

2017-05-01

**Mobility Working Group Meeting 1**

**Meeting notes**

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Committee Attendees

Michelle Danila, Chris Featherman, Annie Tuan, Caitlin McMurtry, Melissa Schakro, John Gintell, Rachel Dias Calson, Steve Miller, Rob Ricchi, Bethany Stevens, Greg Heidelberger, Dustin Weigl, Dave Allen, Mark Jensen, Ruthann Rudel, Nate Fillmore

Staff / Consultant Present

**Staff:** Stuart Dash, Susanne Rasmussen, Stephanie Groll, Joe Barr

**Utile:** Tim Love, John McCartin

**Nelson\Nygaard:** Jason Schreiber, Cynthia Lin, Suzie Birdsell

Committee Members Absent

Stacy Thompson

One member of the public present.

Meeting overview

Stuart Dash introduced the consultants, committee members, and the committee process. Jason Schreiber reviewed existing conditions. Dash and Schreiber fielded discussion on data and goals with committee, city staff, and consultants.

**Committee discussion**

**Existing Conditions Discussion**

- Members wanted to know how cross-tabulations of commute mode-share data would affect their understanding of who was using what modes of transportation. Who is walking? Who is driving? Who is taking transit? Who is cycling?
  - Members speculated that Cambridge's large student population perhaps inflated the role of walking for commutes. Consultants responded that, while this may be the case (especially for graduate students), it is unlikely many undergraduates were "caught" in the survey collection.
  - Members felt that many of the city's drivers may be families with children who feel they don't have other safe or convenient options. This also speaks to the disadvantage of families who can't afford to drive and therefore can't access the same amenities.
  - Members worried that without crosstabs, they could end up advocating policies that negatively impacted the city's more marginalized populations.
- City staff emphasized that most of the information in the presentation relates to commutes, as these are the trips for which there is robust data. However, commutes represent less than a quarter of all trips. City staff recommended the committee remember this context.
- City staff points out that it is a commonly expressed how expensive it is to live in Cambridge, but taking transportation into account makes this cheaper than surrounding communities.
- Members were curious about overall population projections and how that might change their understanding of the mobility issues. Who will live in Cambridge and what will their needs/choices be?

- Consultants and city staff noted that the overall trend currently is for cities to have a growing young adult population, but that demographic trends point to a decrease in this population (at least nationally). These trends may point to a growth in older age cohorts.
- Commenting on growth in neighboring communities to the north (like Chelsea, Everett, and Revere), members were curious about who was moving to these communities.
  - Consultant responded that those communities were still attracting working class residents, more people across the income scale were becoming attracted to these communities by lower cost market-rate housing.
  - Consultants noted mode-shares for public transit there were surprisingly high, given their relatively poor transit accessibility. For instance, Broadway in Everett is the highest bus ridership corridor in the metro region.
  - When asked by committee members about the government's position on sustainable transit, city staff and consultants noted progressive transportation initiatives currently underway in Everett and Chelsea's current mobility planning effort.
- Members were curious about the timing of the traffic count data collection. The most recent traffic data (on Alewife Brook Parkway) shows traffic increasing. This is also in line with national post-recessionary trends. Would updated traffic counts across Cambridge reveal a traffic increase everywhere?
  - Consultants responded there may be some post-recessionary uptick everywhere, but that this uptick would likely not reveal an increase back to pre-recession levels.
  - Nationally, Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) are still down (due in part to demographic changes), likely the case in Cambridge as well.
  - City staff noted that VMT counts do *not* capture driving rates for ride-hailing services, and that nationwide, cities are just beginning to address that gap in the data.
- Members expressed interest in regional collaborations. City staff noted regional efforts were typically routed through MAPC (the regional planning agency) or the MBTA, with more targeted coordination with adjacent communities on traffic and transportation issues.
  - Members expressed concern that data not in the presentation showed fewer commutes from Cambridge to adjacent communities like Somerville, and that these relationships were becoming less relevant. Consultants said they would return with most recent commute flow figures (2013).
- Members expressed concern that the presentation did not include discussions of emerging concerns, such as autonomous vehicles, electric bicycles, semi-public transit (e.g. Bridj), and the significant growth of home delivery.
  - Members, City staff, and consultants discussed that while regulation of these items (especially autonomous vehicles) would likely be eclipsed by state and federal standards, municipalities still play a large role and should advance thinking on these issues.
- Members sought more information on how to operationalize regional goals. For instance, what are the mechanics of actually changing the right-of-way on a DCR-controlled street?

### **Goals Discussion**

- There was general agreement by committee members on the ideas animating the goals as presented, but that certain issues could be explicitly added or reframed. These included:
  - Efficiency, particularly efficiency in the use of space and the right-of-way.
  - Efficiency in how we use semi-public transit (like LMA shuttle or EZ bus)
  - A focus on the transportation system as a network, and to enhance the network as a whole (rather than disconnected parts).
  - A need for a more user-friendly system, intuitive signage, and the like. Having smartphone apps is nice, but the physical system should already address needs that these apps have solved.
  - A focus on mobility innovation.

- A focus on the community building power of shared transit/transportation.
  - A focus on reliability and scheduling.
  - Explicitly noting transportation accessibility for families.
  - A need to strengthen intra-Cambridge connections as well as regional ones.
  - Ensuring last-mile infrastructures are in place even beyond 5-minute transit walkshed.
  - Explicitly *not* making things more convenient for single-occupancy vehicles.
  - Emphasizing safety but mobility's impact on health (beyond collisions).
  - Acknowledgement of land use's role in the transportation system.
  - Flexibility and leaving the system open to respond to unforeseen challenges.
  - The link between mobility, opportunity, and collective prosperity.
  - Education on the impact of mobility choices
  - Making sustainable options more appealing (through connectivity, efficiency, and a change in its image).
  - Noting the role of local businesses, the sharing economy, and place-making.
- Members expressed concern about how the goals were drafted. Presentation showed a lot of quantitative data, but little of the community input.
    - Consultants noted qualitative input from engagement were taken into account when drafting the goals. That input also guided the development of a framework through which these goals were drafted.

#### **Public Comments**

- The attending member of the public brought up the need to emphasize equity, and the social costs of not acting.
- She also asked what data the committee wished it had but that doesn't exist, and that the plan should create the infrastructure for collecting that data.
- She also asked for more clarity in the ultimate goal of the overall Envision Cambridge process.

#### **Additional Comments**

Following the meeting, committee members also emailed comments reiterating the points above, including the importance of the following in setting mobility goals:

- Public health,
- Network continuity,
- Equity,
- Energy and resource efficiency,
- Social interaction as part of community character,
- Innovation,
- Usability,
- Functionality for children and families, and
- Economic opportunity