



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

TRAFFIC, PARKING, + TRANSPORTATION

MEMORANDUM

To: Cambridge Planning Board

From: Joseph E. Barr, Director

Date: January 19, 2021

Subject: MIT Schwarzman College of Computing, 51 Vassar Street (PB#370)

The Cambridge Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department (TP+T) has reviewed the Special Permit Application and Circulation and Access Study for the proposed MIT Schwarzman College of Computing (PB#370). The Project proposes to replace the MIT Building #44 with an eight-story approximately 174,000 gross square feet building for institutional/academic uses. The project will have no on-site street parking spaces (parking will be accommodated by the MIT's institutional parking pool), 36 long-term bicycle parking spaces, 71 short-term bicycle parking spaces, and 2 loading bays.

The Project does not formally trigger the requirement for a Transportation Impact Study (TIS); however, MIT completed a Circulation and Access Study that evaluated the project's transportation impacts. The study can assist the Planning Board members during their consideration of the Project under Article 19, Project Review Special Permit, and for the reduction in parking request under Article 6, Section 6.35.1.

TP+T worked with MIT and their Traffic Consultant, VHB, on the parameters of the Circulation and Access study and we believe the study is a professionally complete transportation study, which includes an evaluate of the areas existing and future transportation conditions, an analysis the Project's trip generation, transit, bicycle, parking, loading needs, and proposes transportation mitigation. Overall, TP+T supports the Project, and offers the Planning Board the following comments and recommendations:

- TP+T supports the request for reduction in automobile parking spaces because MIT can meet the building's parking demands using its institutional pool of parking spaces and does not need to provide parking on-site.
- TP+T does not support eliminating the on-street parking spaces in front of the site to create a large curb extension as illustrated in the Special Permit Application because no justification has been provided for eliminating the on-street spaces and associated curb access.
 - On-street parking should remain, but the parking spaces directly in front of the main building entrance can become a drop-off/pick-up area or loading zone, subject to further review and approval by TP+T.
 - The proposed design is likely to encourage undesirable activity, such as motorists stopping in the travel lane on Vassar Street to drop-off/pick-up passengers directly in front of the buildings main entrance. The proposed

design will also encourage pedestrians to not use the existing crosswalk on Vassar Street.

- It is unclear why there is a break in the street trees in front of the building's main entrance when additional street trees can be provided. This aspect of the plan further encourages the previously noted potential for motorists to unsafely stop directly in front of the building's main entrance. TP+T recommends potentially adding additional street trees in that area and relocating or removing the tree next to the loading zone curb cut which may be an issue (e.g., trucks hitting it, creating safety problems with hidden sightlines, etc.).
 - TP+T, in coordination with CDD and DPW will work on final design changes to Vassar Street as part of the Project's Building Permit process, including the on-street parking spaces, curb regulations, any curb line changes, street trees, and any changes to the existing crosswalk.
- TP+T believes that the proposed multi-use path along the side of the Project is an improvement compared to the existing conditions, but the width as presented only represents an 8' wide path given the required 2' buffers on either side. We suggest that there be a 14-foot wide total clear zone (including buffers), which would meet City and national standards. The path should be a minimum of 10-foot wide with 2-foot buffers on each side. TP+T, in coordination with CDD and DPW will work on the final design of the multi-use path as part of the continuing review during the Project's Building Permit process.
 - The Project proposes 36 long-term bicycle parking spaces in the basement of the building with access from the main building elevators. The layout of the bicycle parking spaces appears to meet City standards and TP+T will ensure that they do as part of the Building Permit process. It should be made explicitly clear, such as through signage, that transporting bicycles through the buildings main doorways and elevators is allowed.
 - It is unclear what the distance is between the short-term bicycle parking spaces and the building entrances and whether this meets City zoning requirements. There also appear to be columns or light poles located within the short-term bicycle parking area near the railroad tracks, which may violate City standards because there cannot be any vertical obstructions in a bicycle parking space. TP+T believes that this issue can be addressed through the continuing design review during the Building Permit process.
 - The applicant should clarify if the loading bays will be shared with the adjacent building #46 which were used for loading in the past, and if the loading bays will be sufficient to meet the needs for both buildings.
 - The sightline drawing for the loading area curb cut does not appear to meet TP+T's standards for sightline drawings, however, we believe the final curb cut changes will be fully addressed as part of the standard City curb cut review process. In general, TP+T does not see any major red flags with the proposed location of the loading zone and curb cut. The reduction of one existing curb cut on Vassar Street will be positive.

- Any plan(s) that will affect the Grand Junction railroad and multi-use path will need review and approval by the City's Grand Junction team.
- Finally, TP+T recommends that the Project should offer the same Transportation Demand Management Measures (TDM) as offered by MIT for any of their other academic buildings.