

Cambridge Parking Study

Draft Report—November 2022

Over the past year, the City of Cambridge has conducted a study¹ about how people use car parking². The purpose is to evaluate how well parking policies and regulations for cars support both community needs and City goals. The policies that currently regulate parking and that we might recommend changing, include the following:

- Zoning Ordinance
- Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinance (PTDM)
- Commercial Parking Ordinance (parking available to the public for a fee)
- Resident Parking Permit Program
- Traffic Regulations

Why Look at Parking Policy?

Parking policy impacts how easy or difficult it is to find parking. This can impact how people experience life in the city and how they choose to get around. It can invite more driving, which creates traffic and air pollution, or it can encourage people to take a bus or bike, which helps us meet our climate and quality-of-life goals. It can cause people to park on the street instead of using the garage in their building.

How Is This Study Different?

Over the past 50 years, City staff, elected officials, and appointed boards developed our parking policies for on-street parking, off-street accessory parking, and general public parking by using consultant and staff expertise, and national best practices. We don't know the exact mix of identities and life experiences of the people we heard from when we collected community feedback in the past, but it is highly likely that they were primarily white, English-speaking, able-bodied homeowners with moderate or high incomes. This would not have represented the overall Cambridge population and likely left many in the community, namely people of color and certain linguistic communities, excluded and unheard. In general, the City is now rethinking how we engage with people who live, work, and visit Cambridge to include members of our whole community in our planning. For this study, we tried something different—we actively sought feedback from more diverse groups and then developed actions in response to the community experiences we heard.

In fall 2021, we began interviewing residents, business owners, property owners, and board members of the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities, to listen to people's needs and experiences with transportation in the city. These early conversations shaped discussions we later had in focus groups with the American-born Black community, Bangla-speaking community, Haitian-Creole-speaking community, Arabic-speaking community, Spanish-speaking community, Amharic-speaking community, which were hosted by the Department of Human Service Programs' Community Engagement Team. We concentrated our time and resources on reaching people who have barriers to participating in planning processes and

¹ www.cambridgema.gov/ParkingStudy

² This parking study addresses car parking and does not address parking for bicycles or micromobility devices, such as scooters.

whose needs and opinions may not have been heard in past discussions about parking policy. We also conducted an online transportation and parking survey to hear from members of the broader community.

What We Heard in the Parking Study

Before proposing any changes, we needed to understand how changes might impact people. During the Parking Study, we heard a variety of opinions ranging from “We need more parking” to “My life would improve if I had safer bike lanes” to “How could you expect me to rely on the bus when I never know when it will show up?”

Despite differences of opinion, we heard these shared values again and again throughout our discussions with the community:

- **Community:** I need to be able to easily receive friends and family in my home. I want to feel closer to my community.
- **Trust:** I want to be involved in decisions the City makes, even if it’s a difficult conversation, and even if we disagree.
- **Respect:** I want people to treat me kindly, even if I choose to use different transportation options than they do.
(Note: Many car drivers, bicyclists, and bus riders expressed a feeling that they don’t feel respected for their transportation choices, even as they judged other people’s choices. While everyone shares a desire to feel good about the choices they make, there was a general sense of dissatisfaction towards others.)
- **Accountability:** I want everybody to be held accountable for their behavior on our streets.
- **Safety:** I need to feel safe, no matter how I get around.
- **Predictability:** I need to know that I can easily and predictably get around to participate in all areas of life.

We have included a sample of quotes we heard in conversations below, and you can see detailed comments from all the focus groups on the [Parking Study web page](#). We will share results from the online transportation and parking survey in the final report.

Selected quotes from community engagement

“How do we do this [transportation planning] in a cohesive manner so that we can see progress and we have a voice, a part of it? We’re not going to all agree, definitely, but how do we reach middle ground so that **we can all live cohesively in the City?**” —American Born Black Community focus group

“I prefer to walk or take a bus or train, depending on how fast it’s coming. Because **it’s easier to walk around and get errands done or when you are with kids who want to explore the city.** I also walk around for health reasons and for the environment. Cambridge has good signals and respectful people so it’s comfortable to walk around. There is also very low crime so you don’t have to be scared walking.” —Spanish-speaking focus group

“Can you do something **about restaurant outdoor dining?** They take too many parking spaces.” —Haitian-Creole-speaking Focus Group

“Parking is always challenging here. But Covid made it worse. **I lost 2 or 3 employees this year, because they got tickets on their cars.** They live far away, especially at nighttime, they finish at 11 pm and must take

two or three buses or bus+train to get home. Much harder to keep employees in winter than nicer weather.” —Owner of a sit-down restaurant

“My biggest use of parking is when we need loading for deliveries of prepared food. Almost none of my customers in Harvard and Kendall Square drive to get lunch. A surprising number of the employees take Uber and Lyft. Almost none of them drive to work. A good number have an hour-long transit trip. **To help employees, I would like to see improved bus service or free bus service for part-time wage workers.** Fast, frequent transit service is more important than lower transit fares.” —Owner of a casual lunch restaurant with 4 locations in Cambridge.

“**I have not ridden a bike outside the parks in a while, because it scares me a little** and I don’t have a proper bike. But in summer we always go outside to ride bikes in nice weather in the park with kids.” — Spanish-Speaking focus group

“I go with my elderly parents to hospital appointments. **It is very difficult to find permit parking near Mt Auburn Hospital.**” —Bangla-speaking focus group

“I drive and it's awesome. What would be better is if we got rid of them bike lanes because it's so difficult to navigate around them. If there was more accountability put on bikers. They get all this space in street. They should get pulled over if they don't stop at a red light. **The city is so geared just to biking.** That's great and eco-friendly, but not all of us can just, like, ride bikes. Some of us have children, have other things you need to do, you need to go farther distances and **it's just not a vehicle friendly city.** —American Born Black Community focus group

“To be honest, bus and train, we have a lot of stuff going on ... **my comfort zone is my car and safe because protect myself from any harm and danger** ... every day I'm not safe, but suddenly you sit down in the bus, two people fighting, and then reckless stuff happens. So that makes me worry ... So the car is very important for me. City of Cambridge has to really, really consider our need.” —Amharic-speaking focus group

“In general, **I like the way, in my area, they’re encouraging biking, go green,** and they offer some bike for people to get to the train. And I like the way in Cambridge when they put the [lanes] specially for biking, for our kids’ safety. What my concern about the bus [lane]—sometimes it is no buses, only one [lane] for cars and one [lane] for bus. People start driving there, sometimes I drive too, I use that [lane], but at the same time I’m feeling guilty. Am I supposed to drive that time or am I supposed to stick only with that other [lane], and the other one is empty? **There is no sign to allow us to use it or leave it empty for bus, even if there is no bus.**” —Arabic-speaking focus group

“**I’m so glad I don’t have to think about parking because I don’t have a car.**” —Tabling at Main Library

“**I don’t drive and don’t need parking.**” I take the bus and walk everywhere. I need safe crosswalks because cars don’t see me crossing, even in the day. They drive too fast and almost hit me. Worst areas are in front of Starbucks across Broadway from Main Library, and at Skendarian pharmacy across Cambridge St. — Tabling at Main Library

“**Parking is hard, but I will never leave Cambridge.** I am addicted to the city. I will never leave, I love it too much. “ —Danehy Park Day ’21

Planning Goals

As city planners, our job is to think about what people need today and what people will need in 30 years. We recommend policies that improve the health, happiness, and opportunities of Cambridge residents, visitors, and workers. The Envision Cambridge citywide plan includes these mobility and climate goals:

- **Equity and Accessibility:** Ensure a diverse set of travel options that meet the access and mobility needs of people of all ages, abilities, and incomes.
- **Reliability and Efficiency:** Ensure people and goods can reliably move within Cambridge and around the region, and encourage space-efficient transportation choices like walking, biking, public transit, and carpooling.
- **Safe and Active Transportation:** Eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries while encouraging active living and improving comfort for people of all ages and abilities.
- **Connectedness and User-Friendliness:** Create an easy-to-understand, integrated, continuous, and comfortable transportation network for all people.
- **Community Character and Vitality:** Ensure that the city's transportation system supports shared community spaces and enhances neighborhood streets.
- **Climate Action:** Achieve carbon neutrality, including a carbon-neutral transportation system.
- **Climate Change Preparedness:** Protect the lives and livelihoods of the Cambridge community from the impacts of climate change.
- **Environmental Justice:** Ensure that all Cambridge residents are protected from environmental impacts and benefit equitably from environmental resources.

The City has described these goals for many years, in policies and plans that support people taking the bus and train, and walking, biking, and carpooling. In particular, these goals are reflected in our [Vehicle Trip Reduction Ordinance](#), [Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinance](#), [Vision Zero Policy](#), [Complete Streets Policy](#), [Transit Strategic Plan](#), [Bicycle Plan](#), [Cycling Safety Ordinance](#), [School Wellness Policy](#), [Envision Cambridge](#), and [Resilient Cambridge](#).

For the foreseeable future, cars will be part of the mix in our transportation system. But cars use the most space, fuel, and energy to transport the fewest people, and they cause the most serious crashes. Studies show that the presence of parking causes people to drive.³

Ultimately, we are trying to create a city where there is less need for driving and parking. To achieve this, we want to make it easier and more convenient for people to get around without cars. For example, bus lanes⁴ give people on buses more reliable and faster trips, and separated bike lanes make it safer and more comfortable to get around on bicycle. These changes will help people rely less on driving and parking, but will mean removing on-street parking spaces. Removing spaces lets us improve transportation options, and we are hoping to make this transition as painless as possible. To do this, we want to make it easier for people to find the parking spaces that are still available.

³ https://people.ucsc.edu/~jwest1/articles/MillardBall_West_Rezaei_Desai_SFBMR_UrbanStudies.pdf

⁴ <https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/Transportation/regionalplanning/masstransit/buspriority>

Our Community's Challenge: Balancing Everyone's Needs

Transportation choices are highly personal.

The City can influence people's choices through transportation policies and investments, but cannot and should not dictate what people do. No single option will be right for everyone. The City can improve transportation options available to people by giving equitable access to parking to those who need it, and to other convenient and affordable options for getting around so they can also make the choice not to drive.

People choose how to travel based on their personal circumstances, but not everyone starts with the same set of choices. For example, some people depend on their cars to do their job, while other people do not. For many people it is difficult to own and drive a car because the cost is too high or they might have a disability that prevents them from being able to drive a car. For other people, it can be difficult to not own and drive a car because they live far from work, have a disability, or feel unsafe traveling another way.

People with more economic privilege might choose to drive if they can afford the costs of the vehicle, insurance, gas, and parking and they think other transportation options are not convenient. Others might choose not to drive because they live close enough to their destination, want exercise, or want to read on the train. But while choices may be based on individual needs and resources, some choices have a greater impact on other people.

In addition, there are some issues that won't be solved by parking policy alone and will need to be addressed in a larger effort. For example, housing affordability and MBTA service quality are two enormous challenges that affect people's transportation choices, and solving them depends on a regional approach working with the State and our neighboring cities and towns.

Parking will always be a limited resource, with impacts on equity.

There is only so much space for parking on Cambridge streets. Many of our neighborhoods were built before cars existed and evolved without much off-street parking. Many Cambridge residents live in apartments without driveways or off-street parking and rely on resident street parking.

People with fewer choices feel the effects of limited parking more than people with greater choices. High parking costs affect people who must rely on a car to get around. People with lower incomes who have to drive will either spend a larger share of their income on parking or will need to hunt for cheaper, but more heavily used, street parking, and they might need to park farther away.

At the same time, people who can't, or don't, have a car end up paying indirectly for parking they don't use. Public space that is used for parking doesn't benefit them and means less is available for open space. The price of parking is often included in rents and the prices people pay for goods when they shop in the city. They pay those higher prices regardless of whether they use parking. They also live with problems caused by traffic (air pollution, slower buses, etc.).

We can't guarantee that everyone will find a parking spot exactly where and when they want it, at the price they want to pay. But we can help make the availability of parking more equitable for those who need it.

Parking serves different and changing needs.

Many current policies focus on storing private vehicles of residents, employees, and retail customers. Based on what we heard in the focus groups, we also need to improve parking policies for other kinds of people:

- **Visitors to residences**—large gatherings with family and friends, home healthcare worker visits, electricians and others who service homes, etc.
- **Self-employed Cambridge residents**—people with commercial vehicles, ride-hail drivers, delivery drivers
- **Cambridge residents who use ride hailing services and receive deliveries**—people who need very short-term parking for pick-up/drop-off
- People who start using other trip types that might emerge in the future

Parking policies affect Cambridge’s future, not just its present.

The choices people make today aren’t necessarily the choices that they will make in the future. Policies that focus only on today’s transportation system—or on trying to return to the ways of the past—might result in fewer choices available to future generations.

The more parking spaces there are, the more traffic we’ll have. The City created the plans and policies mentioned above in order to support people getting around with sustainable transportation, like walking, biking, and taking buses and trains. If we decide to change our policies to make a lot of new parking available, that could result in a huge amount of new traffic, which would impact people in terms of congestion, air quality, noise, and traffic crashes. This is especially true when many people are traveling at the same time. These impacts will increase over time as our city and region grow, and if people become more dependent on cars as their main form of transportation.

New parking lots and garages can be created, but it is very expensive and can reduce the amount of open space, housing, and other things that people want in the city. When a large amount of parking is created, it can change the feel of an area from being a place for people to go about their lives into being a place for cars. Even if it were possible to create free and plentiful parking wherever and whenever someone might need it, it would transform Cambridge into a very different place.

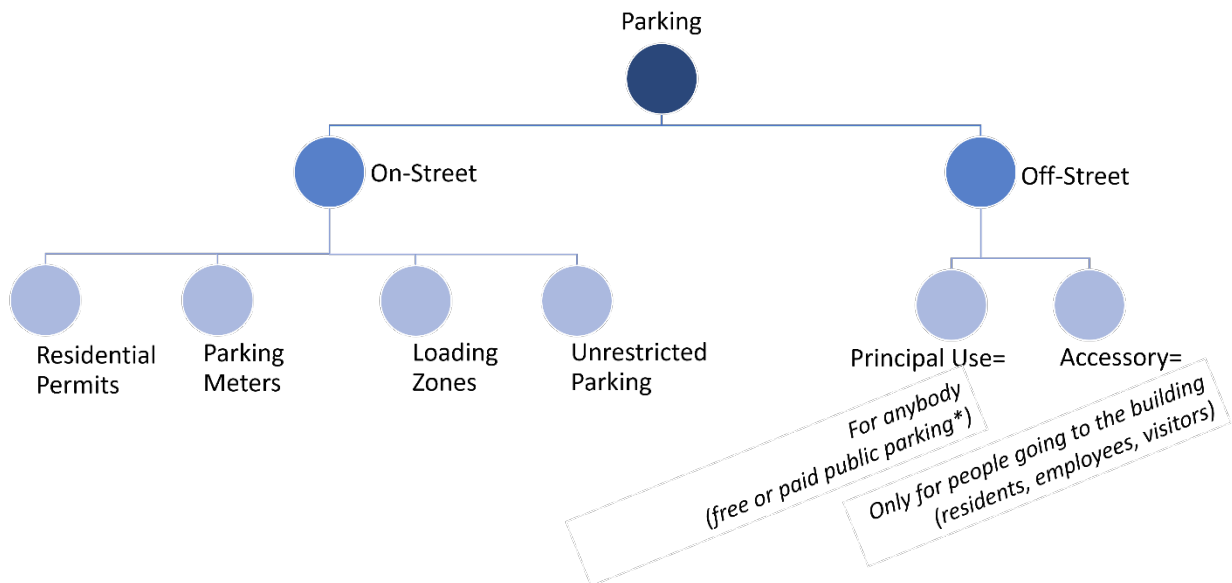
We need to work together to find the right solutions.

We ask for your patience and understanding as we work together to find a complete set of solutions—it is difficult to balance many competing needs and hope that you will see that we are trying our best to make changes that benefit the most people in a way that prioritizes the needs of the community members who need them the most.

On Page 12, we propose some strategies and actions that respond to concerns we heard from members of our community. We would like to understand which of these potential actions best addresses your parking needs. And which of these do you feel would make your parking experience worse? We will consider this feedback when we revise the report.

What we know about parking in Cambridge

Here are the different types of parking in the city.



* Parking available to the public for a fee is called “Commercial parking” in Cambridge

Definitions

- Parking policy—A way to approach creating rules and regulations for parking.
- On-street parking—Parking spaces that are located on the street, and can be next to sidewalks, bike lanes, or travel lanes.
- Off-street parking—A parking lot or parking garage that is either on private property or owned by the City of Cambridge.
- Pedestrian ramp—Ramps that are for disability access to pass from the sidewalk to the road (like at a crosswalk).
- Curb cut—A ramp built into a curb or sidewalk to allow for private vehicles to pass across the sidewalk to access a private driveway. Curb cuts require City Council approval to create or remove one.
- “City” vs “city”—We capitalize the word City when we are talking about the City of Cambridge government. When city has a lower case “c,” we are talking about Cambridge overall.

Here is what we know about roughly how many parking spaces are in the city. In the future, we will create maps of these spaces to show where in the city they are located.

| Type of Parking | Number of Spaces | Source | What Rules Govern this Type of Parking |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---|--|
| On-Street parking | | | |
| Resident permit spaces | Currently unknown | We haven't counted the exact number of resident parking permit spaces yet, but we are working to get there. The City recently completed an asset inventory, which will help us get to the next step (creating a digital tool to manage all curb uses, in addition to parking). This will eventually tell us how many of which kind of spaces we have. | Chapter 10.12, Municipal Code and Traffic Regulations |
| Parking meters | 3,100 | https://www.cambridgema.gov/iwantto/parkacarincambridge/map | Traffic Regulations |
| Disability Spaces | 150 | https://www.cambridgema.gov/iwantto/parkacarincambridge/map | Traffic Regulations, Americans With Disabilities Act, MA Architectural Access Board |
| Loading zones | Currently unknown | We don't know the exact number of loading zone spaces yet, but we are working to get there. | Traffic Regulations |
| Off-Street Parking | | | |
| Principal Use Parking | | | |
| Commercial spaces | 16,400 | This number includes approximately 1,700 parking spaces in municipal parking lots or garages, 2,700 in the MBTA Alewife garage, and 12,000 registered privately owned Commercial Parking spaces. Most commercial parking spaces may be used by any type of public user (i.e., employee, customer, institution, residential, etc.) for a fee. | Chapter 10.16, Municipal Code |
| Accessory Parking | | | |
| Resident spaces | Currently unknown | We don't know the exact number of parking spaces in residential garages, lots, and driveways yet. As of October 2022, we know we had at least 17,500 parking spaces in large multi-family buildings. | Zoning Ordinance (Article 6.000) |
| Employee spaces | 35,600 | Registered parking spaces | Zoning Ordinance (Article 6.000) and Chapter 10.18, Municipal Code |
| Customer or visitor spaces | 8,000 | Registered parking spaces | Zoning Ordinance (Article 6.000) and Chapter 10.18, Municipal Code |
| University spaces | 9,100 | Harvard conducted a parking inventory in 2017, MIT in 2020, and Lesley in 2019. To be updated in 2023. | Zoning Ordinance (Article 6.000) and Chapter 10.18, Municipal Code |

| Type of Parking | Number of Spaces | Source | What Rules Govern this Type of Parking |
|--|---------------------------|---|---|
| Electric Vehicle Chargers (open to the public) | 15 stations with 27 ports | We expect to install 7 more stations with a total of 14 charging ports in 2023, and another 3 stations with 6 charging ports in the future on River Street. That will bring us to 25 stations with 47 charging ports. https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/communitiydevelopment/evchargingstations | Traffic Regulations (coming soon) |
| Carshare spaces | 130 spaces | Carshare spaces reported by Zipcar in 2022. These spaces are located in accessory and principal use parking spaces around the city. | Zoning Ordinance (6.24) |

Policies that might be changed

Policies for Off-Street Parking

Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) Ordinance (Chapter 10.18, Municipal Code)

The Cambridge PTDM Ordinance promotes walking, bicycling, public transit, and other sustainable modes in order to improve mobility and access, reduce traffic congestion and air pollution, and increase safety. The ordinance was adopted in 1998 and became a program that regulates 26,000 parking spaces, 33 million square feet of development, and 48,000 employees, or a third of all employees in Cambridge.

When an owner of new or existing non-residential property proposes to add parking on their site, they come into the program. In exchange for adding new parking, they have to take steps to make it easier for employees, customers, and visitors to not drive (we call these “TDM Programs”). Examples include:

- Giving free or low-price MBTA passes or Bluebikes memberships.
- Letting people pay for parking only when they need it, rather than having a monthly permit.
- Reserving parking spaces for carpooling.
- Giving people information about sustainable transportation options.

Read details here:

https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT10VETR_CH10.18PATRDEMAPLPASPRE

Zoning Ordinance (Article 6.000)

Zoning is a legal tool that sets standards for how land in a city can be used. It’s called “zoning” because it divides the city into zones that are called “zoning districts.”

The Zoning Ordinance is the document that sets the zoning rules in Cambridge. It regulates off-street parking in a couple of ways:

- It sets maximum requirements for “accessory parking.” (The City Council recently voted to eliminate minimum parking requirements for new buildings.⁵)

⁵ <https://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/zoninganddevelopment/Zoning/Amendments>

- It says where “principal use parking” is allowed.

Zoning does not regulate on-street parking.

Read details here:

https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/zoning_ordinance?nodeId=ZONING_ORDINANCE_ART6.000OFSTPALORENICULACOTHTR

Commercial Parking Space Permits (Chapter 10.16, Municipal Code) and “Commercial Parking Freeze”

The City created the Commercial Parking Freeze in 1975 under rules set by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (40 CFR 52.1135). The purpose of the freeze was to reduce air pollution caused by cars.

The freeze limits the total number of commercial off-street parking spaces in Cambridge. We are allowed to have about 13,000 commercial parking spaces, and we have issued permits for about 12,000 spaces. We have about 1,000 commercial parking permits left that we can issue. Commercial parking is a parking space available for use by the public for a fee.

Read details here:

https://library.municode.com/ma/cambridge/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT10VETR_CH10.16COPASPPE

Policies for On-Street Parking

Resident Parking (Chapter 10.12, Municipal Code)

Residents need a permit to park on the street in areas designated “Parking by Permit Only.” Residents may apply for Resident Parking Permits (RPP), for passenger vehicles and motorcycles. Each household is also eligible to receive one Visitor Parking Permit. Massachusetts Laws state that we cannot issue Resident Parking Permits unless the vehicle is registered in your name at your address in Cambridge. However, if you are borrowing a vehicle from a family member **and** you intend to register the vehicle in your name, you may purchase a Temporary Parking Permit which will give you time to register the vehicle in your name.

Read details here: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/iwantto/applyforaparkingpermit>

Cambridge Traffic Regulations (Chapter 10.04, Municipal Code)

The 1961 special act of the Massachusetts State Legislature that created the Traffic and Parking Department, also authorizes the Director of Traffic, Parking, and Transportation to create, amend, or delete the Cambridge Traffic Regulations. These Traffic Regulations describe rules for the use of Cambridge streets, including regulation of parking and curb space, installation of traffic control devices (traffic signals, signs, and markings), and creation of traffic restrictions (one-way streets and local speed limits). The Traffic Regulations are the main way that various types of parking in Cambridge are established and managed.

Read details here: <https://www.cambridgema.gov/traffic/aboutus/trafficregulations>

Parking Meters

See [Traffic Regulations](#).

Potential Strategies and Actions

This is our first attempt⁶ at potential strategies and actions that grew out of the Parking Study's community engagement process. This includes the ideas that community members and City staff proposed. We reflected on the following questions: What do members of our community need? Who is impacted when those needs are not met? What policy changes can help meet those needs? And what other benefits can those changes bring beyond addressing the original need?

Some of these would be small adjustments and some would be really big shifts in how parking works in our city.⁷ **We would like to understand which of these potential actions best addresses your parking needs? And which of these do you feel would make your parking experience worse? We will consider this feedback when we revise the report.**

Please send comments to parkingstudy@cambridgema.gov.

Strategy 1: Use existing parking better

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
|----------|---|---|--|
| Action 1 | One type of off-street parking can only be legally used by people going to a specific building (like residents, employees, or visitors). This is called "accessory" parking. | Make it legal for property owners to allow some people to use their private off-street parking even if they aren't going to a specific building. | People have told us that it's frustrating when accessory parking sits empty because only people in a specific building can use it. If those spaces were available to more people, they would have more parking options. |
| Action 2 | Most parking in new developments near restaurants, shops, and offices, can only be used by the people in the new buildings, but not the wider community. | Allow and encourage more public parking (free or paid) in commercial or mixed-use areas. This is called "principal use" parking. | Principal use parking can be used by more people. For example, this would make it possible for parking near an office building to be used by restaurant customers at night. |
| Action 3 | Cambridge has a Parking Freeze that limits the total number of parking spaces that are available to the public for a fee. That makes it illegal to rent out parking spaces without a Commercial Parking Permit issued by the Commercial Parking Control | Form the Commercial Parking Control Committee to be able to issue permits for the remaining spaces that are allowed under the current freeze, but that don't currently exist in the city. OR | The Commercial Parking Control Committee (CPCC) currently has about 1,000 parking spaces left that it can permit property owners to rent out. However, permitting 1,000 spaces would result in creating parking for new users, which would increase traffic. It's also possible that allowing people to rent out parking when they aren't using it might make it easier to reduce the number of spaces in the city without |

⁶ We revised the document on December 14, 2022, after trying to make some parts of it easier to understand.

⁷ For example, when we consider changes to on-street parking policies, it is important to structure these regulations in a way that can be enforced by the parking enforcement staff from the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department.

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
|----------|--|---|---|
| | Committee (CPCC). But the CPCC doesn't currently exist, so it is impossible to apply for a Commercial Parking Permit. | Seek Federal EPA approval to eliminate the Commercial Parking Freeze to allow people to rent parking to the public for a fee. | making it harder to park. The Commercial Parking Control process could be a way to make sure that enough new parking is created to meet needs without creating so much parking that it would make traffic worse. But in the long run, we may want to eliminate the Freeze to encourage more flexible use of spaces. If we eliminate the Freeze, Cambridge might be legally required by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency to take a lot of other actions to reduce driving. |
| Action 4 | Parking spaces are not allowed to be used for anything except parking a car. | Allow people to temporarily turn their private off-street parking into recreational areas, storage, bike parking, or another use. | This would allow space to be used flexibly if people don't need it for cars, without getting rid of the parking spaces permanently. The challenge is that people might still own cars but choose to park them on the street. |
| Action 5 | There are rules for how big a parking space must be and how close it can be to a wall or other cars. | Allow more flexibility in parking design, like letting a 2- family house or small businesses park two or more cars behind one another. | Creating some more flexibility in the rules for what counts as "acceptable" parking could allow for more creative parking arrangements and potentially increase the amount of spaces available. There would still need to be some rules to make sure parking areas are safe. |
| Action 6 | Some residents are parking in on-street residential permit spaces even though there is off-street parking in their building. | Study ways to encourage property owners to charge the right price for private parking to reduce the chance of people parking on the street instead. | Focus group participants have noticed unused parking in residential buildings that charge a fee for parking. They say that residential permit parking is cheap while private parking is expensive. Private parking owners need guidance for getting the price right. |
| Action 7 | See Traffic Regulations | Do more enforcement of parking regulations. | Residents asked for more parking enforcement in resident permit areas. |

Strategy 2: Create some new parking

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
|----------|--|--|---|
| Action 1 | The City currently has 3,100 parking meters and 1,700 parking spaces in City lots and garages. | Consider building new City-owned parking on public property. | Community members are wondering if the City can build underground or garage parking on existing City parking lots. At \$100,000 to \$150,000 per parking space, we need to discuss whether this is the best use of public funding and |

| | | | |
|----------|--|---|--|
| | | | scarce land. There are many competing uses for City property (both above and below ground), such as affordable housing, open space, and green infrastructure for stormwater or sanitary storage to reduce flooding and improve water quality. |
| Action 2 | There is an increasing need for quick stopping opportunities at local businesses, and for ride-hail services, The Ride paratransit service, and food and package deliveries. | Create a way to allow more parking for short stops of 30 minutes to 2 hours. Example: Convert spaces to pickup and drop-off (one per residential block and evaluate desirable number on commercial blocks). | Business owners and residents want more loading zones. This would increase parking availability without building new spaces. This supports local businesses and people who work as food delivery drivers. In addition, providing space for loading zones can reduce conflicts between people driving cars and riding bikes, which has gotten worse as people use more delivery vehicles and ridehail vehicles. However, converting existing parking to short-term uses could reduce how much resident and meter parking is available. |
| Action 3 | Driveways in residential areas reduce the amount of public on-street parking that is available, but they only give access to private parking. | Charge an annual fee for driveways that people actively use and pay for programs that increase equity or sustainable transportation. Mark unused curb cuts in a way to tell parkers that it is available to park in front of. | It is unclear how this action would affect parking behavior, but potential benefits might include opening up some additional residential permit parking, reducing the number of curb cuts, and ensuring that private owners pay fairly for using a public asset. A variation could allow residents to have the curb cut for free if they do not get a residential parking permit. |
| Action 4 | The majority of parking in the city is permanent, but parking needs change throughout the year. | Create temporary parking during busy times (ex. near the Post Office two weeks leading up to December holidays). | Focus group participants said they need different amounts of parking at different times of year. Temporarily increasing parking could fill this parking need occasionally, but allow the space to be used in other ways when the parking isn't needed. |

Strategy 3: Provide clear information to residents, business owners, and property owners

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
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| Action 1 | The City provides varying levels of advance notice to businesses about changes to parking. | Give earlier notice to businesses about future changes to public parking (temporary or permanent). Include | Informs businesses who can educate their customers, and reduces traffic/pollution due to circling looking for a spot. |

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| | | information about where there is other parking nearby. | |
| Action 2 | Cambridge regulates parking through zoning, PTDM, commercial parking permits, and public on-street and off-street parking policies. But there is no unified system and no clear guide for how these rules all work together. | Create a unified system of parking rules and make a simple guide that explains how they work together. | People do not understand the complicated ways that our parking rules work together. |
| Action 3 | We do not have a complete inventory of on-street parking spaces. | Create an inventory of on-street parking spaces. | With this information, we will be able to share how many resident permit spaces there are in different parts of the city and compare to the number of resident permit stickers people have. |
| Action 4 | The City, residents, and business owners shovel snow after storms, but people don't always know who is responsible. | Increase education about who should clear snow in different areas (the City, residents, or business owners). | Snow was on people's minds during winter focus groups. There were questions about clearing snow from parking spaces, sidewalks, crosswalk ramps and around schools. |

Strategy 4: Increase equity through parking policy changes

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
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| Action 1 | See Traffic Regulations | <p>Revise the policy for on-street disability spaces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Add more disability spaces to side streets in commercial areas. b) Increase or strengthen enforcement of placard fraud. c) Retain disability parking when converting parking into outdoor dining, bus stops, outdoor event space, etc. d) Continue to design separated bike lanes with disability spaces in mind—against the curb and start after the parking space or make it safe to cross the lane if away from curb, as is the current practice. | People with disabilities suggested these actions in interviews. |

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
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| Action 2 | The number of disability parking spaces is a proportion of the total number of spaces (on private and public property?). | Study how many disability parking spaces are needed compared to non-disability parking spaces. Move to provide an equitable number of disability spaces instead of proportional. | It's getting harder for people for people with mobility difficulties to find parking. As City policy reduces the number of parking spaces, disability spaces are reducing too, but the need is not reducing. We need to better understand the needs of people with disabilities and set policies so that they are not inequitably affected by parking reductions. |
| Action 3 | The City provides some materials in large print format, but navigation can still be difficult for people with disabilities. | Provide assistance and information to people who need help navigating mobility options: a) Create a large print map that shows the locations of all bus stops in city. b) Assess City staff schedule to be able to meet people in person to show where bus stops are. | Residents requested these actions during interviews. |
| Action 4 | Parking costs the same for everyone but not everyone who needs parking has the same ability to afford it. Bluebikes memberships are currently available at a discount through an income eligible program. The MBTA offers discounts for children, people with disabilities, seniors, some students, some youth. https://www.mbta.com/fares/reduced | Help people who are less able to afford to pay for a variety of mobility options. | People said they need help paying for a variety of mobility options. They believe that parking should be more equitably available to people who need it. The City could investigate programs that would allow people to pay more equitably for off-street parking or other transportation options. Programs could potentially use funds raised through other actions. |
| Action 5 | Residents in affordable housing units in market rate buildings receive a discounted parking space for one car. They pay full price to park additional cars. Buildings charge varying amounts for visitor parking. | Study parking needs of residents living in affordable housing units: a) Determine whether to change how parking fees are calculated for inclusionary housing units. b) Require that multi-family residential | Limited parking options have inequitable effects on people who have fewer choices. These actions were suggested by residents in affordable housing units in market rate buildings and City staff who work on affordable housing programs. |

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
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| | | <p>buildings make visitor parking available at affordable prices (ex. less than \$25 per hour).</p> <p>c) Consider how much resident permit parking and meter parking is near buildings with inclusionary rental units.</p> | |
| Action 6 | People have the same access to public parking, whether or not they experience difficulties in life. | Create a program for some people to have discounted and/or priority public parking. Could depend on income, ability, or other criteria the community identifies. | Interviews revealed a desire for parking priority to be given to some groups of people, for example, people who are staying in domestic violence shelters. |
| Action 7 | Access to affordable grocery options is important to people with low incomes, but there is only one bus that stops close to Market Basket and it only travel to Lechmere in Cambridge. | Try running a shuttle to Market Basket to help people without a car access affordable groceries. | Staff suggested this action based on their understanding of needs experienced by Cambridge residents with low incomes. |
| Action 8 | Cambridge has many programs to help income-eligible residents with expenses (ex. housing costs, fuel assistance, etc). There are no current programs to support low-wage workers who are not also residents. | Identify costs the City could help pay for income-eligible residents and low-wage workers. The goal is to support people who work in nonprofits, restaurants, and other important parts of Cambridge's local business community. | People are experiencing higher costs in all areas of life and the City might be able to give some relief without encouraging driving as an unintended consequence. |
| Action 9 | Restaurants are having a difficult time attracting and retaining workers, in part because they say it is difficult for employees to commute to work from cities where they can afford to live. | <p>Help restaurants support employees getting to work by:</p> <p>a) Increasing support for hiring local employees through the Office of Workforce Development.</p> <p>b) Running a shuttle between Cambridge and Everett, Chelsea, or other areas where workers live.</p> <p>c) Adding Bluebikes stations near work sites</p> | <p>Staff suggested a) , and business owners requested b) and c) in interviews.</p> <p>Note: Business owners also requested that the City create a small business parking permit and allow them to use the permit flexibly among employees, allowing employees to park at a meter or residential space during their shift. But creating a small business permit to allow employees to park in residential areas will not be possible. On July 29, 2019, the City Solicitor issued a legal opinion stating the reason this program cannot happen</p> |

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
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| Action 10 | One type of off-street parking can only be legally used by people going to a specific building (like residents, employees, or visitors). This is called "accessory" parking. | Change accessory parking requirements by either: a) Eliminating minimum parking requirements, or b) Reducing minimum parking requirements based on a study of how much parking is needed for each land use, and revise over time. | Residents requested this action because accessory parking serves people in a particular building, not the larger community need. Creating more parking than is needed for a particular building forces people to pay hidden costs for parking that they don't use. The City Council made this amendment in October 2022 to eliminate minimum parking requirements. |
| Action 11 | Transportation demand management programs make it easier for employees, customers, and visitors to not drive. The City has a Parking and TDM program that applies to 26,000 parking spaces, and 48,000 employees, or a third of all employees in Cambridge. There is a TDM program for small businesses that provides information about employees' commuting options. | Evaluate and potentially expand transportation demand management programs in the city: a) Create a new program for small businesses to help customers and employees come by all transportation options. Provide updated transportation options packet for businesses. b) Expand the PTDM Ordinance to include residents and projects without parking, etc. c) Include TDM strategies in other regulations like zoning, the Parking Freeze, etc. d) Evaluate whether and how City TDM programs produce equitable outcomes. e) Evaluate a fare-free bus pilot or a program to provide a free T pass to every Cambridge resident. | Expanding TDM would provide sustainable transportation support to people beyond the current group of employees and residents who receive it. |
| Action 12 | Parking maximums in zoning and the parking freeze limit the number of parking spaces in the city. or Parking maximums in zoning limit the number of parking spaces based on how many people we think will want | Put limits on the amount of new parking that can be created based on studies of how much traffic is acceptable. | City staff suggested this action in response to a citywide need to reduce traffic to ensure future access and mobility opportunities for Cambridge residents and reduce the impacts of traffic on people who cannot or do not drive. |

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
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| | <p>come to a site.</p> <p>The parking freeze limits the number of parking spaces in the city based on how many public parking spaces we wanted to allow in the 1970s.</p> | | |

Strategy 5: Improve the experience of driving, parking, walking, biking, taking a bus and train, scooting, sharing a ride, and sharing a car

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
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| Action 1 | The City currently registers privately owned commercial parking spaces that may be used by any type of user for a fee, but does not track whether private spaces are offered to the public for free. | Register private parking that is available to the public for free. Evaluate whether City should support an app that helps people find available parking and see the price. | Providing clear parking information to customers and employees could ease the frustration of having limited parking available. |
| Action 2 | Cambridge has a meter payment app, but some people don't know it exists and others don't know how to use it. | Make garage and parking lot signs easy to read. Make parking information available to the public in other ways. Give clear information and ongoing trainings to learn how to use the parking meter payment apps. | Easy-to-understand signs can reduce the amount of time people spend looking for parking. Relatedly, people in interviews expressed confusion about the meter payment apps. |
| Action 3 | People pay for parking at City meters and lots with cash, the meter payment app, or at a pay station. Private garages and lots have their own payment system, which varies from place to place. There is no consistent system throughout the city. | Consider making the payment process the same for both public and private parking. | Standardized payment could help people have easier access to a greater range of parking facilities. This is also a possible way to regulate commercial parking under a City ordinance. |
| Action 4 | <p>The City website tells people how to park a car in Cambridge and where there are parking lots and garages, meters and disability spaces. There is no list of loading zones available.</p> <p>The City collects feedback on changes to street design before and after it</p> | Create a driver's guide for where to find all types of parking in Cambridge and how to drive in new street infrastructure. | People are asking for clear communication from the City, to reduce their confusion and make it less stressful to go about their lives. This includes understanding loading zone rules and locations, and learning how to use the new street designs. |

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
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| | appears on the street, but people must figure out how to use it through personal experience. | | |
| Action 5 | Cambridge has a lot of new people coming into the city every year, either as students, or short-term workers, or tourists. | Send out City workers to help people understand how to get around at high-confusion times. These might include the beginning of school years, or when it's time to get used to a new street design. | This action was inspired by interviews in which people expressed confusion. |
| Action 6 | The City website contains policies and plans for transportation in Cambridge. But there are many pieces in different places and some of it is described in complicated, inaccessible language. | Create a short presentation and videos to explain decisions that led to today's transportation system. Work with Community Engagement Teams to share plans and ensure that underheard, underserved, and historically excluded communities learn about changes. | People would like to know how decisions are made about changing policies and infrastructure, and what is coming next. Staff see a need to bring a broad diversity of people to City mailing lists. |
| Action 7 | <p>Having a residential parking permit does not guarantee that people will find a space to park.</p> <p>Residents can request the City not enforce residential permit program rules during gatherings, so that multiple visitors can attend, but many people do not know this is an option or do not know how to request this.</p> | <p>a) Make changes to resident and visitor parking permit program. Goals include:</p> <p>a) Make it easier to have more than one car visit for a large gathering. Better educate people on visitor parking options.</p> <p>b) Ensure that people with permits will be able to find parking space. (For example, study whether to limit the number of permits to reduce competition for spaces).</p> <p>c) Prevent people from using more than their fair share of the residential permit parking.</p> <p>d) Increase the yearly cost of resident permits. This would be part of a means-tested equity program that would provide discounts for people who are less able to pay the higher cost.</p> | <p>People are frustrated that it is difficult to find residential permit parking in some areas. They are also affected by not having enough visitor parking—they feel socially isolated because it's difficult for a full range of friends and family to come visit them. This action aims to address how parking fits into people's whole lives and not just their commute needs.</p> <p>Action d) could discourage car ownership and bring the cost closer to off-street parking costs.</p> |
| Action 8 | The number of carsharing vehicles located in Cambridge has been declining since ride-hail became popular. | Allow carsharing spaces in all residential areas. | Increasing access to carshare reduces the need to own a private car. Equitable distribution is important. |

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
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| | Carshare spaces are currently limited to 25% of parking spaces in residential areas. Driveways of single-family residential homes may not be used as a carsharing vehicle space. | | |
| Action 9 | The City focuses on places with high bus delay or high unreliability to identify locations that will benefit from various bus priority changes. | Install bus priority projects on important bus routes. | Dedicated lanes, transit signal priority, and other changes to traffic patterns allows bus trips to become more reliable and quicker. |
| Action 10 | Find It Cambridge lists private afterschool activity options. | Connect more private afterschool activity options with Find It Cambridge. Clarify how kids can take a Cambridge public school bus to the private afterschool activity | Residents want more afterschool options they don't have to drive to. |
| Action 11 | People have two choices for riding a bicycle in Cambridge: rent a Bluebikes bike or get a private bike. | Give people access to a bicycle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Expand the group of people eligible for discounted Bluebikes memberships. b) Expand Bluebikes network to meet the Bike Plan goal of one station every 1/8 mile. c) Provide bikes, helmets, and lessons on how to fix a bike to income-eligible residents and workers. | Focus group members expressed a desire for more people to have access to bicycles. |
| Action 12 | The City offers bicycle education workshops throughout the year, free for people who work or live in Cambridge. | a) Revise bike education workshops to include etiquette. Work with bike advocates to spread the word about safe cycling behavior. | Many people in focus groups and interviews thought that too many bicyclists ride recklessly and/or selfishly. |
| Action 13 | Cambridge offers many programs to encourage people to try walking, biking, and taking transit. | Launch annual September event encouraging people to try active transportation to capture the Fresh Start Effect. | This action was inspired by interviews with business owners. |
| Action 14 | Cambridge encourages social interaction through its community cookouts, Dance Party, Block Party permit program, the Public Space Lab, and other programs. | Support more social mixing between different groups of people. There are many ways to strengthen social relationships within a community. We would like to hear more ideas for what would help you feel like part of the Cambridge community. | The study revealed a deep need to increase community connections if we are going to be able to engage in difficult transportation conversations. |
| Action 15 | The City has a strong understanding of traffic safety from its work with local and national data and research. We | Identify actions that would improve people's feelings of personal safety. | Feelings of personal safety affect people's transportation choices. |

| Number | Current Rule or Process | Potential Action | How the Action Responds to the Study |
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| | have more to learn about peoples' personal safety needs. | | |