



## WORKING GROUP MEETING

Monday, July 22, 2019

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Cambridge Public Health Department

119 Windsor Street

Working Group Members	City Staff
Joseph Aiello	Tegin Teich – CDD
Jason Alves	Andrew Reker – CCD
Rebecca Bowie	Jerry Friedman - DPW
Christopher Cassa	Susanne Rasmussen - CDD
Tom Evans	
Amy Flax	<b>Consultants</b>
Kathryn Lachelt Brown	Joseph Maliawco
Caroline Lowenthal	James Turnbull
Sarabrent McCoy	Jason Degray
Brad Pillen	Christi Apicella
Diana Prideaux-Brune	Natalie Raffol
Robert Ricchi	
Jose Luis Rojas	
Katrina Sousa	<b>Public</b>
<b>Not here:</b>	Katrina Sousa
Nicholas Dard	K. Britts
Tony Lechuga	Bill Byrn
Michelle Lower	
Bill McAvinney	
Miguel Perez-Luna	
Dalila Salcedo	
John Sanzone	
Florence Toussaint	
Samantha Tracey	

**Key:**

**CDD = Community Development Department**

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

The following is a meeting summary of the Working Group Meeting #2 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 Tegin Teich, Transportation Planner for the City of Cambridge, with a brief round of introductions of the Working Group, project team, City staff, and other meeting attendees. Working Group members agreed that the meeting location works well and can be used for future meetings.

Tegin provided a refresher of the purpose of the Working Group, purpose of the Grand Junction Multi-use Path project and review of the ground rules developed at the first Working Group meeting.

### **Recap of Meetings Held to Date**

Andy Reker, Assistant Transportation Planner for the City of Cambridge, provided an overview of the recent project meetings and outreach.

- *Working Group Meeting 1, April 30<sup>th</sup>*: The first Working Group meeting reviewed project basics and the project scope, which involves designing a path within the City limits of Cambridge, excluding regional connections. An icebreaker activity with the Working Group showed that members envision using a future Grand Junction path as a corridor for commuting, exercise, safe cycling, and as a connection to other modes. A visual preference dot exercise revealed the Working Group's likes and dislikes with other multi-use paths in the country.
- *Public Meeting 1, June 4<sup>th</sup>*: The visual preference exercise used for the Working Group was modified to survey the public's likes and dislikes for multi-use path elements such as wayfinding, separation between walkers and bikers, and barrier types between the path and tracks. Preferences included having a barrier between tracks and path, distinct wayfinding signage (colorful), well designed path crossings over tracks, and parklets/greenery. Dislikes included paths with too much public art, high chain link fencing, and rubber track crossings. Additional desires included benches, trash bins, and water stations. Attendance at the meeting was approximately 20 people.
- *Mayor's Summer Youth Program*: The City is working with a team of high school students to disperse information to the community. They will be reaching out to residents and targeting where people live.
- *On-going coordination*: There are multiple on-going efforts and agencies that the City is coordinating with, including MassDOT, the MBTA, and MIT, as well as the recently completed

MAPC Pathway Benefits Study, among other recent studies. A Working Group member noted that the Rail Vision meeting released alternatives 1, 2, and 3 and is expected to release alternatives 4, 5, and 6, which include the Grand Junction shuttle, on September 12<sup>th</sup>. Another Working Group member asked if this project is included in the MassDOT Statewide Bicycle Plan. Tegin responded that the City will look into this and clarify the project across agencies.

### **Group Input Session: Visual Photo Tour of Corridor**

Tegin led visual photo tour of the corridor by section based on ownership. Although the scope right now does not include regional connections, thinking and planning for how the path can connect to the greater transportation network is important. Reviewing the corridor map (slide 16), Tegin explained that the section of the path owned by MassDOT remains unfunded and the City needs agreement from MassDOT to use this right-of-way (ROW), though it can still be designed. The portion between Main Street and Broadway is already constructed. North of this the path has been designed and construction is to start imminently. The City is looking at an alignment with one to two tracks to not preclude possible future transit.

A summary of the tour and Working Group comments and questions is provided by section below:

#### **1. MassDOT Owned Section**

This section contains two tracks, generally with a significant amount of available space (not ROW). There are buildings and equipment right up against the tracks in certain locations. The adjacent buildings have mixed ownership.

Near Fort Washington Park, the area surrounding the track is very open and there is a crossing inside the park. The space is a design opportunity to integrate the path with the park/park entrance, though there could be issues with land dedicated as open space. This is the first grade crossing along the southern end of the corridor.

Approaching the MIT-owned section is the crossing at Pacific Street. Here there is more activity adjacent to the tracks. The land uses and access needs must be considered when designing the path. These types of issues and needs are laid out in the MIT feasibility study and the City will have conversations with MIT to consider adjacent land uses. There are also some points in this section where the space narrows with a retaining wall. The challenge will be figuring out how to design a functional path with an at grade crossing, while still servicing the needs of adjacent land uses.

#### Working Group Member Questions:

- Will the survey establish where the ROWs are? Tegin responded that Joe Maliawco with Kleinfelder on the project team, had roll plans that show ROW. The survey is being finalized and is approximately 90% complete.
- Will the side of the tracks that the path is on change? Tegin responded that in the MIT and MassDOT owned sections, it makes sense to put the path on the north side of the tracks, however where the path is currently built/designed it is on the south side, and will have to switch back to the north side. This will be a design challenge and will be laid out as the design details are progressed and intersection treatments are identified.
- What is the status of the Grand Junction Bridge? Tegin responded that the bridge does not fit into the scope of the project and is not funded through any existing project.
- How would a connection be made to the section adjacent to Memorial Drive? Tegin responded that there are constraint issues under the bridge, especially due to support structures. Street connections on either side can be considered, and the City will have to think about how the path will connect through the DCR/Memorial Drive rotary. The City will bring up the importance of a direct connection in this area when meeting with MassDOT and the MBTA.
- What does grade crossing mean? Tegin responded that this is where the path and tracks cross each other at the same level and one of the approaches must stop for the other to cross.
- How much does the ROW narrow at Pacific Street? Tegin responded that the City and project team have the cross-sections and will outline what is able to fit. The path will not need to be narrowed down to a minimum, as it fits closely to the ideal width.
- How will the path interact with new uses – for example, just past Pacific Street there is a retaining wall where Service Drive is located and new MIT undergrad residences, and the nuclear reactor lab? Tegin responded that the ROW narrows by a few feet, but there is still space. There is a high existing fence between the tracks and these uses.
- Are there still two tracks at the end of this section? Tegin responded that there are two tracks, they merge close to Mass. Ave.

#### 2. MIT-Owned Section

The MIT-owned section includes the crossing at Mass Ave., which has a lot of people and traffic crossing the tracks. The ROW for the path narrows at the intersection with Mass. Ave, with uses right up against the tracks. The current usage adjacent to the tracks is something the team will need to work through. This section also contains an overhead structure over the tracks adjacent to the N16 Co-gen Plant.

In the section between Mass. Ave and Main Street, James Turnbull from Kleinfelder on the project team, clarified that the fence is not necessarily the property line. MIT owns all of the ROW including the tracks and an easement was granted to MassDOT to operate rail on the corridor. The ROW is roughly 20 feet, 10-feet off-set from the centerline of the track.

The Albany Street/Vassar Street crossing is another at-grade crossing with a footpath at the garage off Albany Street, currently providing very narrow access to Vassar Street. In the section approaching and underneath the Brain and Cognitive Sciences Complex, it will be a challenge to work with the support structures. This is an area where it will be important to think about how to make the path feel safe and comfortable. The curve towards the end of this section will be a challenge as the path narrows to the opening at the intersection with Main Street.

At Main Street people exit the path on the sidewalk and the path continues by Galileo Galili Way. At this point, where the path goes across the tracks, both the street crossing and track crossing have to be considered. MIT is currently working to improve the Vassar Street cycle track, which could help improve the connection with the existing off-set alignment of the path.

#### Working Group Member Questions:

- Could the second track continue along the right side? Tegin responded that this would have to be addressed in consideration of adjacent land uses.
- Will the community gardens adjacent to the parking garage be moved? Tegin responded that the garden will be moved but there is no specific location known. The new building across the tracks will dramatically change the look and feel of this section. A Working Group member added that the garden is owned by MIT community members such as teachers, staff, and students.
- A comment was made that gardens would be a nice element of the design. Tegin responded that it is both a challenge and opportunity to identify places where elements like gardens can be incorporated. The Transport Kendall report shows what this could look like.
- Could the Cambridge compost program be used to plant gardens along the path? Jerry Friedman, City of Cambridge DPW Supervising Engineer, explained that the compost is shipped to a recycling facility where it is used, but it can be made available for residents, so this is something the City could look into.

### 3. Grand Junction Park

This is the one section of the path that is already built. Along the winding multi-use path are play elements and trees. Galileo Galilei way will be reconstructed to include a one-way cycle track on both sides of the street with sidewalks on both sides as well. This is similar to the area in Boston near Northeastern that has a cycle track and multi-use path. Although there will be facilities on the road, there are multiple desire lines that move through this area due to the road curvature creating a triangular parcel. Some users may come from the path through MIT and follow the cycle track along Binney Street, allowing people walking to be separated from bikers.

#### Working Group Member Questions:

- Would elements like new signage be incorporated into parts of the path that are already constructed or designed? Tegin responded that the goal is to have continuity - elements like signage could be implemented on the existing path to integrate it with new parts of the path. There has already been work done to determine signage and modifications once the path is regionally connected.
- Why is Galileo Galilei Way being reconstructed? Tom Evans, a Working Group member, responded that as a separate project, Boston Properties has been designing the Akamai building at Broadway, and the Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) wanted a cycle track constructed along the whole block while the parcel was redeveloped. The CRA redesigned the whole corridor from where Vassar Street ends to Third Street and property owners are to carry forth the redevelopment. The section is included in the City 5-year plan. Although there is also the multi-use path, having both facilitates on this corridor creates better connections with less overlap between modes and mitigates crossings and conflicts with traffic as there will be facilities on both sides of the street.
- There was a comment supporting the strip of trees shown in Grand Junction Park and desire to see it replicated in other places along the path.
- Is it possible to align the "Little Binney" section so that is on the east side of the tracks instead of the west side to minimize disruption and crossings? Tegin responded that there is a different process to have access to the ROW and would involve land takings, which would be a longer and more complicated process.

### 4. Binney Street Park

Due to the triangular shape of this section, just north of Broadway, it is referred to as the "pork chop" parcel. The section is designed with construction beginning soon. There is an existing sidewalk along the edge that follows the rail alignment. The path will need to cross over "Little Binney", then will run adjacent to the parking garage for One Kendall Square. There is a

constrained width in this location, so creativity will be needed to find solutions that work at the entry point and to continue two track alignment to maximize the available space.

Working Group Member Questions:

- How will the path be impacted by the proposed new Eversource substation? Tegin responded that the proposed substation would only be on part of the parcel. There are the rest of the properties to think about that about the ROW.
- When will the path be constructed? Jerry responded that the design is at about 75% and construction should start by the end of the year.

5. MassDOT/ARE

This section begins north of “Little Binney” and goes up to Cambridge Street. The ARE easement agreement was part of the 399 Binney Street Project. The path would run adjacent to the Linden Park neighborhood and between the Wellington-Harington and East Cambridge neighborhoods. It will be important to think about parking and access needs, especially as it is approaching St. Anthony’s Church. The fence on either side of the track roughly outlines the property to be given to the City. The fence is currently a barrier between the neighborhoods and the design would be an opportunity to better integrate spaces.

Cambridge Street is the final location where the path will switch sides along the tracks. A well-known spot at this location is the Loyal 9 Café seating. This parcel is the most constrained section and a pinch point. A design challenge will be making the path continuous at this intersection. From the edge of the property line there is a 10-foot off-set, as well as grade changes, and a park on the opposite side of Cambridge Street, making it a challenging spot. Past this area, further north, smaller properties with backyard uses abut the MassDOT property.

Working Group Member Questions:

- Would the track along the fence that the residents of the neighborhood put in stay in place? Tegin responded that it is not known where the fence lays in relation to the ROW. It is a design preference and may prohibit access to the path as an amenity. It is also preferable to not have the path running in a tunnel. A decision has not been made and concerns of the residential neighborhood will be considered by communicating with the community to ensure it feels like a safe space.

- There is a long stretch where it is not possible to cross between Binney Street and Cambridge Street – a pedestrian must walk very far to get between neighborhoods, and it would be cool to see a pedestrian way across the tracks. Tegin responded that the CRA funded a grant to understand potential desire lines and connections. The challenge is that any additional at-grade crossings will require approval from MassDOT, which will have safety concerns.
- A Working Group member asked if overhead crossings were an option, such as an overhead bike/pedestrian bridge. Crossings will continue to be a theme for discussions and elements like cost and accessibility will have to be considered. Susanne Rasmussen, City of Cambridge Director of Environmental and Transportation Planning, added that the MBTA has 22-foot required minimum vertical clearance for an overhead structure such as a bridge, and the ramping length and space needed for accessibility on a bike/pedestrian bridge is a key design factor.
- A Working Group member added that the pedestrian underpass between Somerville Avenue and Beacon Street in Somerville is being reconstructed, but the condition seems ok. Tegin responded that it may feel dark, and it is important to think about the land uses around it. Including a gradual approach for ramps to an overpass or underpass requires a lot more space. The group will start to look at local design examples.
- Is there an opportunity to look at the park across Cambridge Street? Tegin responded that changing open space triggers other processes. It might make sense to cross on the side of the tracks with the small building instead of the park. Constructing a path crossing might warrant a signal, which could help improve safety. James from the project team added that the two intersections abutting the railroad crossing meet a signal warrant, but the signal was not recommended due to the development of the path and complication of the tracks. Working group members “air knocked” to support signalization.

#### 6. CHA to Somerville

This section north of Cambridge Street contains a retaining wall and fence along the eastern side. This represents a hard edge and barrier to the surrounding neighborhood.

Tegin then briefly reviewed regional connections and intersections with existing transit. The current version of the Cambridge Bike Plan was shown, which identifies the Grand Junction path regionally connecting across and outside of Cambridge. The MAPC Landline network includes this as a regional connection as well, though the State Bicycle Transportation Plan does not, with a focus more on state roadways rather than a multi-use path network.



Preserving transit on the corridor is important, but it is also important to think about all of the public transit that crosses at each intersection with the tracks. MBTA bus routes 1 and CT1 (soon to be combined) serve as the main spine of the region as they run along Mass. Ave. Thinking about safety and creating an integrated network, especially at intersections, will be a challenging but crucial component of the project.

## **Public Comment**

Tegin then opened the meeting up to any additional questions by Working Group members or the public:

- How can the path be designed for both industrial and residential areas? Tegin responded that the path is going to look and feel different across the corridor based on the character of the individual section. The design may feel different, but it will still also be a contiguous, consistent path.
- How will outreach be conducted to serve all types of populations who will use the path, and not just about its use for physical activity? Tegin responded that the City will make sure the path is a place where people feel safe and comfortable, that it is well lit, separated from the tracks, and that crossings are safe. It will be important to attract people in the outreach process who do not attend these meetings. The goal is to design the path for all ages and abilities. For example, the path will run next to the Cambridge Health Alliance (CHA), so the group will need to think about what access looks like at this location vs. access in a more industrial area to make sure everyone can comfortably cross the path.
- The part of the path under MIT would be a cool spot for street art, as well as an area to make feel welcoming. Can the project tap into the federal program for safety/grade crossings? Tegin responded that the City is coordinating with rail and trail groups, as well as a MassDOT special task force. The Cambridge Director of Public Art will be invited to a Working Group meeting to discuss what kinds of art would make sense and the process for integrating art.
- The setback of private buildings is important as it can change the feel of the path. It would not be preferable to create a tunnel where walkers will not feel comfortable. Tegin responded that building setbacks will be considered. For example, Alexandria's petition for zoning for 25-foot setbacks with trees. Having buildings along the path every now and then would be less suppressive, more inviting and healthier with the incorporation of trees. There is a need to think beyond the scope in terms of how elements like this affect the experience of path users.
- Many people believe there is not enough space along the tracks for a path. Tegin responded that there are two areas of sustained constraint, and otherwise just a few points. There is the ideal cross-section, and then room for play. Even in a constrained condition the path would be over minimum requirements.

- Is lighting part of the design scope? Tegin responded that it is, and that lighting is a double edge sword in residential areas, as the path should be lit for safety, but lights should not be interfering with residences. Susanne added the example of the DCR path at the water treatment plant in Watertown where lighting is designed to only hit the path and nothing off of the path surface.

### **Group Feedback and Homework**

Christi Apicella from McMahon Associates on the project team provided a review of stakeholder outreach and homework for Working Group members to complete by the next meeting. The City and project team are looking to the Working Group to identify stakeholders they should speak to so that concerns can be addressed before the project goes into design. This includes groups that meet regularly that can distribute information, email out a fact sheet, or have the City come to a meeting and present (it was asked that Working Group members let the City know of specific dates and times that would work for specified groups). Working Group members are to ask others to sign up for website updates and the project email notification list.

Working Group members also were asked to complete a homework assignment before the next meeting on October 1, 2019. The assignment involves visiting Grand Junction Park (among several other suggested locations sent out in a worksheet following the meeting) and to think factors such as access, connections, safety and amenities. Some sample questions include:

- How do people access the area – by walking, biking, EZRide shuttle, bus?
- How will people get to the path? What are the important connections?
- What amenities do you think are important?
- How do your answers change based on day of the week, night vs. day, by mode, as an individual vs. someone traveling with children or elderly parents?

A worksheet with locations and questions to record observations will be sent out to Working Group members following the meeting.

It was also noted the 6<sup>th</sup> Street path by the Volpe Center could be visited to serve as another example to record likes and dislikes.

### **Upcoming Meetings Schedule**

Christi wrapped up the meeting by reviewing the upcoming meeting schedule. Meetings will only be held if the City and project team have something to share. They will go into design after this meeting and consider things like which side of the tracks the path will go on in each segment. The next meetings will be held in the fall to go over design ideas. During this time the City and project team will be working with agencies, the public, and larger landowners. Tentative dates for upcoming meetings are Tuesday, October 1, 2019 for the Working Group and Tuesday, October 29, 2019 for the public meeting. The project website will be updated with information such as meeting minutes, boards from the public meeting, and project updates.