

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTES

Date, Time & Place:
MIT building E25, room 117
September 6, 2017, 5:30-7:30

Attendance

Committee Members

Arthur Strang, Alexander Taylor, Saul Tannenbaum, Andrew McFarland, Devin Chausse, Katherine Rafferty, Robert Ricchi, Robert Fitzgerald, Melissa Zampitella, Charles Fineman

City of Cambridge

Susanne Rasmussen and Greg Hanafin (Community Development), Adam Shulman (Traffic, Parking, and Transportation)

Presenters, official entities, and members of the public

Phil Groth (MBTA) was present, 3 members of the public were present

Committee Intros, administrative business, and updates

Susanne Rasmussen, Director of the City's Community Development Department (CDD) Environmental and Transportation Division, Rasmussen announced that she would be facilitating the meeting in Tegin Bennett's absence.

Susanne informed the Committee with great sadness of the tragic loss of Cleo Stoughton, transportation planner at the Community Development Department and staff member for the Transit Advisory Committee. Cleo passed away Monday, September 5 following a courageous battle with ovarian cancer. She was 28 years old. Susanne talked about Cleo's work at CDD to create a safe, better designed transportation system, and especially transit related improvements. After very heartfelt remarks about Cleo, Susanne led the TAC in a moment of silence in remembrance of Cleo. Susanne stated that the date for services had not been announced yet.

Minutes for the June and August meetings were approved after a motion, a second, and affirmative voice vote by TAC members.

Public Comment

There were no comments.

Inman Square Redesign Presentation

Adam Shulman presented on the preferred concept for the Inman Square redesign and potential changes in bus routing.

- The transit stop with a queue jump on Cambridge Street eastbound approach to the intersection is still in the plan
- The plans are currently at 25%, working towards 75%
- There will be a public meeting in about a month, but it has not yet been scheduled
- A current alternative plan includes consolidating bus stops for the 83 and 69 buses and rerouting the 83 bus from using Hampshire Street (between Prospect and Cambridge/Springfield Street) to using Cambridge Street (between Prospect and Cambridge Street). The 83 and 69 bus would then share stops on Cambridge Street, including a "floating" bus stop on the northern side of Cambridge Street which would provide a bike lane behind the bus stop. The bus stop consolidation would limit the space needed for bus stops in Inman Square and provide easier transfers from one bus to another since both buses would use the same stop. It would also help create more of a transit node for Inman Square. Bus travel time is not expected to be impacted by the route change.

Discussion:

- Phil Groth commented that the MBTA supports these routing changes, but noted that the stop line for cars on Prospect Street northbound must be pulled back for buses to be able to make the right turn

onto Prospect Street from Cambridge Street. He also noted that the proposed rerouting on bus routes means that riders going to Central Square will lose the common bus stop for the 83 and 91 buses on Hampshire Street, so riders may have to wait longer or walk farther to get a bus between Inman Square and Central Square.

- A suggestion was made of adding transit screens with real time bus arrival times to make it easier for riders to decide which stops to use, which the City intends to do.

Engagement Workshop Activity

The committee split into three groups to work on an engagement workshop activity. Each group was given an engagement scenario to promote a transit initiative. Each group spent 30 minutes discussing their scenario amongst themselves, and then presented the results of their discussion to the whole committee.

Group 1: You work for Mt. Auburn Hospital, and as a member of the Transit Advisory Committee you have an opportunity to influence your peers and garner their support for bus priority on Mt. Auburn St. A few of your coworkers have heard that a project is being planned, but most are unaware and unfamiliar with the benefits of bus priority.

- The group identified that transit improvements projects, especially bus priority lanes, would be beneficial to Mt. Auburn Hospital staff because a larger percentage of them take public transit to work. Katherine Rafferty, who works for Mt. Auburn Hospital, noted that 35-40% of staff park in Watertown and take a shuttle to the hospital. She also said that many staff live in Watertown and take public transit to work.
- The group identified that one elevator pitch to Mt. Auburn Hospital staff to support bus priority lanes could be to explain to them that an equal number of people on the corridor use buses as those who use cars.
- They discussed ways to get staff educated and involved in transit advocacy, including emails and community meetings.
- They discussed a desire for data on potential traffic impacts for cars to be able to craft more strategic talking points.
- Andrew McFarland advised that it is helpful to use both data and personal conversations to be influential.

Group 2: A merchant whose store is located on the corridor is opposed to the project on the grounds that it is "bad for business". You live nearby and patronize this business often. As a member of the Transit Advisory Committee you have an opportunity to address this merchants' concerns and possibly change his/her/their mind when it comes to bus priority on Mt. Auburn.

- The group identified that a business owner's major concern would be loss of parking. Their counter-argument was that more efficient transit will bring more people, and therefore more potential customers, to the area near the business.
- They discussed promoting bus priority by providing transit benefits, such as a sticker for transit riders that allows them to get discounts at certain stores. Another idea was to create different style Charlie Cards for different neighborhoods that people could collect by riding the bus to that neighborhood.
- They noted that it would be useful to have data on parking volumes on Mt. Auburn Street and bus boardings and alightings at stops along the corridor.

Group 3: Some residents are expected to voice opposition for bus priority on Mt. Auburn Street at an upcoming public meeting. As a resident and a member of the Transit Advisory Committee you have an opportunity to express why this project is important to you and the rest of the city.

- The group identified that some residents could be concerned about neighborhood access, loss of parking and impacts on local businesses, increased congestion, reduced bike service, and hospital operations. In response to these, the group counter-argued that not many parking spots will be lost on this project, improved transit may result in less people choosing to drive, a combined bus/bike

lane will provide space for cyclists, and the hospital is supportive of the project and its emergency vehicles would be able to use the bus lane.

Discussion

Many members of the committee felt that the engagement activity provoked thoughtful and useful discussion. In addition, they also raised the desire for more specific and concrete action items and talking points for upcoming projects. Andrew McFarland said that part of the purpose of this exercise was to identify what types of information the committee wanted for engagement purposes going further.

Announcements

Susanne Rasmussen announced some updates for the Green Line Extension Project. The state selected 3 design-build teams in February. A Request for Proposals (RFP) was issued to the teams in May. The teams will be awarded points based on the number of additional elements their cost proposal is able to include beyond the basic design within the project budget. The state plans to select a final team by December 11. The City of Cambridge will pay a total of \$25 million to the project, beginning with the first installment of \$5 million in March 2018.

Final Public Comments

A member of the public made some announcements:

- An open house was held in Union Square by Green Line Extension project developers.
- He recently observed the 83 bus get stuck at the Rindge Field turn around and noted that this happens regularly due to the tight radius of the turnaround.
- He suggested improved signage at the Sullivan Square bus stops.
- He said that work needed to be done on the Harvard Square bus tunnels. Phil Groth said that a rehabilitation of the Harvard Square tunnels is planned for Summer 2018.

Adjourned at 7:45