

2018-05-21

Mobility Working Group #6

Committee Attendees

Nate Fillmore, Michelle Danila, Ruth Allen, Greg Heidelberger, Mark Jensen, Dave Allen, John Gintell, Melissa Shakro, Annie Tuan

Staff / Consultant Present

Staff: Susanne Rasmussen, Stephanie Groll, Melissa Peters

Committee Members Absent

Chris Featherman, Rob Ricchi, Ruthann Rudel, Emma Sandoe, Rachel Dias Carlson, Caitlin McMurtry, Steve Miller, Stacy Thompson, Dustin Weigl, Bethany Stevens

Meeting overview

This was the final meeting of the Mobility Working Group to review the draft implementation plan identifying near-, medium-, and long-term mobility actions.

Committee discussion

General questions and comments

- Question on when Mt. Auburn bus priority project will be operational. City staff said it will likely be in October. Pre-project data collection is currently being conducted.
- Question on if bus service will be changed when the Green Line extension is operating. City staff mentioned that the MBTA is not making any changes to local bus service until its operational and impacts of bus usage are known.
- Question on how the city collaborated with the MBTA on automatic fare collection and all-door boarding. City staff stated that they have regular meetings with the MBTA and will provide infrastructure support and do outreach/education.
- Working group member noted that the MBTA has been eliminating bus stops and asked if they would be replaced. Staff stated that the MBTA were consolidating stops to decrease delays under the Key Bus Routes Initiative, and is making sure they are spaced adequately.
- Question if the city has data on number of Uber and Lyft trips in the city. Staff responded that the state made 2017 data available. However, and the city cannot regulate ride-hail companies, due to state regulation. All the city can do is enforce traffic regulations.
- Working group noted that it would be helpful to know why people use ride-hail companies. Staff mentioned that they will include a question to address this in the survey done for Envision Indicators.
- There was a suggestion to improve park-and-ride facilities to intercept vehicles outside of Cambridge. Group would like to add action to advocate for regional solutions.

Strategy: Reduce transportation energy consumption

- Proposed deletion of action to reduce vehicle miles travelled since that is a strategy, not a specific action. The group accepted this.

Strategy: Ensure that travel by foot, bike, and bus is minimally disrupted by delays, barriers, and gaps in connectivity

- A working group member would like to specify what “bus priority treatments” are. City staff specified that they include signal priority, bus lanes and queue jumps, and floating bus stops, and they will be added to the action language.
- Working group members would like to keep the specific examples of BRT/bus priority routes (i.e. Route 1, 71, 73, and 77) in action language.
- Collaborate with MBTA on bus service planning can be combined with like action under strategy to increase access to transit.
- Working group members would like the action on completing the Bicycle Network Plan to move from a long-term action to a short- or medium-term action.
 - Staff explained that it is not possible to complete the full network with permanent reconstruction any sooner than ten years. Staff proposed adding two actions to address working group member concerns. They include:
 - Short-term action (<5 years): Undertake a detailed feasibility analysis of proposed separated bicycle network and install a temporary quick-build infrastructure
 - Staff noted that a feasibility study was not done as part of the Bike Network Plan. The Bike Network Plan was a visioning exercise. A feasibility study would entail determining if there is enough physical space for bike lanes, accessible sidewalks, and other needed infrastructure. It would study impacts on the removal of parking and travel lanes.
 - Medium-term actions (5-10 years): Undertake community engagement process to prioritize and implement or high-quality infrastructure separated bicycle projects on priority street segments
 - The working group would also like to add an action to continue monitoring the separated bike facilities.
 - Staff mentioned that the City Council is working with the Consensus Building Institute to develop a community engagement framework to serve as model for all bike facility projects.

Strategy: Ensure that transportation infrastructure is constructed, rehabilitated, and/or operated in a way that is resilient to floods, heat waves and other climate impacts

- Make action to advocate for the MBTA to conduct a vulnerability assessment of all transit facilities a high priority action.

Strategy: Improve wayfinding and real-time transportation information, particularly related to transfers between modes

- “Shared-ride services” in the action on real-time information displays is confusing; one member thought it referred to ride-hail apps like Uber and Lyft. In fact, it refers to carpool services to help people find a ride in a vehicle with multiple passengers.
- Working group members asked what demand-based pricing for parking meters means and asked if it would require new meters and software. City staff replied yes.
 - Staff explained that it is variable pricing to manage parking demand. Owned by the City of Cambridge to improve parking availability for those driving while incentivizing the use of other modes. When demand is high, the price increases; when demand is low, the price decreases to achieve a 15% vacancy rate for each block, or about 1 free space per block.
 - Action will include community engagement in action.

Strategy: Increase access to transit, bicycle, and carsharing options in areas of Cambridge that are underserved in the mobility network, especially near affordable housing.

- Working group would like to combine action to participate in MBTA's service planning with other action in underserved areas with similar action in strategy to ensure that travel by foot, bike, and bus is minimally disrupted. They want to continue emphasizing the need to prioritize underserved areas.
- Action to participate in MBTA's service planning to be combined with like action under Strategy to minimize transit delays.
- Action to create a conceptual design and continue to explore demand for two-track rail service on the Grand Junction rail corridor should mention proposed bike/ped path. Should be a high priority.
- Action to build a bike/ped bridge on Fitchburg Line should reference Alewife. Should be a high priority.
- Action to continue to subsidize reduced bike share memberships for low- to moderate-income residents should be a high priority.

Strategy: Increase active transportation and promote public transit to improve the health and safety.

- Action to encourage property owners and employers to promote the use of mass transit, etc., does not need to mention Vehicle Trip Reduction and Parking and Transportation Demand Management Ordinances.
- Transit Plan does not currently have implementation component, only principles. Action recommends an implementation plan.

Strategy: Rebalance the right-of-way to provide amenities for comfort while walking or biking (like wider sidewalks, rest stops)

- Action to attract more people to walk, should list advocacy to DCR as a tool.
- Action to ensure that reconstructed streets include sidewalks and bicycle facilities should list developer mitigation as a tool.
- There was a discussion about locating utility poles underground to improve walkability and open space. Staff mentioned that residents would be charged more for the private connections and usually no longer support the idea after learning about the increased cost to the consumer. Requires every building on the block to pay for the connection to the public utility line.
- Action to develop a policy to allocate space within public rights-of-way to better balance cars with sustainable modes of transportation needs to be rewritten to clarify that the intent is to rebalance the right-of-way in proportion to mode usage (i.e. if more people use bus than car or bike, designate more space to buses).
- Staff clarified that resident permit parking fees cannot be raised more than the cost to operate the program, otherwise it would be considered a tax.

Strategy: Reduce the use of single-occupancy vehicles and number of miles traveled by car within and through Cambridge

- Action to prepare for autonomous vehicles should address safety.
- The action on transit expansions should mention extending the Green Line to Porter and beyond. A working group member asked if the action on transit expansions should include the Red-Blue Connector. Staff indicated that the Red-Blue Connector is not a priority for Cambridge so was left off the list.
- Action to change zoning to allow lower parking requirements citywide should consider impacts of parking spillover to residential streets and demand from visitors. Staff clarified this would impact new construction only.

- Staff explained that an example of an impact fee for traffic generation is a proposed \$5/sf fee for commercial development in Alewife.

Strategy: Support Vision Zero Efforts

- Action to better manage freight movement and delivery should make it clear that the action intends to increase enforcement of truck route violations and include recommendation to study ways to incentivize the use of smaller sized trucks.
- Action to require truck sideguards is an expanded (not new) action.

Strategy: Through new open spaces and public realm improvements complete the open space network to create both local and regional connections.

- Action to commit funds to improve pedestrian comfort and safety on priority streets is not clear. Needs to be rephrased to make connection to open space network.

Actions considered but not recommended for implementation

- Action to study the need for improving the legibility of street name signs can be rephrased to address obstructions (i.e. trees) and poor lighting, not new signs.