

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING NOTES

Date, Time & Place:
October 5, 2016, 5:30-7:30
MIT building E25, room 117

Attendance

Committee Members

John Attanucci, Devin Chausse, Charlie Fineman, Doug Manz, Katherine Rafferty, Simon Shapiro, Arthur Strang, Saul Tannenbaum, and Alex Taylor

City of Cambridge

Tegin Bennett and Cleo Stoughton (Community Development)

Presenters, official entities, and members of the public

Three members of the public were present. Philip Groth (MBTA) was present.

Committee Introductions, Administrative Business, and Updates

September notes were not approved because quorum was not met.

Public Comment

There were no public comments at this time.

Bus Priority Outreach Materials

City staff presented ideas for a webpage and brochure to increase awareness and understanding of bus priority concepts and sought input from the Committee.

Discussion:

- The Committee and public suggested using a format that would be simple to put together and easy to browse.
- The Committee discussed the potential audience for the materials and what kinds of content would be appropriate for different audiences.
- There was general encouragement to place the most compelling and interesting information upfront. For example, limit the “background” section but do lay out the goals, show examples of bus priority designs and tie them where possible to previous and ongoing efforts, and make it clear what the benefits are to using these designs. Emphasize that bus priority is part of getting people to shift modes.
- The Committee and public were encouraged to send City staff examples of similar materials if they see any.

Project Updates

City staff gave updates about a few key projects in progress, and the Committee discussed how best to participate in these projects as they move forward.

Kendall Square Mobility Task Force:

- A number of alternative bus routings have been modeled by the consultant carrying out the work of the Task Force. The Committee expressed doubt that it will be possible to prioritize the list of possible routes and create a set of recommendations, especially given the short timeframe for the rest of the Task Force work.
- The Committee noted that proposed routes could be valuable if they: align well to current transfer patterns, provide connections to the Commuter Rail, replace multi-seat rides with one-seat rides, alleviate congestion on the Red and Orange lines, etc.
- The Committee discussed the proposed replacement of the No. 3 Red Line cars, estimated to result in a 50% increase in the number of passengers the Red Line can carry per hour. The Committee noted a number of other potential limitations on the degree to which capacity can, in reality, be increased. In general, though, the Committee supported replacing the No. 3 cars (in addition to replacing older cars).
- The Committee expressed interest in holding a special meeting in November to discuss this work further before the KSMTF public meeting in December.

DCR Mt Auburn Street Corridor study:

- The Committee reviewed the materials for the DCR study presented to date and agreed that their comments should be sent to the study team. Because there was not quorum at the meeting, it was decided after the meeting

that John Attanucci, as Chair of the Committee, would send his impressions of the meeting to the study team, to be followed at a later date by an official letter from the Committee. The Committee's comments included:

- *Introduction of new delay to buses:* One of the stated goals of the study is to "improve transit delays," which the Committee strongly supports. The Committee was concerned that some aspects of the proposed concepts could lead to increased delay for buses:
 - Converting the Mt Auburn Street and Brattle Street intersection to a signalized intersection could result in additional delay due to queueing. One potential solution, if a signalized intersection is indeed warranted, would be to provide a queue jump lane (at least eastbound but preferably in both directions) and Transit Signal Priority for buses. The Committee advocates that the study team assess the impact to buses.
 - Reducing the number of travel lanes at the Mt Auburn Street approach to Fresh Pond Parkway in the westbound direction. Currently, there are two lanes approaching this intersection, and buses tend to use the right lane as an informal queue jump. If this approach is reduced to one lane, buses will be forced to wait in the remaining single-lane queue. Perhaps a formal queue jump lane could be established.
 - Although the Committee strongly supports adding an eastbound bus only lane on Mt Auburn Street between Brattle Street and Coolidge Avenue, it will be important to ensure that, if a westbound travel lane is removed, delay to westbound buses does not outweigh the benefits to eastbound buses.
- *Opportunities to further reduce bus delay:* The Committee urges the design team to consider additional design options that could improve service reliability and mitigate delay:
 - The intersection with Fresh Pond Parkway is a source of delay for buses traveling along Huron Avenue. Queue jumps at both Huron Avenue approaches should be considered. In the westbound direction, the queue jump could begin at the Huron Avenue at Larch Road bus stop.
 - The Committee supports the team's consideration of making the right lane on Belmont Street approaching Mt Auburn Street eastbound into a queue jump lane for buses. The team could consider banning right turns (instead of continuing to permit them) since there are other opportunities to connect from Belmont Street to Mt Auburn Street.
- *Calculating bus delay:* MBTA bus scheduling is based on the 90th percentile of delay. It would be more informative to describe delay along the corridor using that measure in addition to the average delay used in the presentation materials.

Announcements, Events, and Updates

- *Overnight MBTA service:* Jarred Johnson, representing the advocacy group TransitMatters, gave an update on the TransitMatters proposal to the MBTA FMCB to run bus service all nights of the week between about 1-5 AM. This service is intended to primarily serve late and early shift workers and would cost an estimated \$3.5 million per year. The Committee generally supports this proposal and discussed sending a letter to City Council and the City Manager. Because quorum was not met at the meeting, it was decided after the meeting that John Attanucci, as Chair of the Committee, would send his impressions of the meeting to this audience, to be followed at a later date by an official letter from the Committee.
- *City Manager:* Pending contract negotiations, the City has selected a new City Manager: Louis DePasquale.
- *TIS methodology subcommittee meeting:* City staff plan to schedule a subcommittee meeting in early January to discuss the transit analysis methodologies used in transportation impact studies.
- *Tragic crash in Porter Square:* A cyclist was killed in a crash with a large truck in Porter Square in the morning on October 5. The Committee briefly discussed the role of transit in Vision Zero.
- *Focus40:* There is an open house on October 13, which all who are able should attend.
- *Joint Committee meetings:* There was general interest in meeting more often with the Bike and Ped Committees.
- *Green Line Extension:* The MBTA has released a request for letters of interest for design build services.

Final Public Comment

John Hawkinson noted that the City's proposed Green Line Extension expenditure was approved by City Council. The Planning Board hearing date for the Mass + Main project may be November 1. Finally, the City has made progress extending its transit signal priority network to traffic signals.

Adjourned at 7:40 pm