CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTES

Date, Time & Place: April 1, 2015, 5:30-7:30 PM
Cambridge Citywide Senior Center

Attendance

Committee Members

John Attanucci, Joseph Beggan, Kelley Brown, Charles Fineman, Robert Fitzgerald, Jim Gascoigne, Eric Hoke, Doug Manz, Jeremy Mendelson (for LivableStreets), George Metzger, Susan Pacheco, Simon Shapiro, Saul Tannenbaum, Ritesh Warade

City of Cambridge

Tegin Bennett (Community Development Department), Adam Shulman (Traffic, Parking and Transportation)

5 members of the public were present. Philip Groth (MBTA) and Matt Ciborowski (MassDOT) were present. Karen Arpino-Shaffer from Gilbane Building Company was present.

Committee Introductions and Approve Notes

Attachment: Draft March notes
Notes were approved by the Committee.

Committee Updates

- Committee members were reminded to complete the Ethics training if they have not already.
- The late night MBTA meeting held in Cambridge was discussed. Philip Groth (MBTA) stated that public comments at meetings and written comments were in support of the late night service, but there were few recommendations on how to fund the service. It is expected that the MBTA Finance Board will make a decision by April 15.
- Tegin Bennett stated that she attended a Green Line Extension (GLX) meeting about the Grand Junction Path bicycle/pedestrian connection to the Community Path running parallel to the GLX. Several options for the connection were discussed and the GLX project will not preclude a connection between the Community Path and the Grand Junction Path.
- Matt Ciborowski (MassDOT) provided an update on the Kendall Square Mobility Task Force study. The first meeting will be on April 28 at 4 PM at 600 Technology Square, Cambridge. He will present the study in more detail to the Committee at the next meeting. All modes, including Diesel Multiple Units (DMUs) will be considered and the study is expected to last 10-12 months.

Green Line Extension (GLX) and Lechmere Station Plans

Karen Arpino-Shaffer from Gilbane presented an overview of Lechmere Station plans and answered questions from committee members. Currently, the station and right of way designs are considered to be complete, while designs for adjacent roadways are at the 25 percent design stage.

Highlighted design features of the GLX Lechmere station included:

- The addition of a second entrance at the southern end of the station, more secure bicycle parking, advanced design of the busway, artwork, a connection to the Community Path, and improvements to the pedestrian environment around the station. The goal is to transform O'Brien Highway into a "boulevard" (more like a street than highway). Protected bicycle lanes will be installed from Land Blvd to Water Street.
- The station platform will be built to accommodate 3-car trains, but the design of tracks will be such that an extension to accommodate 4-car trains will be feasible (although possibly cost prohibitive) in the future.
- The station will have one main (north) headhouse at North 1st Street with two entrances and an additional headhouse at the station's southern end. There will only be escalators going upstairs (no down escalators because of the limited space). There will be two elevators per access agreements.
- The contract for Lechmere and other stations is supposed to be put out to bid this spring, with the interim opening of Lechmere around the end of 2017.

The Committee discussed design features and other concerns, including:

- Green Line service to Lechmere will be suspended for approximately 15 months during construction. The project team will meet with MBTA staff to design a shuttle bus system with staging in a parking lot called Lot A. Committee members expressed concern with this plan, noting the severe delays resulting from previous shuttle operations at this location. Bus priority treatments, including signal priority and dedicated lanes leading to and over the Charles River, could help mitigate delays. The proposed transfer location between shuttle buses and connecting local bus routes was considered to be too far from the station and too difficult to access. The project team and the MBTA should study passenger travel and operational needs to determine if existing bus routes could either be extended to Boston or provide some other connection to rapid transit. Karen Arpino-Shaffer said these ideas would be considered in construction plans and noted that the station closure will be as short as possible.
- Jim Gascoigne discussed the EZ Ride bus stop at Lechmere Station and recommended a stop in front of Lechmere Station on the First Street extension.
- The Committee asked if the MBTA planned to winterize the system to withstand another potentially harsh winter like the past one. Comments were made that the viaduct is in the air and there is no third rail, which should help protect the system from snow. Karen Arpino-Shaffer confirmed that winter storms were considered.
- Other Committee comments included a request for focus on visibility and aesthetics to mitigate the impacts of an elevated structure, as well as concern about the busway (dark, exposed to elements, no waiting area, minimal shelter, potentially narrow walkways). There may be some tension between ideal busway features and the adjacent property owner's concerns over exposure to noise and other impacts of the busway.

Committee Structure

Committee members discussed the future structure of the Committee. The Committee was formed about two years ago and current members were asked to serve two-year terms. The primary task was to complete the Cambridge Transit Strategic Plan, which is nearly finished. The Committee was asked what type of committee structure they envision for the future.

- Tegin Bennett proposed a set of bylaws to consider; there was some deliberation but tentative consensus indicates that members feel the Committee is productive and may not require a formal structure. This is a topic for members to consider prior to the next meeting.
- A call for new members will be publicized. Members are asked to spread the word and reapply if interested in continuing to serve.
- A member indicated that the Committee's goal should be to maximize on policy.
- There was a discussion about having a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. It was felt that no elections or final decisions on the Committee structure should occur until the future Committee members are appointed.

Public Comment

Members of the public made comments and presented ideas and recommendations.

- There was a discussion about transit signal priority (TSP). TSP is complicated to set up and most of the existing infrastructure cannot accommodate it without expensive upgrades. The City's Bus Priority Study investigating these issues further and identified some locations where priority such as TSP could possibly be considered. A Committee member was concerned that this study puts too much emphasis on the impacts of TSP on drivers rather than benefits to transit. The study looks at travel time both for the vehicle as well as person travel time and well as reliability. The City of Boston is working to implement TSP in some locations.
- It was asked if Green Line service could continue to run between Science Park and North Station during Lechmere construction, which may require using a different switch on the Green Line viaduct.
- The Committee vision should include transit service operations, specifically the policies and practices governing existing services such as the Red Line. Many improvements can be made on existing services by managing buses and trains in real time. The speaker referred the Committee to a "Red Line Improvement Plan" by Cambridge resident Stephen Kaiser.
- In the blizzard of 1978, the MBTA was able to do a better job of dealing with the snow.
- There was a recommendation that someone from low and moderate income housing be represented on the Committee.
- There was a suggestion that there be limited public comments allowed during discussions of key issues throughout the meeting.
- There was a recommendation that Committee members be surveyed about how they get around (how much transit they use) to make sure Committee members are representative of people who are dependent on transit.
- The MASCO M2 shuttle bus should have broad public access.

Adjourned at 7:30pm