



CENTRAL SQUARE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

REGULAR MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, January 17, 2018

6:00 – 7:30 PM

344 Broadway, 4th Floor Meeting Room

Overview

The Central Square Advisory Committee, as part of its charge to monitor the progress of the non-zoning recommendations of the 2013 Central Square Study, met to receive updates on completed and ongoing improvements, current and upcoming projects, and the prevailing traffic and transportation needs of Central Square (the “Square”). This update focuses on the traffic and transportation sections of the non-zoning recommendations.

I. Central Square Updates

- The **Central Square Public Toilet** has been installed but it is not yet open. Due to low temperatures experience at the beginning of the year, the water pipes were shut off (a lesson learned from the Harvard Square Public Toilet). The pipes will be turned on soon for final testing to check for leaks or damage to the pipes. Barring any setbacks, the toilet will be opened to the public in the coming weeks. **Update (1/29): The Public Toilet is now open to the public.**
- To address flooding and water quality challenges, the City is creating a stormwater facility at **Parking Lot 6** as part of **The Port Infrastructure Project**. This work is currently part of the [Mass + Main Project](#):
 - the foundation work for the Mass + Main buildings - including basement walls and parking structure - are expected to be completed during Summer '18
 - the foundation, plumbing, and utilities for the building at 47 Bishop Allen Drive have been completed; the structure is scheduled to be erected by mid-March and fully enclosed by late Spring '18
- The Central Square Business Association (CSBA) hosted a community-based design charrette on Saturday, January 27th for the redesign and renovation of **Carl Barron Plaza**, part of the **River Street Reconstruction Project**. The CSBA is working with members of the Planners Network Greater Boston to lead an effort “to gather feedback from local stakeholders, constituents and the public to provide recommendations for the plaza to the Department of Public Works.”
- **Star Market** will be leaving its location at 20 Sidney Street.
 - The Mayor hosted a community meeting on Thursday, January 25th from 6-8pm at the Central Square Branch Library regarding this development.
 - The Community Development Department (CDD) received a City Council Policy Order for the City to work with Forest City to find a new grocer for this vacant space that can provide goods at an affordable price. The City has been in touch with local grocers who might be able to fill this vacant space. CDD’s response to the policy order will be available to the public soon.

II. Introduction to Non-Zoning Recommendations

Transportation policy and planning in Cambridge emphasizes the sustainability and equity of all modes of transportation - such as walking, biking, driving, and public transit - and the safety of the individuals who choose to use them. This has included initiatives such as separated bike lanes, parking and traffic demand management, real-time transit data, Vision Zero (decreasing traffic fatalities and serious injuries), and lower speed limits. The City’s approach is to establish a balance across these modes which ultimately promotes a more livable, economically viable, and environmentally-friendly city.

III. Non-Zoning Recommendations (Presentation + Discussion)

Tegin Teich, Transportation Planner for the Community Development Department, gave the following presentation:

1. Central Square Transportation Improvements

2. Discussion*

- The City has installed two solar-powered LED real-time display signs at City-owned bus shelters (Mass Ave @ Porter Station and Western Avenue @ Putnam Ave) as part of a pilot program. The City will work on a maintenance plan and evaluate the pilot to inform the use of the \$150,000 from FY18 Participatory Budgeting funds to install Solar-Powered Real-Time Bus Tracker Displays.
- The City is planning to expand Transit Signal Priority (TSP). TSP was piloted at the intersection of Mass Ave and Brookline St.
 - ***Are the M2 buses also tied into this proposed transit signal priority pilot?***
 - At this time, this TSP pilot only affects MBTA buses.
 - Due to the nature of TSP, giving priority to one street over another to allow buses to get through lights, Mass Ave and Brookline was appropriate for this pilot because the flows of traffic on Mass Ave are prioritized over Brookline Ave. The impact of longer wait times for those on Brookline Ave, while important, would be minimal. This would not be the case for Mass Ave and Prospect St, as an example, which experiences heavy flows of traffic, including buses, in both directions. There would be a greater impact on traffic in Central Square if those on Prospect St had longer wait times.
- ***There was talk during the 2013 Central Square Study about transforming municipal parking lots into affordable housing. Where are we on that and is there a way of pushing that conversation forward?***
 - In recognition of the affordable housing crisis, City Council asked City Administration to “evaluate building below market rental housing on City-owned parking lots along Bishop Allen Drive”. (O-4, December 12, 2016) Currently, there are no concrete plans to convert municipal lots into affordable housing although this continues to be a part of the conversation regarding Central Square.
- ***When it comes to affordable housing in municipal parking lots, in the interim, what would preclude us from adding more parking to those lots in the form of parking structures?***
- ***How do autonomous vehicles impact parking consideration in Central Square?***
 - Autonomous vehicles, and how they impact parking, has been and is an ongoing conversation at the local, regional, and state level. If it happens, when it happens, the City would like for it to happen in a way that best meets the city’s needs, both in practice and in policy.
- ***Ride-hailing services (such as Lyft and Uber) have become more of a nuisance. What can be done about that?***
 - The City is exploring several methods to address conflicts that arise from ride-hailing vehicles picking up and dropping off at cubs, which does include enforcement, but also can include designating areas for pick-up/drop-off.

****Text formatted as such indicates questions asked by Committee members.***

IV. Public Comments

- *Is it possible to put a sign on the public toilet to let the public know why it is not yet open?*
 - DPW will be contacted regarding this. **Update (1/29): The Public Toilet is now open to the public.**
- *Regarding the transit screen at the Senior Center, there were times where it did work when it was first installed, and it was very helpful. But, when the Hubway information was included, the text became much smaller thereby making it more difficult to read.*
 - The screens are not managed by the City, but by a third-party. There have been changes made that the City did not request, and staff has worked to correct these issues.
- *There are legitimate safety concerns regarding the condition of the Central Square stop on the Red Line. What can be done about that?*
 - The City is aware of these issues and continues to make known to the MBTA the public safety concerns that are present in many stations in Cambridge.
- *There ought to be more enforcement of people who ride bicycles that ignore red lights at intersections where there are no cars coming in a certain direction, for example, in from of the Post Office opposite Inman Street.*
 - The City looks at all types of bad behavior on the roadway and ways to improve them through good design, providing safer and more comfortable facilities, and working with police on enforcement
- *Regarding concerns of Uber and Lyft drivers parking or idling in places where they are not allowed to, I believe that having the right infrastructure that discourages this type of behavior helps, but it's not a magic bullet. I think it's more a matter of enforcement.*
- *When the City announces a pilot project, at some point, that project ought to come back to the public for further deliberation and conversation with relevant data and findings before a final decision is made. For example, the protected bike lane pilot at Mass Ave in front of the Mass + Main site (Northbound from Sidney St to Douglass St) will be a permanent project. While I'm not opposed to it, I would've preferred that it came back to the public before that decision was made. There must be a continuous conversation about the utilization of the right-of-way.*

V. Next Meeting & Next Steps

There are no meetings scheduled at this time.

Committee Members Present

- Joel Alstein
- Esther Hanig
- Tahir Kapoor
- Michael Monestime
- Christopher Sol Gully
- Robert Winters

Committee Members Absent

- Melissa Greene
- Drew Kane

Guest Presenter

- Tegin Teich, *Transportation Planner, Community Development Department*

Committee Staff

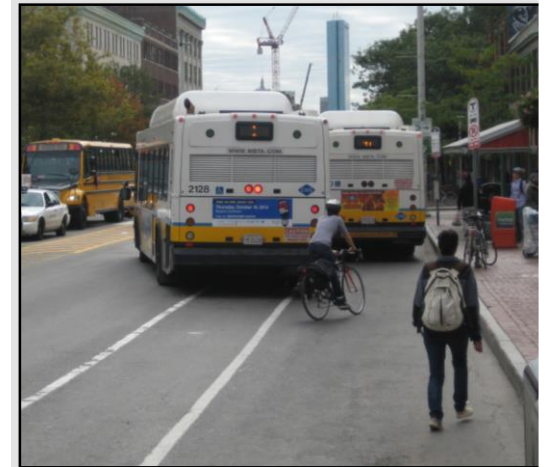
- Wendell Joseph

There were two (2) members of the public in attendance.

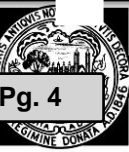
Presentation to the Central Square Advisory Committee

Central Square Transportation Improvements

January 2018



Communication: Central Square Transportation Improvements (Non-Zoning)



Contents

- Completed and ongoing improvements for people who walk, bike, and take transit
- Recently completed studies relevant for Central Square
- Review of MBTA Service Plan Tiers
- Ongoing and upcoming major construction projects
- Ongoing needs and discussion

Completed and Ongoing Improvements

- Improvements for people who walk:
 - Mass Ave sidewalk improvements
 - Essex Street – sidewalks widened 1-foot on east side, Mass Ave to Bishop Allen
 - Pearl Street sidewalk reconstruction
 - Public toilet



Completed and Ongoing Improvements

- Improvements for people who bicycle:
 - Bicycle parking – additional capacity for approximately 80 additional bicycles and 1 FixIt stand complete, primarily in the blocks closest to the MBTA station
 - Parking protected bicycle facility near Main Street piloted and will be made permanent



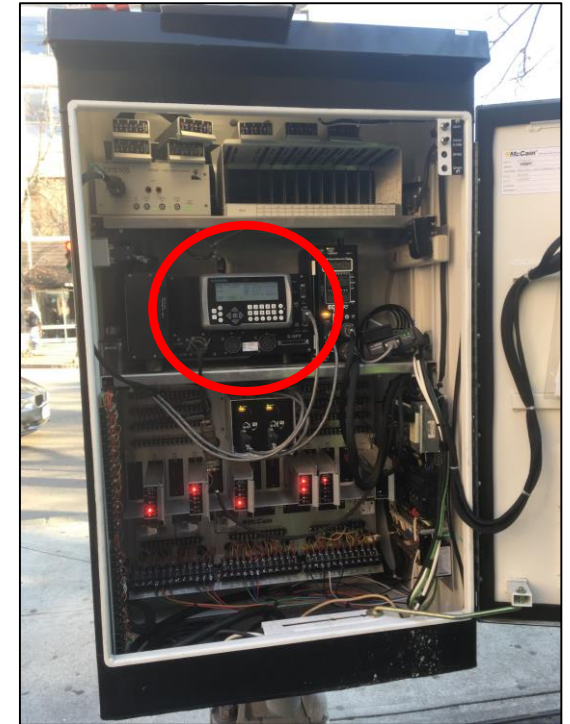
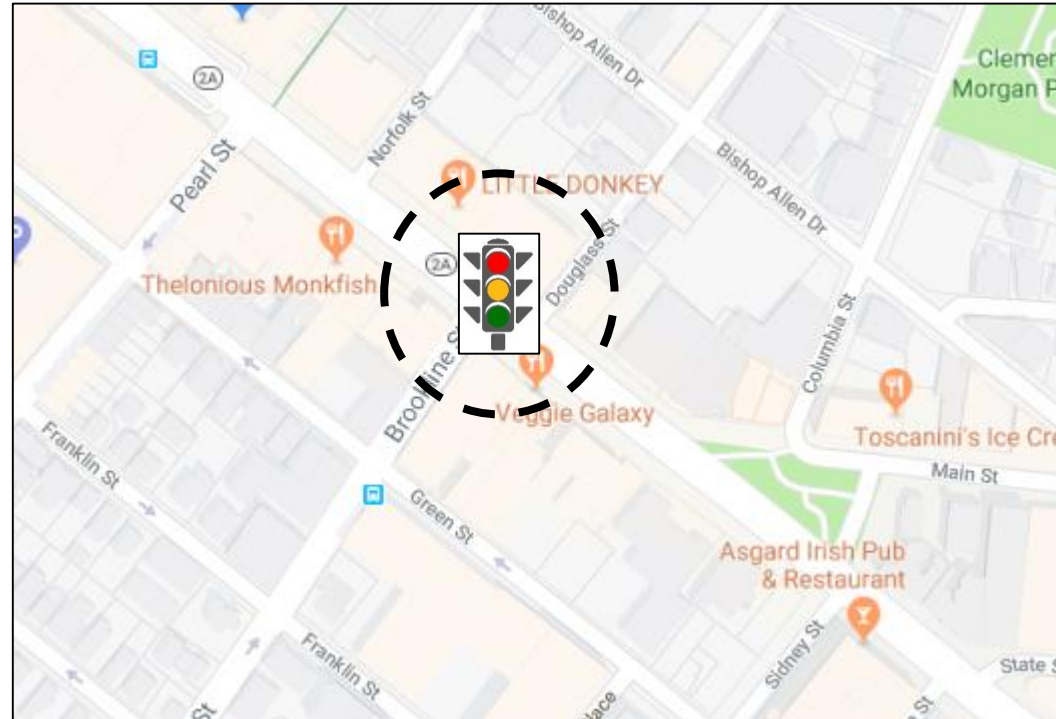
Completed and Ongoing Improvements

- Improvements for people who take transit:
 - Green Street curb extension and shelter installed in 2018



Completed and Ongoing Improvements

- Improvements for people who take transit:
 - Transit signal priority (TSP) pilot at Mass Ave and Brookline for Routes 1 and CT1
 - Participatory budgeting money exists for expanding TSP on Mass Ave for the #1 bus.

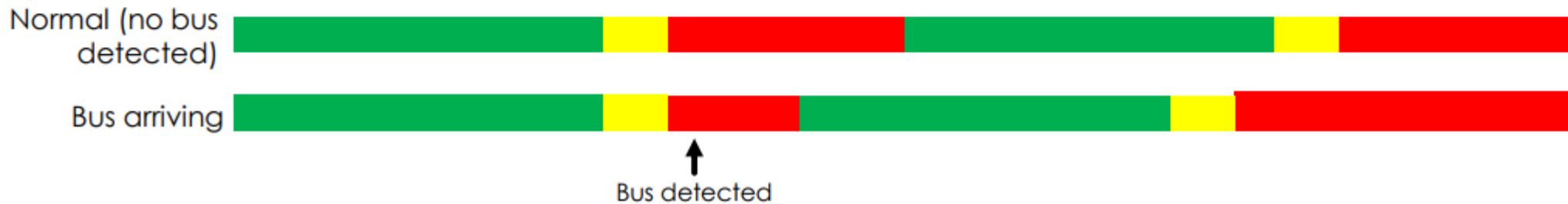


How Transit Signal Priority (TSP) Works

▶ Green extension

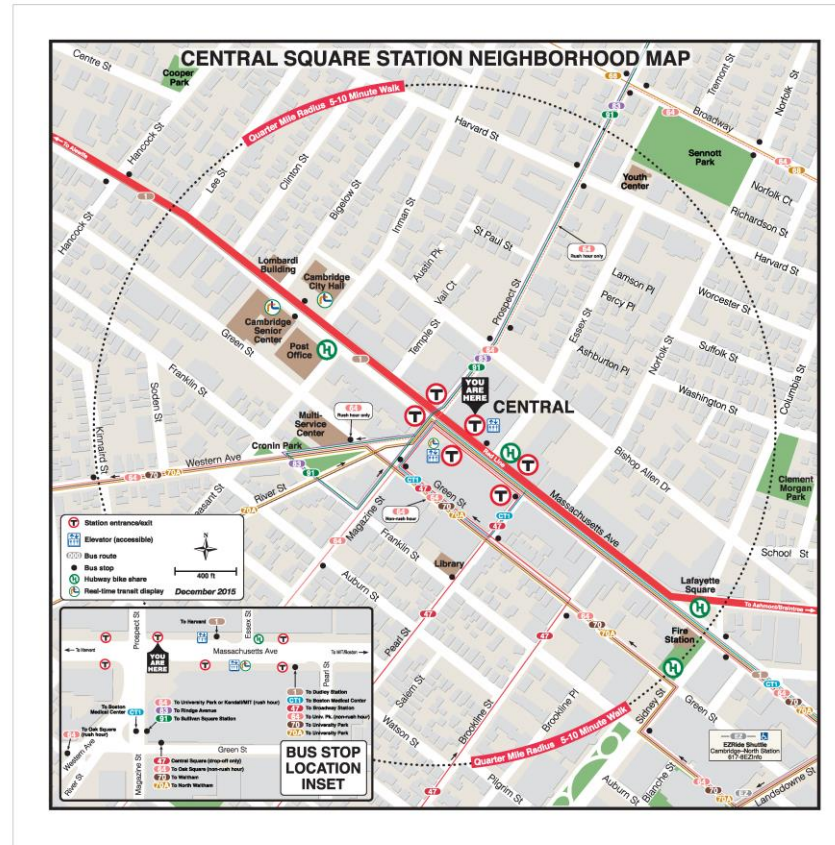


▶ Early green/red truncation



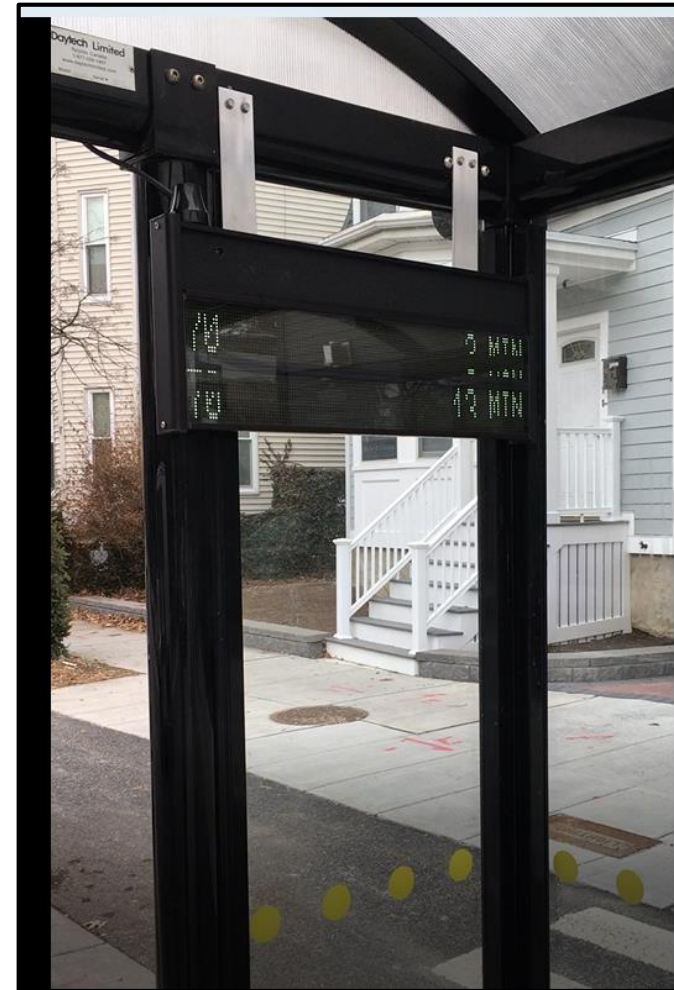
Completed and Ongoing Improvements

- Improvements for people who take transit:
 - MBTA installed neighborhood map in stations
 - MBTA installed screen with real-time information



Complete and Ongoing Improvements

- Improvements for people who take transit:
 - MBTA elevator reconstruction (expected Spring 2018)
 - City's real-time sign pilot (Western at Putnam shown)
 - Considering improving artistic shelters on Mass Ave

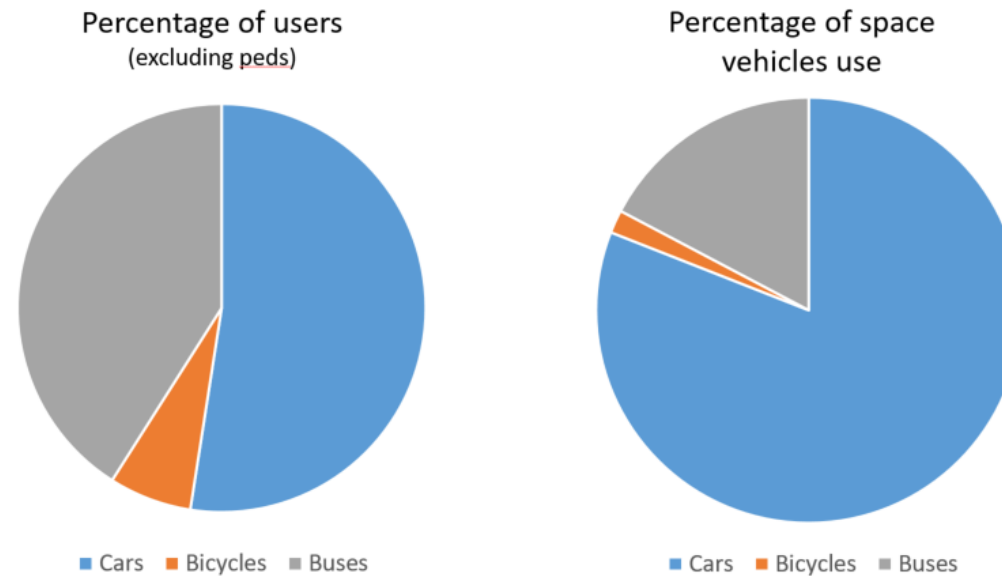


Communication: Central Square Transportation Improvements (Non-Zoning)

Recently Completed Studies

- Additional studies:
 - Gathered multi-modal counts and curb use information for all of Mass Ave in 2016
 - Completed NACTO Transit Program Accelerator, to develop internal capacity and explore bus priority improvements on Mass Ave.

Central Square - AM peak hour (8AM-9AM)



41% of users are on buses, which take up 17% of the space

Completed Studies

Central Square - AM peak hour (8AM-9AM)

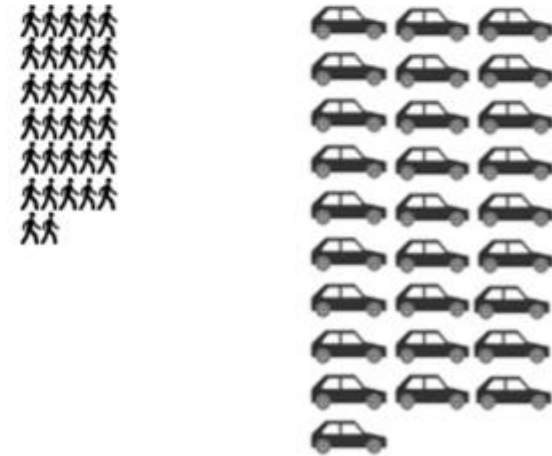
670 people... ...walking



250 people... ...on 12 buses



320* people... ...in 280 cars



40* people... ...on 40 bikes



*count from 2011

*using work-related occupancy of 1.13
(<http://nhts.ornl.gov/2009/pub/stt.pdf>)

MBTA Service Planning

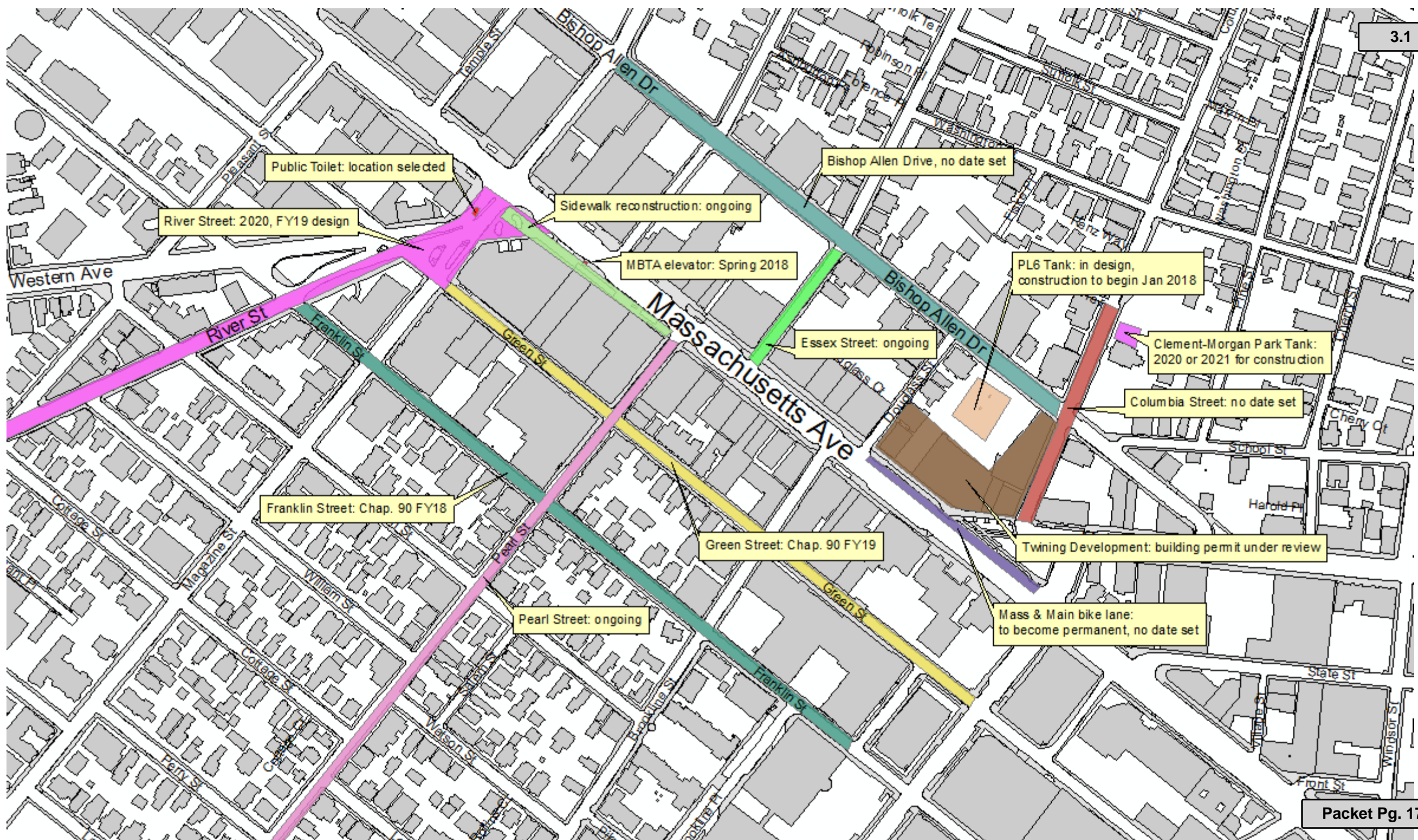
Tiered Approach Bus – Service and Improvement Plans



Tier 1 GOOD	Unlikely to meet all Service Delivery Policy Standards, but will support improvements.	Cost Neutral Options
Tier 2 BETTER	Will likely meet a subset of the Service Delivery Policy Standards. This tier will require investment and/or partnerships.	\$\$
Tier 3 BEST	Will meet most, if not all, of the Service Policy Standards. This tier will require partnerships and greater investment.	\$\$\$

Ongoing and Upcoming Major Reconstruction Projects

- Pearl Street (ongoing, expected completion 2018)
- Essex Street (ongoing, expected completion 2018)
- Franklin Street (starting in FY2018)
- River Street (starting in FY2019)
- Green Street (starting in FY2019)
- Columbia St and Bishop Allen (no date set)



Public Toilet: location selected

River Street: 2020, FY19 design

Sidewalk reconstruction: ongoing

MBTA elevator: Spring 2018

Bishop Allen Drive, no date set

PL6 Tank: in design, construction to begin Jan 2018

Clement-Morgan Park Tank: 2020 or 2021 for construction

Columbia Street: no date set

Essex Street: ongoing

Twining Development: building permit under review

Franklin Street: Chap. 90 FY18

Green Street: Chap. 90 FY19

Mass & Main bike lane: to become permanent, no date set

Pearl Street: ongoing

Communication: Central Square Transportation Improvements (Non-Zoning)

Ongoing Needs

- Station maintenance and improvements (MBTA)
- Enforcement (Police)
- Improved pedestrian environment, transit priority (signals and lanes) and protected bicycle facilities, safe and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities (City)
- Bus service changes: (MBTA)
 - Extend 64 bus service into Kendall Square all day
- Long-term redesign (City)
 - Studies have recommended bus rerouting, bus priority, and protected bicycle facilities
- *What else?*

Thank you!!

Tegin Teich

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