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# I-90 Allston Multimodal Project

## Task Force Meeting Summary

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DATE:	November 14, 2023	HSH PROJECT NO.:	2021055.08
PANELISTS:	Ashley Pierre-Louis (HSH) Chris Calnan (TetraTech) Don Kindsvatter (Urban Idea Lab) Ed Ionata (TetraTech) Erin Reed (HSH) Etty Padmodipoetro (Urban Idea Lab) Gregory Boles (VHB) Jim Keller (TetraTech) John Fallon (MassDOT) Katie Mancinelli (VHB) Mark Fobert (TetraTech) Mark Shamon (VHB) Meredith Avery (VHB) Michael Hall (TetraTech) Rick Plenge (VHB) Susan Harrington (MassDOT) Taylor O'Neill (HSH) Wayne Amico (VHB)		

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## Introduction

- On Tuesday November 14, 2023, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) convened a virtual meeting of the I-90 Allston Multimodal Project Task Force. There were 99 virtual registrants.
- The presentation covered the following agenda:
  - Welcome
  - USDOT Grant App Update
  - Cambridge Street Bridge
  - Franklin Street Bridge
  - Southside Buffer Path
  - CTPS Modeling
  - Lincoln Street Noise Barriers



# Presentation

## WELCOME

- The Project Manager Susan Harrington stated that while some Task Force members have expressed a preference for in-person meetings, the project team is trying to strike a balance between in-person and virtual meetings.

## USDOT GRANT APP UPDATE

- USDOT MEGA Grant.
  - Submitted on August 21, 23
  - Grant for \$200 million
  - MassDOT is filing jointly with the City of Boston
  - Collaboration between MassDOT, City of Boston, Harvard University, and Boston University
- USDOT Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods (RCN) Grant.
  - Submitted on September 28, 2023
  - Grant for \$500 million
  - MassDOT is filing jointly with the City of Boston
  - Collaboration between MassDOT, City of Boston, Harvard University, and Boston University
  - Looking to hear results in Q1 Calendar Year 2024

## CAMBRIDGE STREET BRIDGE

- Design Charrette held on September 28, 2023.
- Katie Mancinelli discussed the design details of the Cambridge Street Bridge Rehabilitation and gave a summary of the Charette.
- Next Steps:
  - There is a site walk planned for December 7, 2023 from 2-4 p.m.
- Comments:
  - Jessica Robertson said it's great that there's going to be a site walk and that they're weighing the costs and benefits of a replacement compared to a rehabilitation
  - David Loutzenheiser said thank you for considering the replacement options
  - An attendee asked whether abutments were being reconstructed. Katie said that they are considering all their options. Replacing the abutments would be costly, and it would be difficult to rebuild the abutments near the train tracks



- Harry Mattison said thank you for offering a site walk and added that it will be hard to hear due to proximity to the street. He asked if there would be a place to sit down and talk during the session. Susan said they will consider that

## FRANKLIN STREET BRIDGE

- Option 1: Access Ramp at the former Allston Depot:
  - Similar to existing bridge and avoids takings on Braintree Street
  - No direct connection to the south side buffer path
  - Located in a historic district, which will require permits
- Option 2: Spiral at the Ace Ticket building:
  - Most direct connection to the south side buffer path
  - Will need to be shifted away from Franklin Street
  - Potential to create an urban park
  - Includes ramp and stairs connection
  - Includes a gentle slope
- Option 3: U-turn:
  - Pinch point occurs in order to stay away from the train tracks
  - Space is very tight – close proximity to the building at 35 Lincoln Street which is currently in construction
  - Widening the ramp from 10 feet to 12.75 feet
  - The team will continue to look at how to widen the path further
  - Met with MassDOT Complete Streets group to get comments and options
- Comments:
  - Harry Mattison asked whether the Spiral would require land taking and, if so, whether the landowner is supportive of this?
    - Susan said they are in communications with the Arcand family as they move forward with all 3 design options
  - Harry said thank you for developing a design for the U-turn and asked whether they would consider a variation that adds the direct connection straight across the Pike that the Spiral has (but with stairs up to this connection instead of the spiral ramp)
    - Susan said that comment came up during the charette. They have considered it and it's something that can be explored further
  - Jessica Robertson said thank you for advancing the options. All are great improvements. She wanted to know which factors would impact timing. The neighborhood wants this to be an early action item



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- Cambridge Street Bridge would be a separate structure since the slopes are not aligned
- Glen Berkowitz appreciated the presentation and said that clearly a lot of work went into it
- Glen asked why four railroad tracks were needed under the bridge when there are only two tracks at Boston Landing
  - Greg Boles said the proposed design plan as it connects to Boston Landing includes a third track for freight runaround and a fourth track heading to West Station and its future corridor. It's more three tracks instead of four.  
The pinch point is created from the transition between the tracks
- Harry said thank you for agreeing to consider a direct footbridge connection in the U-Turn. It is not redundant to have a direct footbridge connection if it makes it much faster to walk from one side to the other, and it lets the ramp design prioritize wheeled users

## SOUTH SIDE BUFFER PATH

- The team is evaluating two options for the southside path:
  - Path at Plaza level – path inclines to Malvern Street level and continues to Agganis Way
  - At-grade Path – path goes under Malvern Street, starts to rise at Babcock Street, and then reaches plaza level at Agganis Way
- Cross section at Allston Depot:
  - Most constrained area – only 16 feet of clearance, 12 feet can be used
  - At-grade and elevated are the same at this location
- Cambridge Street:
  - Would like to maintain 16 feet wherever possible
- Wadsworth Street:
  - 6 feet bioswale
  - 20 feet path
  - Noise barrier for residential abutters
- Malvern Street:
  - Right of way narrows to 16 feet
  - Removed the bioswale, but keeping a screen
- Malvern Transitway:
  - Could be at-grade or elevated
  - Exploring a connection to the 76 Ashford Street project



- Considering 3 options
- Boston University Track and Tennis:
  - At-grade path starts to rise to provide clearance; 24-foot path
  - Elevated 20–24-foot clearance
- Babcock Street emergency entrance:
  - Concepts are on a viaduct
  - Emergency vehicles need access
  - 20-foot clearance, 16 feet usable
- Comments:
  - Harry Mattison said thank you for showing the People's Pike going all the way to Agganis Way
  - Thomas Nally said the dimensions are very tight. He asked if it's possible to maintain the at-grade bike path and shared use path and provide a connection with a ramp or stairs that connects to Malvern Street/ West Station Plaza level
    - Don Kindsvatter said the connection only considers a ramp to Ashford Street. Stairs wouldn't be accessible, but it may work if there is a parallel accessible route
    - Tom said he would like to see a study to see if that's possible
  - David Loutzenheiser said he's more in favor of the elevated option as it provides direct access to the station. The crossings wouldn't be as difficult because there's less traffic at the busways
  - Galen Mook said thank you for all of the details on the buffer path/ People's Pike. He said that the raised connection is his preferred option. Bringing the pathway up will give a better vantage point of the neighborhood. Agganis Way is pretty much at the same grade, you'd have to rise to go eastbound

## CTPS MODELING

- Mike Hall presented the changes that have happened since the DEIR:
  - The design year will be 2050 instead of 2040
    - Consistent with Boston MPO long range transportation plan
    - Compliance with FHWA's 20-year planning horizon requirements
  - Modeling software is being upgraded (TDM 23)
  - New 2050 modeling scenarios
    - 2050 No Build
    - Three 2050 Build alternatives
      - 3L Realignment Option



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- 3L Modified Option
  - 3-Bridge Option
- 2050 Build infrastructure/No Build land use
  - Opening Year analysis scenario will no longer be pursued
- Comments:
  - Bill Deignan said he wants to make sure the results cover streets across the river, particularly River Street and Western Avenue up to Union Square in Somerville
    - Mike confirmed the model will cover the streets across the river
  - David Loutzenheiser asked whether 14 lanes for each of the options is a good idea
    - Mike said they will try to reduce it where they can, but they need to complete the model first for the analysis
  - Tom Nally said he appreciated getting the slides in advance and asked for the version of the presentation with the build options included
  - Albert Ng asked for an explanation of the purpose of the 2050 Build Infrastructure/No Build Development scenario
    - It was explained that there is a desire to look at the effects of the infrastructure project. In the past, the infrastructure and land use has changed, but in the No Build, there's no new infrastructure
  - Brendan Kearney said there hasn't been much comment on the massive size of the other major intersections. They look like Mass Ave which is one of those most dangerous intersections for bikes and pedestrians
    - Mike said that they are concept plans and they will be able to adjust and balance them once the models come out
  - Jessica Robertson said that the State has ambitious mode shift goals that weren't reflected in the base models. She requested a scenario in line with State policy. For example, the West Station model was assuming 100 trips a day. She would like to see something more realistic
  - Jessica added that MAPC did a study on West Station a few years ago. The parking ratio on Beacon Yards had an impact on trips. It would be great to see high parking and low parking scenarios
    - Mike said that for the 2050 modeling, parking falls under the land use assumptions. It's critical and we want to make sure they're the correct inputs that we agree with before the modeling starts

## LINCOLN STREET NOISE BARRIERS

- Type II barriers were determined eligible under a Mass Turnpike priority study.



- Lincoln Street noise barriers have the potential to be advanced as an Early Action Item.
- The barriers are subject to neighborhood approval.

## Questions and Answers

- Representative Honan thanked the project team for the work they've done and for considering the opinions of residents on the sound barriers. It's great that the residents will get to vote.
  - Beautification of the barrier would be important, maybe a greenspace so it doesn't become a canyon
  - Prioritization of the Franklin Street Bridge is something that the neighborhood has been supportive of for early action
- Kimberley Hutter from Senator Brownsberger's Office echoed thanks to the project team for working with residents. She was glad to see updated plans.
- Chris Osgood from the City of Boston Mayor's Office said he appreciated involvement of the public in the process and said it's apparent how much work has gone into this over the year. He added he wants to make sure we're sizing the streets correctly which is a goal of the city
- Anthony D'Isidoro thanked MassDOT for the tremendous amount of work. It was gratifying to see the response to the work that the Task Force has done over the years. It's always impressive to see MassDOT responding to the work.
  - Anthony asked on the survey for the noise barrier, how would new development be weighed and utilized and how would voices be counted in the survey
  - Mark Shamon said he could find out that process
- Stacy Thompson said this was a great meeting and that she appreciated the hard work. She said renters are more likely to be BIPOC and immigrants. Weighing homeowners over renters would create inequities.
  - Stacy asked if there's a cost estimate or schedule for starting this work in 2024
  - Mark said they did a programmatic cost and it's \$7-10 million
- Christian MillNeil asked what MassDOT's assumptions are for baseline VMT growth and future mode share when it does these models. Both Boston and Cambridge have ambitious targets for mode shift, will MassDOT honor those in this modeling?
  - Mark said there are no preset parameters to input yet
- Harry Mattison praised Jessica and Brendan's comments. He shared a link to Hoffer's report that says, "all discretionary State government spending should be aligned with our 2050 Net



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Zero mandate and climate resilience priorities. Grant programs and capital spending should advance, not undermine, state climate goals."

- Christian added that the GWSA law/Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030 requires gross reductions in statewide VMT, so any model that assumes more traffic in the future is inconsistent with the state's climate law
- Lila Heller said that this was her first meeting and thanked the project team for the presentation and clear visuals. She asked where she could access the materials after the meeting. The MassDOT project website URL was shared: <https://www.mass.gov/allston-multimodal-project>
  - Another attendee suggested Lila read an article from StreetsblogMASS for additional project context: "A Rough Guide To Boston's Allston/I-90 Megaproject": <https://mass.streetsblog.org/2019/10/15/a-rough-guide-to-bostons-allston-i-90-megaproject>
- Galen Mook asked if the buffer wall on Lincoln Street is being incorporated into the pathway on the DOT ROW. There's a dream of connecting a multiuse pathway on Market Street to the I-90 corridor to the Franklin Street bridge and Leo Birmingham and Charles Riverway network. Galen asked if the pathway could be integrated into the noise barrier conversation.
  - Mark said they have not discussed how that path will be integrated but are happy to as it would make sense as a cohesive project
- Harry was happy to see the noise barriers being advanced. He added that making space on Lincoln Street for protected cycling is a priority of the City of Boston, residents in Allston/Brighton, and beyond. A 10-foot offset between the Noise Wall and I-90 breakdown lane puts this in jeopardy and needs to be reconsidered. And more generally, the design and construction of noise barriers should be coordinated with these improvements to make Lincoln Street a safe cycling route.
- Anthony said that the corridor is becoming more residential than commercial and that some of the Lincoln Street designs present a challenge for implementing Complete Streets. Anthony asked if MassDOT has been receptive to signage issues if that comes up for commercial areas.
  - Mark said that MassDOT does not integrate noise barriers atop roadside traffic barriers.
- Jessica Robertson asked when they would be able to discuss the railroad design and the height of the express track.
  - Mark said it has been discussed with the MBTA. The statute for vertical clearance is 22 feet 6 inches. Anything less would require a waiver. They're uncomfortable going less than 18 feet 6 inches due to pantographs. MBTA is concerned about reducing





service if every train has to go through West Station. The express track is very much part of the project for the MBTA

- Seth Gadbois expressed similar concern about noise barrier voting. Environmental Justice communities would be impacted. A study should be conducted into who lives there and how homeownership should be assessed as owners could be renting out their homes.
- Glen Berkowitz thanked the project team and said this was the “best Task Force slide deck/presentations ever!”
- Chris Osgood said that the City of Boston is very happy to work with the project team and the community on how to advance both the noise barriers and improved bike facilities on Lincoln Street.
- Next Steps:
  - Cambridge Street Bridge site walk on December 7, 2023 from 2 to 4 p.m.
  - The next Task Force meetings will be held the week of February 15, 2024 and the week of May 20, 2024
  - Planning meetings ahead of time will help to gauge meeting format (in person, virtual)