

2017-12-07

**Mobility Working Group #4**  
**Meeting Notes**

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Attendance

Committee: Dave Allen, Ruth Allen, Michelle Danila, Nate Gillmore, John Gintell, Mark Jensen, Ruthann Rudel, Emma Sandoe, Melissa Shakro, Annie Tuan, Dustin Weigl

City Staff: Susanne Rasmussen, Melissa Peters, Gary Chan, Stephanie Groll  
Consultant team: Jason Schrieber, Liza Cohen, Jessica Robertson

Three members of the public attended.

Summary

Melissa Peters described the goals of the meeting, Jason Schrieber introduced the categorization exercise and then facilitated a discussion on those categorizations.

**Categorization discussion**

One committee member stated widening sidewalks would not be an easy win. City staff responded it depends on the location, that in some places it would be easy but in others impossible.

There was a discussion about wayfinding.

- One committee member stated that bike wayfinding would be an easy win, since it would impact neighborhoods.
- City staff clarified pedestrian wayfinding signage currently exists at Porter Square, and does not relate to street design.
- Consultants noted the action may also be low-impact. One committee member agreed, saying it should be a fill-in.
- City staff stated wayfinding has been a priority because the street layout is not intuitive, like a grid. One committee member agreed, saying it could offer safe routes for bicycles that google does not give.
- Another member suggested adding bus information.
- City staff clarified that these are small signs (not a mobile app) on the sidewalk.

There was a discussion about underutilized vehicle space being converted to pedestrian plazas, etc.

- One committee member felt this would not be an easy win, saying that no underutilized vehicle space exists.
- Consultants and City staff noted Lafayette Square and Quincy Park were both underutilized vehicle space. They clarified the specifics of any spot being underutilized can be debated, but when there is underutilized space, it counts as an easy win.
- Staff noted this plan will not get location-specific enough to hold those debates, but suggested the bus layover in Central Square as one potentially underutilized location.
- One committee member felt it was important to find more spaces for bus layover to improve schedule adherence.

One committee member stated there would be significant pushback to bicycle parking from neighborhoods, specifically pedestrians.

There was a discussion about demand-based parking pricing:

- City staff clarified the goal is to encourage parking turnover, not remove spaces. One committee member suggested its efficacy during university graduations, and compared it to parking near the Fenway during Red Sox games. Consultants noted the strategy has worked elsewhere in the US to encourage some visitors to take other modes.
- One committee member stated it would make it more difficult for drivers, particularly those with low and middle incomes. They wanted to know how often pricing would be adjusted.
- A different member stated this strategy would effectively cut down on car traffic, a goal of the committee.
- City staff noted the purpose of the meeting is not to debate the content of the actions, but the categorizations.

Committee members said adding bus shelters should be an easy win. Consultants noted it was currently a fill-in.

One committee member stated bus priority would only work if other cities adopt it, too. Another member suggested Cambridge should advocate for this in neighboring municipalities. Consultants noted that the City has been pursuing this for a long time. City staff noted that grant funding for bus priority was just obtained and announced, and a pilot is active on Mass Ave.

There was a discussion about the future of autonomous vehicles:

- One member stated introducing AVs would not be an easy win, it would need buy in. Consultants agreed but said the easy win would be starting to prepare relevant policies.
- That member asked if AVs could be a revenue source. Consultants felt revenues could be considered once initial regulations were made. City staff noted the first priority was to ensure “zombie” AVs weren’t clogging the streets, in effect the opposite of how Uber and Lyft have been regulated.

There was a discussion about impact fees for transportation improvements

- One member felt that impact fees would inappropriately burden residents, even if levied on developers, since the fees could filter down to users of the development.
- Given Cambridge’s housing affordability challenges, they didn’t want housing to be more expensive than it is.
- Another member felt this would not be difficult to include in zoning proposals.
- Another member felt the fee should be proportional to the size of development.
- City staff noted it will be difficult to determine what fees should be levied for, since all the working groups are suggesting them, and that it will take coordination. They also said the new Kendall Square zoning already includes such a mandate.

One committee member asked why flexible curb regulations were low-impact. Consultants clarified that while these regulations are good operationally, they won’t reduce traffic, the specified goal. Another member pointed out the impact on double parking could improve safety.

There was a discussion about urban rail:

- One member stated if this is about priorities, Grand Junction and Fitchburg Line urban rail improvements should be more important.
- The City noted it is not high-impact because all that is suggested is a study, which is not impactful on its own. They also said the study is in the works.
- Consultants suggested moving this action to existing actions if it is underway.
- City staff also said the MBTA is focused on buses and clarified the Fitchburg line is in discussion because there is a desire to include a commuter rail station at Alewife, but that there is not a substantive plan on the table for an Alewife station.

- Committee members stated such major projects would not happen without the cities lobbying the MBTA.
- Consultant suggested moving GJRR alone to major projects. Committee members agreed to add GJRR bicycle/pedestrian path with a connection to Somerville.

One person said a crash database will help to identify areas for intersection improvements, which would have a major impact. Consultants suggested combining the two actions.

There was a discussion about a citywide border toll:

- A few members asked if it was feasible and legal. Staff noted it is challenging, and would include putting toll readers on every street.
- One committee member said restricting access to the city would limit personal freedom. Another committee member said it was meant to limit traffic, not restrict people.
- The committee agreed to remove the action.

There was a discussion about driver and bicyclist education. Some felt it is important, while others felt it should be deprioritized in favor of infrastructure.

One member stated there should be lower parking requirements, and that fully implementing the bike plan should be a high priority.

There was a discussion about the Mass Pike realignment in Allston. Consultants suggested including an advocacy action. City staff felt it should be a fill-in, since it's outside of City control.

Consultants clarified off-board fare payment speeds up transit by removing the need for everyone to enter at the same door and pay while boarding. However, they stated it is already underway, so it should be removed.

There was a discussion about increasing resident parking fees.

- One member felt it was excessive, that automobile users already paid taxes as well as excise fees. They felt it was trying to get people not to drive.
- City staff said it was meant to reflect the true costs of car ownership that are otherwise borne by the city and to discourage storage on the street by those who don't use them.
- The initial member stated there should be similar fees for bicycles. Staff and consultants noted parked bikes don't take up as much space and have less impact on streets, resulting in lower street maintenance costs.
- Another member suggested indexing permit prices to inflation.
- Consultants said there should be an integrated parking management plan.

Several members felt mobility education for all modes in schools should be a high priority, and that private and charter schools should be included.

One member suggested making several cuts or action moves. These included:

- Cutting the Sullivan Square bridge action. City staff agreed it was very long-term priority. Consultants suggested moving it to regional advocacy.
- Moving resilience actions to the climate group.
- Moving zoning actions to the housing group. A different member suggested focusing more on parking for these.

They also suggested focusing more on freight movement.

One member said placemaking is a low priority.

There was a discussion about reducing parking requirements.

- One committee member said it is an easy win. Consultants said they felt otherwise.
- City staff noted it was already happening around transit stations.

There was a discussion about street sign legibility.

- Consultants felt it was low-impact.
- City staff said they couldn't let it look like a highway.
- Committee members said even just more street signs or better lighting would be reasonable.

One member felt there should be elder exceptions to snow removal requirements and that the City should increase its resources for removal.

### **Indicators**

One member suggested crashes, not just injuries. Another member disagreed, feeling injuries were more important. One member suggested injuries were a proxy for crashes. Staff noted this indicator is related to the City's Vision Zero policy, which is in the process of defining "serious injury," but that total crashes (tracked by Cambridge PD and hospital transports) could be added.

One member asked how knowing this information would lead to better decisions. They asked if the committee should suggest new kinds of data. Consultants stated the purpose is to track progress toward a target to hold the City accountable, so the plan must ensure the data can be collected every year moving forward.

One member asked if alternative indicators would be included. City staff said not every indicator would be in EC's ongoing reports, but many are already tracked by the City.

One member asked if traffic was an indicator. Consultants said yes, that some of this data is from mobile phones. Staff noted transit counts are from the MBTA, bike counts are done by the City every other year, and new developments must do multimodal counts.

One member asked about intercept studies. Staff noted the Economic Development division conducts them around the city from time to time. Consultants suggested making them more robust and regular.

All indicators were approved by the committee.

### **Public comment**

One member of the public stated the EC Alewife Working Group signed a letter saying there was need for ambitious transit solutions, including a bridge from the Quadrangle to the Red Line in the Triangle, and a potential commuter rail station.

- They also said Electric Multiple Unit urban rail cars aren't necessary, citing original stops between Belmont and Porter Square. City staff said there could be technical solutions.
- Members of the public said the bridge could be bike/ped or include shuttle access. The process, they said, should start to include state representatives and MassDOT.