



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
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MEMORANDUM

To: Cambridge Planning Board
From: Joseph E. Barr, Director 
Date: January 30, 2017
Re: King Open/ Cambridge Street Upper Schools & Community Complex (PB#323)

The City of Cambridge is replacing the old King Open and Cambridge Street Upper Schools with a new 227,000 square foot complex on the current site at 850 Cambridge Street. The proposed project includes below-grade parking for 105 vehicles, 92 long-term bicycle parking spaces located in the garage, and 118 short-term bicycle parking spaces located throughout the site. The Cambridge Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department (TP&T) has been working on the Project with the City's Project Manager, Michael Black and the project team including the architect, William Rawn Associates and the transportation consultant, VHB. Overall, TP&T is very supportive of the project, which will significantly improve the educational and community facilities while adding additional accommodation for cyclists traveling through the area.

The proposed project does not trigger the requirement for a Transportation Impact Study (TIS), however a comprehensive and professional transportation study was undertaken by VHB that documented the transportation activities of the old school before it closed and the changes in activities expected from the opening of new school. This analysis included trip generation, automobile and bicycle parking, loading, school bus operations, and parent drop-off and pick-up activities. The new school was evaluated to determine what changes needed to be accommodated and where previous issues that existing at the old school could be improved.

Transportation and Parking Analysis

The transportation study found that compared to when the school was previously in operation, at full occupancy the new school is estimated to add 28 net new vehicle trips during the morning peak hour and 26 net new vehicle trips during the afternoon peak hour. It should be noted, that the only new trip generating aspect of the Project will be the approximately 21,500 Gross Square Feet (GSF) of space dedicated to the Cambridge Public Schools Administrative Offices, which is being relocated to the site from 159 Thorndike Street with approximately 80 transferred staff. Although the size of the school is expanding with respect to gross floor area, the increase is intended to improve and right-size the existing uses to better meet school space standards. The school is expected to grow by about 14 students, from 566 students to 580 students. Similarly, school staff is anticipated to increase very modestly from 140 to 143 staff.

Staff parking will be provided in an underground garage with 105 parking spaces accessed from Berkshire Street. The parking garage will include a mix of tandem and single parking spaces. TP&T supports the underground garage and tandem parking spaces because it will replace surface parking lots and increase landscaped areas on the site. TP&T believes that the system of tandem parking will be functional based on the operation and management of tandem parking at other schools, such as the Martin Luther King School on Putnam Avenue. TP&T believes 105 parking spaces is reasonable and to discourage driving by staff who can and should use sustainable modes of travel, the school will complete a Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) Plan as required.

Building Loading and Service

Loading and service for the project will be accommodated in an off-street loading dock accessed from Berkshire Street. The loading dock will provide a service bay and dedicated space for a dumpster. The new school is expected to have the same number of deliveries as the previous school (approximately 6 per day and mostly with small or medium sized trucks). TP&T supports the proposed loading dock plan because the school complex will accommodate its service and delivery needs on-site and in a controlled and managed condition, including a delivery manager who will schedule deliveries and who should be able to reduce the number of deliveries (if possible) through consolidation of deliveries.

Pick-Up and Drop-Off Operations Plan

Based on observations from when the school was open, and working with the City, the project team has proposed a traffic management and operations plan for morning school arrival and afternoon school dismissals. The plan is intended to address past access, parking, and parent drop-off/pick-up challenges by creating an updated plan that most safely meets the needs for school buses and parent drop-off and pick-up activities. The plan calls for school bus activity to use Cambridge Street and parent drop-off/pick-up activity on Willow Street and Berkshire Street.

TP&T will continue to work with the project team on the traffic management and operations plan and we recommend that the transportation consultant develop a final detailed engineered signage and pavement marking plan prior to Building Occupancy Permit (and if possible, on a faster schedule). TP&T also recommends that the school develop an outreach and marketing plan to educate parents and other school complex users on the protocols for morning student drop-off and afternoon student pick-ups. This could be in the form of brochures, posters, emails, letters, social media, signs, and other methods that graphically show and describe the dos and don'ts. For example, it is important parents not stop on Cambridge Street to drop-off students, as this would prevent school buses from getting to the curb and/or lead to blocking of the bike lanes on Cambridge Street. The school should also provide adequate staff to manage the plan, such as monitors positioned and walking around on the sidewalks around the school before it begins and after school ends to educate and direct parents to the safe and required locations for drop-off and pick-up activities.

Bicycle Parking

TP&T worked with the project team on the bicycle parking plan which will meet or exceed the number of zoning required for long-term and short-term bicycle parking spaces and layout standards. TP&T will continue to work with the project team to make sure all standards are met for bicycle parking through the Building Permit process.

Bicycle Facilities

Working with the City, the project team has developed a streetscape and cross-section plan for Cambridge Street which includes a separated bike lane on the south side of Cambridge Street. The bike

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lane is raised ~3 inches from vehicle traffic, and separated by another 6 inch curb from the pedestrians/sidewalk. TP&T will continue work with the project team, the Department of Public Works, and the Community Development Department on the final design of this improved bicycle facility.

As noted above, TP&T is very supportive of the project and believes it will create no significant new adverse traffic impacts compared to the previous school. We look forward to continuing to work with the project team on this exciting project as it moves into more detailed phases of design.