

**MASSAVE4 IMPROVEMENTS
HARVARD SQUARE
COMMUNITY MEETING**

**Wednesday, October 12, 2022
6:00 PM – 7:30 PM
Zoom Virtual Meeting**

City Staff	Consultants
Kathy Watkins, DPW	Christi Apicella, McMahon
Andy Reker, CDD	Natalie Raffol, McMahon
Diane Stokes, DPW	Zoe Dickerson, McMahon
Andreas Wolfe, TPT	Tyson Ross, Kleinfelder
Wally Joseph, IT	Rosie Jaswal, Toole
Jerry Friedman, DPW	Mike McManus, McMahon
	Artie Bonney, Kleinfelder
	Edmund Mitiguy, Kleinfelder

Key:

DPW = Public Works

TPT = Traffic Parking & Transportation

CDD = Community Development Department

Meeting Summary

The community meeting was attended by 38 members of the public.

Welcome

Kathy Watkins, Cambridge DPW opened the meeting by introducing the pre-recorded presentation available on the project website and providing an overview of the meeting agenda.

Presentation

The recorded presentation was played describing the project background and history, the existing conditions and multimodal design considerations for the project, and the draft concept for Mass Ave between Harvard Street and Garden Street. It is available to be viewed at:

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/Departments/publicworks/cityprojects/2021/massave4cyclingsafetyordinanceprojectplymptontogarden>

Public Questions and Comments

Kathy briefly introduced the meeting attendees from the City of Cambridge and the Project Team with staff in attendance. She explained that the remainder of the meeting would be a question and answer (Q&A) session. She requested attendees keep the time for questions to two minutes or less.

Kathy explained questions and comments would alternate between verbal questions/comments from attendees and written questions/comments submitted in the Q&A box. Below is a summary of questions and comments categorized by topic and the responses provided.

Sidewalks

- Are the sidewalks getting any smaller? There are so many pedestrians, and we want to make sure they're treated well. Will there be a significant physical differential between pedestrians and the bike lanes? I'm concerned about bikes and electric scooters going into the pedestrian area.
 - Rosie Jaswal, Project Team: We are maintaining the existing sidewalk width. We are discussing the use of some kind of physical buffer to keep pedestrians on the sidewalk as we continue to advance the design.
- What will be the new sidewalk material? The existing brick is bumpy, especially for people using any kind of wheeled device – wheelchair, stroller, walker, etc.
 - Kathy Watkins: We have started to use a wire-cut brick instead of a molded brick. Wire-cut brick has the same color variation but is much more regular and less bumpy, which means we can have tighter joints. We have also changed the base material and now use an asphalt base for a smoother surface.
 - Diane Stokes, DPW: We have been doing some test pits in the area. With these we will dig up the existing brick and put in a better base to create a better walking surface.

Crosswalks

- Have we considered raised pedestrian crossings across the side streets? Other nearby streets have raised crossings. Raised crossings help pedestrians and remove the challenges of puddles at curb ramps.
 - Diane Stokes: We haven't looked at raised crossings in detail, but we will look at them as the design moves forward.
- Are we providing crosswalks across Mass Ave at all side streets?
 - Christi Apicella, Project Team: We're going to provide crosswalks where they currently exist. We have looked at other desire lines, but the concern is that those crosswalks would tie in where the bus stops are. We need to have space for curb ramps, and there are concerns about safety with pedestrians crossing right where buses will be stopping and starting. We're currently not proposing any additional crosswalks in this area because of safety concerns.

Bike Lanes

- Will the bike lane be at street level or sidewalk level?
 - Diane Stokes: Bike lane elevation is an ongoing discussion because of potential bicyclist and pedestrian conflicts. We're continuing to look at elevation at different areas along the bike lane. This above ground activity is going on, but we're also looking at what we can do underground. We're looking at drainage structures because we don't want raised bike lanes to puddle. The Red Line tunnel is very shallow in this area, and test pits are ongoing to see what can be done.
- Will there be physical separation between the bike lane and the travel lane?
 - Kathy Watkins: Our goal is to have separation, and there are many different ways of doing this. We are striving for physical separation between cyclists and cars. We're using the Comm Ave bike lanes as potential examples moving forward.
 - Rosie Jaswal: We're trying to keep the bike lane elevated where access to the curb is needed, and we're looking at barrier treatments at other locations.
- Will the bike lane be wide enough for cyclists to overtake each other?

- Rosie Jaswal: We will be maintaining a minimum width of seven feet along the bike lane and will increase width where possible. We may have to reduce the width down to five feet at pinch points.
- What about left turns for bikes at Bow Street and Dunster Street?
 - Kathy Watkins: We're looking through how to best deal with those movements.
 - Christi Apicella: The design team just talked about those movements today.
 - Andreas Wolfe, TPT: I believe the commenter is referring to the contraflow northbound bike lane on Bow Street. We could consider an RRFB [rectangular rapid-flashing beacon] at that location. There are some constraints for a protected corner at that location, but we can look again.
- Comment: E-bikes and electric scooters are fast and need to work in the provided bike space.
- What about a bike lane on Mass Ave southbound along Cambridge Common?
 - Kathy Watkins: That's beyond the scope of this project.

Bike Crossings at Johnston Gate

- There are a lot of pedestrians and bicyclists crossing at Johnston Gate. How are we going to accommodate those crossings without a signal on the south side of the intersection?
 - Kathy Watkins: One side of the Church Street crossing has a signal, and the other side has an RRFB.
 - Rosie Jaswal: We're looking at the RRFB and the traffic analysis. The queue lengths at that location are a potential issue we're looking at.
- Will bikes cross to the south side of Mass Ave from Johnston Gate and continue north to Garden Street? Is there anything more than trust to keep people from going the wrong way northbound on Mass Ave?
 - Kathy Watkins: The bike lane on the south side of Mass Ave will continue to be one-way southbound. We're looking at improving the connection going north to avoid northbound bikes on the wrong side of Mass Ave.
 - Diane Stokes: The project team is working with other city departments to improve the northbound movement.
- Will there be enough left-turn storage space for bikes at the signal turning to Flagstaff Park?
 - Rosie Jaswal: We're going to ensure there's enough left-turn storage space for bikes, but we will continue looking as we advance the design.
 - Kathy Watkins: We're working on improving that connection at Flagstaff Park.

Parking

- How much parking will be maintained with this project?
 - Christi Apicella: We're maintaining as much parking as possible. Most of the parking that exists today will be maintained, but some of the pick-up and drop-off and taxi stand locations may change. We're looking at potential changes in curb use at the pedestrian crossings to provide more space for crossings. We're hoping to keep the curb space as active as possible while improving pedestrian safety.
- What are we doing about potential traffic circulating the area looking for parking? Are we closing streets? Creating new one-way streets?
 - Kathy Watkins: We're looking at the traffic analysis right now but not necessarily looking at changing street directions or closing streets. Give us examples and/or suggestions if you have them.

- Please consider that many elderly and disabled people rely on vehicles and need to be dropped off places. The area around St. Paul's has been hurt greatly by the loss of parking, and parking in this area is already difficult. The Mass Ave proposal seems reasonable, but it's important to consider the population that needs parking in this area.
 - Kathy Watkins: Reconstructing curb ramps and sidewalks will be a big improvement for pedestrians including the elderly and disabled population. We're looking at the existing crossings to see if we can make them better. We will think about if we need to change the existing parking regulations to make space for pickup and drop-off areas.

Bus Stops and Transit

- Will there be bus priority and signal changes similar to the changes on Mt. Auburn Street?
 - Andy Reker, CDD: We're looking specifically at queue jumps. At the Holyoke Street intersection, we're looking at dedicated signals for buses and dedicated signal time for transit. We're figuring out how buses and cars share space at the Dunster Street intersection. Since the Route 1 bus turns left onto Dunster Street, we're looking at this area closely. Signalization and dedicated space for buses are key.
- The walk from Harvard Station to the Route 1 bus is long. Years ago, the bus stop was moved back, and there are metered parking spaces where it once was. There is an opportunity to move the bus back to where it once was. If the bus was moved forward, would there be a problem with left turns onto Dunster Street?
 - Andy Reker: We're working to create a larger comfortable area for people waiting for the bus at the bus stop. We need to create enough space for all the buses that serve the area. In order to have enough space for people waiting, buses, and amenities, we needed to find the longest stretch possible. It's difficult to return the bus to that old location and maintain safe pedestrian crossings. Moving the bus farther forward would be hard with signalization and other bus movements. We are moving the bus stop further north than its current configuration.

Kiosk Project

- Have we reconsidered the traffic light at the kiosk? It's a wide crossing and cars get stuck inside the crossing.
 - Kathy Watkins: We're removing a travel lane as part of the kiosk project. We've also made changes to the zebra striping and pavers at that location.
- Can the raised brick work at the kiosk area be continued north to discourage U-turns?
 - Kathy Watkins: We have extended the nose of the kiosk island as part of the kiosk project to discourage U-turns.
- The Mass Ave northbound merge into the far-right lane to get to Cambridge Street is challenging.
 - Kathy Watkins: The traffic signals should help address that issue at the kiosk.
 - Andreas Wolfe: The merge should be eliminated with a solid white line continuing north. You can choose your lane at the Johnston Gate intersection, so no merge should be needed.

Presentation Material

- Can the presentation slides be shared online? Can the roll plan/site plan graphic be shared online?
 - Rosie Jaswal: The roll plan is a large file, so there may be some limitations to what can be shared on the website, but we'll look into it. The recorded presentation is posted online and a PDF presentation will be shared on the website.
- What software is being used to develop and share the concept plan?

- Christi Apicella: The plan is a color rendering developed through CAD linework. It's a static pdf - there is no special program or software used to display the colored plan.

Kathy closed the meeting by providing the project email (MassAve4@cambridgema.gov) for attendees to send additional feedback and comments. She mentioned the project team will continue working on the details over the winter and will host another community meeting in the spring of 2023.