- Caroline Lowenthal noted that she is also in favor of two entries and a crossing.
- Bill McAvinney wanted to echo that he thinks two entries are preferable.

Bill D. said that they will take all these comments into account for final design.

### **Path & Delivery Coordination**

Bill moved onto the next slides, which touched on a section of the path between Mass. Ave. and Pacific Street, an area used heavily by MIT for deliveries, with whom they have been working lately on this issue.

Michelle expanded on this subject, describing the average use of the area for deliveries, which mostly happen on weekdays. Vehicles range from forklifts to tanker trucks.

Michelle mentioned that the project team reviewed other similar locations and how they have managed needs like this. She noted that priorities and rights of way would need to be clearly defined.

Michelle noted that the most constrained space in the area exists at the rear of the nuclear reactor, where there is a barrier that is located there as dictated by federal law. They are in discussions with MIT to see how they could address this constraint. Michelle also said that these conversations are just

beginning but the project team wanted to give everyone a heads up. Bill said that some potential solutions might involve rescheduling deliveries or temporarily halting path traffic, among other things.

- Caroline Lowenthal asked whether trucks would be driving on the path at times. Bill said that this is correct. He stated that in the section with the nuclear reactor, this is a particular concern. The City and MIT have discussed one-way circulation so that trucks would only be coming from one direction. Caroline asked how truck use would impact path maintenance, as trucks cause more wear and tear. Bill responded that they would likely have to use a different pavement design on this section.

### **Cambridge Street Crossing**

Moving on to the next section, Bill said that while they are not yet ready to show designs for the Cambridge Street pocket park, that the other changes on Cambridge Street could be discussed. Bill introduced Drew Kane, who is heading a study on Cambridge Street.

Drew described the study, which came out of the Envision Cambridge plan. This plan called for gradual changes to be made on Cambridge Street. The City is looking at Cambridge Street as the “Main Street” for the neighborhoods that abut it. Drew noted that as part of the initial parts of the study, they have interviewed 30+ local stakeholders and are now beginning the public engagement process. They will be at Inman Square on Saturday, November 13<sup>th</sup> to gain public input.

Drew then passed off to Michelle, who reviewed the changes to the design of the path crossing at Cambridge Street, noting that the project team incorporated the comments received to make adjustments to the design, accounting for safety and operations.

The proposed redesign incorporates a wide path crossing on the west side of the tracks, as well as a two-way bike facility along Cambridge Street connecting between the two segments of the path. There are additionally mixing zones where sidewalk and path users can navigate around each other. The proposed design also offsets the bus stops and retains the existing crossing for bus stop users to cross Cambridge Street. This allows the bus stops to be improved as well. Bill then asked for input from the Working Group members.

- Chris Cassa asked whether path users can go to the right side of the tree on the northbound path approach.

Bill D. noted that there is just not a lot of space to the right of the tree, so that the space to the left of the tree is designated for the path users, while the area to the right is really just a cut-out for pedestrians to use.

- Bill McAvinney asked where the bus would stop.

Bill D. noted that the bus will stop in the lane – in the street – and pick up and drop off passengers to the platform, which would not conflict with the bike lane.

- Rob Ricchi asked if the street tree is considered a healthy, strong tree. He loves trees, but wonders why we would need to save that one tree if it will be right in the middle of the path.

Bill D. noted that the City has a new urban forestry plan and has a new outlook on trees. This tree was reviewed and deemed a healthy tree and, given that there are few other trees in the area, that this one should stay.

- Miguel Perez-Luna asked if there's any possibility to paint the bike lanes on this stretch. He noted that on the bike lane on Mass. Ave. between Sidney Street and the McDonalds pedestrians will walk on the bike lane. He thought that painting the bike lane would help keep pedestrians off.

Bill D. stated that the City reserves painting of bike lanes for areas where there's conflict, so they will take a look at this suggestion to see if the area warrants it.

- Jason Alves had a similar question about the tree as Rob. He thought there is an opportunity to put many trees in the pocket park that would give a net gain and allow that tree to be cut. Jason also asked why there is such a large buffer on the north side of the street between the path and the tracks.

Bill D. noted that the path is designed to not preclude the potential of two-track transit in the future, which would occupy the buffer space as shown in the plan.

- Chris Cassa also wanted to echo the comments regarding the tree. He thought it would be a little unnatural for path users to go left around the tree. He thought that bringing people around the tree to the right would be more natural. He also echoed Miguel's point about painting the bike lane.
- Caroline wanted to speak up in favor of keeping the tree. She was disappointed with the recent project at O'Connell Library which cut down three trees and replaced them with smaller greenery. She likes that the project proposes keeping the tree. It provides shade and cover while path users wait to cross the street. She also liked the idea of painting the bike lane.
- Jason Alves asked about signaling Warren Street and Cardinal Medeiros Avenue.

Bill explained that cars will be stopped before the crosswalk and that the intersection and crosswalks would be signaled together so that cars won't get stuck in between.

- Caroline asked whether there would be another meeting to discuss the Cambridge Street pocket park.

Bill said that there likely would be a meeting at some point in early 2022.

### **Public Comment**

Charlie Creagh then put forth some questions that had been asked by the public in the Q&A section.

- Will the raised intersection be marked?

Bill responded that the intersection would be indicated.

- Could there be striping and an arrow in the middle of the raised intersection for the path connection?

Bill said he doesn't know whether that could be done. Generally, he said, you can't put paint on the pavers on a raised intersection.

- Previous plans showed an access point at James Way and not Michael Way. What is the plan for James Way?

Bill clarified that there is not a plan for access at James Way.

- What methods were used to gather opinions for neighbors on the other side of Cardinal Medeiros?

Bill said that all neighbors used the same method wherein comments were submitted on the conceptual design through the virtual open house.

- The proposed entry at Linden Park would mean bicyclists would enter the path at speed. Is there a way to require bicyclists entering on foot?

Bill says that generally they do not add barriers, as this creates more conflict and confusion, but they will think about ways to control the speed on the approach.

- How are deliveries made to the nuclear reactor abutting the path at MIT?

Bill does not know the specifics about the deliveries.

- Is the Cambridge Street path crossing raised?



Bill said that since the intersection is signalized, there is no need to have a raised crossing. He also mentioned that the roadway needs to be flush with the railroad tracks.

- Can the path open up wider on the north side of Cambridge Street as it does on the south side?

Bill responded that while the drawing is just a conceptual design, and doesn't show specifics, that is something they can look into.

- Are bicyclists expected to walk their bikes across Cambridge Street or can they ride?

Bill noted that technically at a traffic signal, bicyclists are supposed to dismount, although it's not always realistic and people will cross the way they feel safe to cross.

- Could the path be shifted to the left of the tree and fill in the green space?

Bill said that the design using the space to the right of the tree allows them to have more flexibility.

- Michelle asked whether all diagrams in the future could have a north arrow and make the street labels more visible.

Bill responded that they could do that.

### **Conclusion**

Bill concluded the meeting by saying they would be in touch about next steps.