



TO: Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation DATE: September 4, 2025

FROM: Howard Stein Hudson (HSH) HSH PROJECT NO.: 2017234.02

SUBJECT: Arborway Parkway Improvement Project
Winter/Spring 2025 Comment Summary and Responses

Overview

On January 14, 2025, the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and *Howard Stein Hudson (HSH)* hosted a virtual public meeting to share an updated preferred design alternative to improve the Arborway between Jamaica Pond to the north and the Forest Hills gate of the Arnold Arboretum to the south. The meeting was well attended with over 300 attendees and coverage in the local news. During the meeting, feedback was collected from the public through the Zoom meeting chat along with spoken feedback at the end of the meeting. Following the public meeting, comments were also accepted by email and through the Project website. DCR also hosted several individual stakeholder meetings with the Jamaica Pond Association (JPA), Jamaica Hills Association (JHA), Boston Parks and Recreation Department (BPRD), and the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) throughout Winter/Spring 2025.

A total of **218 comments** were received from **157 individuals/groups** during the public comment period. Larger comment letters were split into parts addressing different themes leading to **297 specific areas of feedback**. The largest source of feedback was the online comment form from the project website which received **124 comments** including **181 areas of feedback**. An additional **50 comments** were recorded during the public meeting, including comments from the chat and verbal comments. **14 email comments** were received, including **22 areas of feedback**, while **44 comments** were recorded during stakeholder engagements.

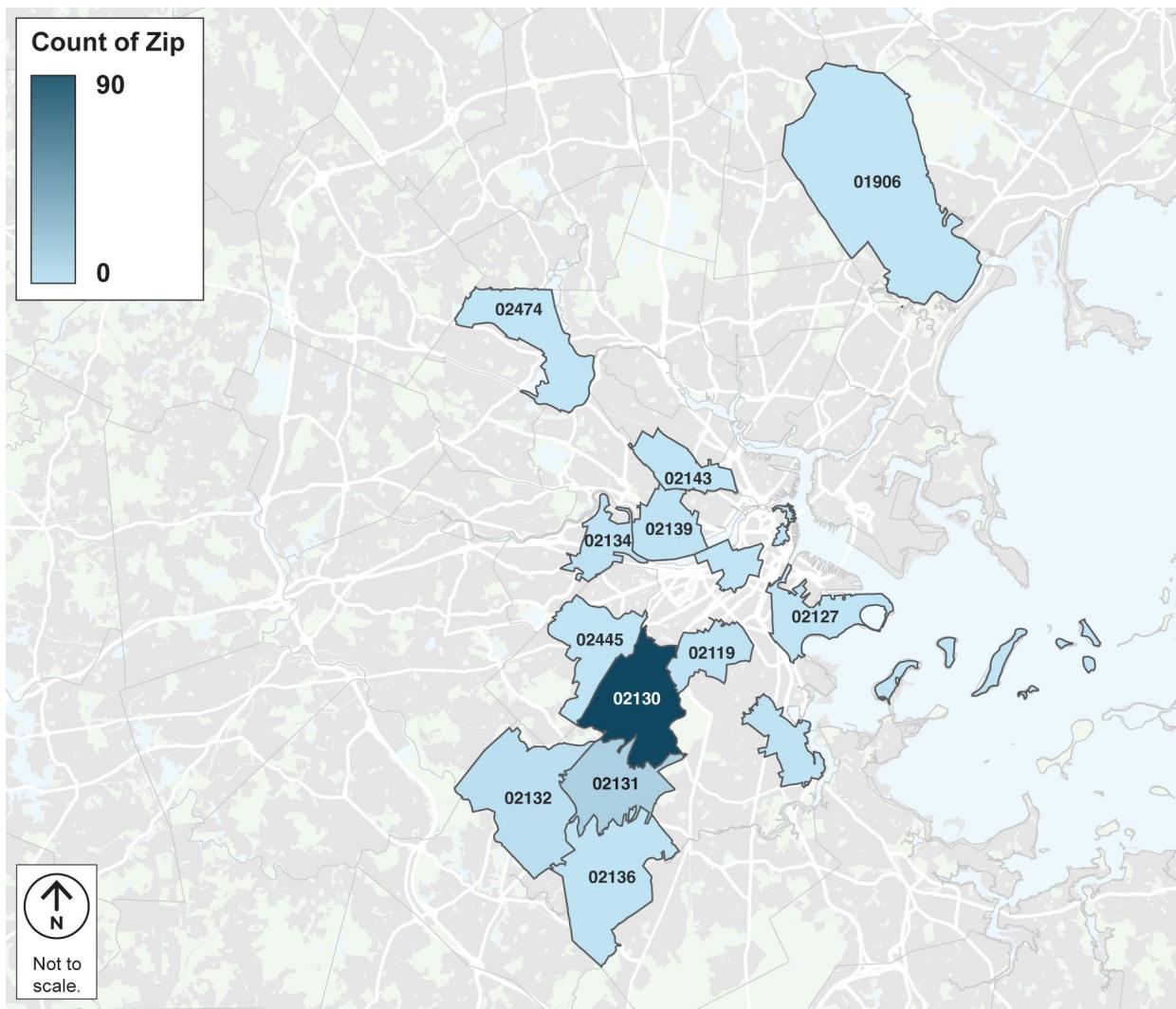
Comments collected via the Project website included the postal code of the respondent. Of the 124 comments from the online comment form, **90 comments (72.6%)** were from residents in the 02130 ZIP code which includes the Arborway, and **16 comments (12.9%)** were from the neighboring 02131 and 02132 ZIP codes which include parts of the Arboretum. The remaining **18 comments (14.5%)** were from various other Boston neighborhoods and surrounding communities, as shown in **Figure 1**.



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Figure 1. Home ZIP Codes of Received Public Comments



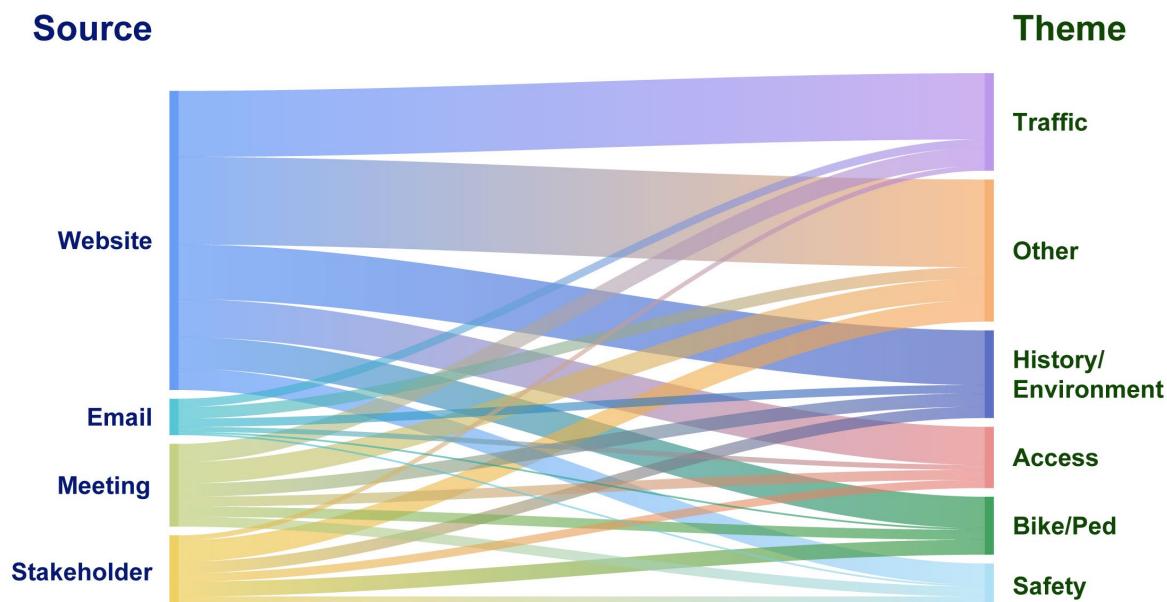
All comments, both written and verbal, submitted to the project team or collected during meetings were reviewed and will be considered to the greatest extent possible while developing the 25% Design. This memorandum only summarizes and responds to the major themes and topics that were identified during that review process between January 2025 and April 2025.



Public Comment Themes

Most feedback received could be categorized into five broad themes: traffic, historical, and environmental resources; walking and biking; safety; and neighborhood access. Where a single comment addressed multiple themes, it was split into multiple categories. The most common area of feedback was traffic, followed by historical and environmental resources. **Figure 2** and **Figure 3** provide a graphical representation of the comments received, including the source of the comment and the general theme that was addressed in the comment.

Figure 2. Comment Theme by Source

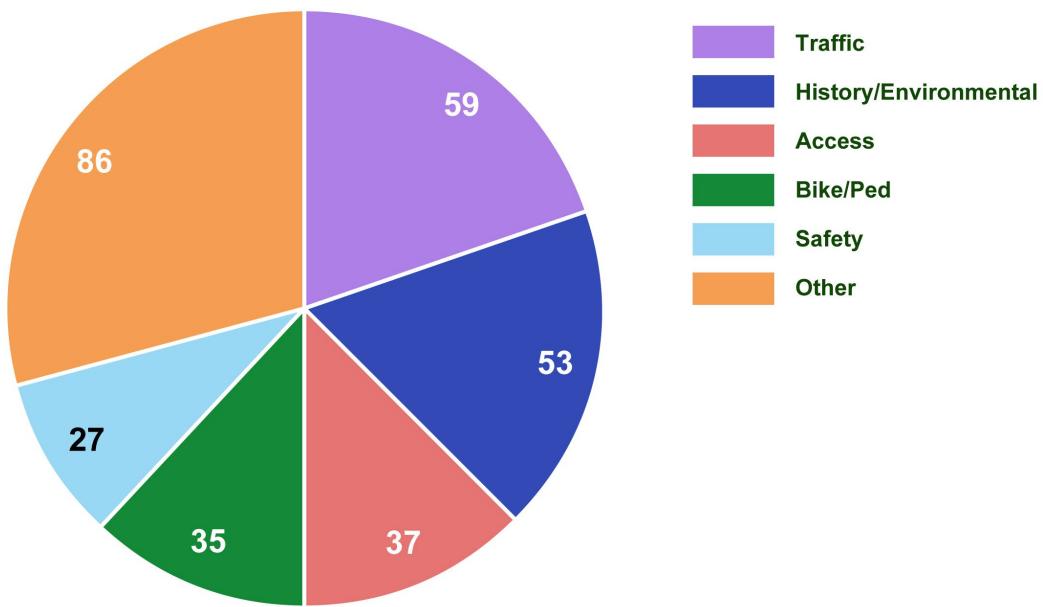




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Figure 3. Comment Theme Distribution

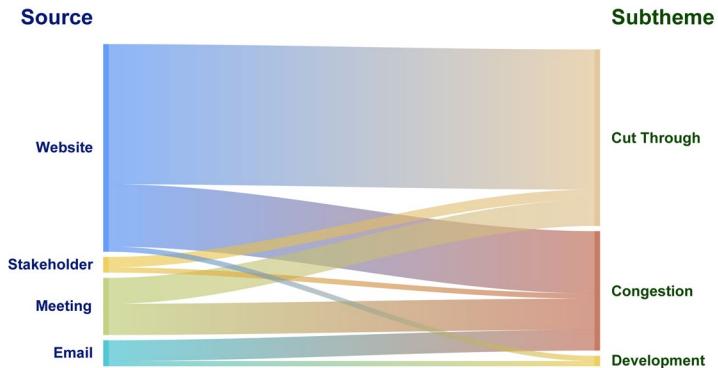


Traffic

The Arborway serves several competing priorities, one of which being an important arterial within the larger street network. **59 comments** were received addressing the traffic impacts of the proposed redesign. The primary concern in **34 of those comments** was centered around cut through traffic having a negative impact on nearby streets, while the remaining **25 comments** addressed general traffic congestion concerns or future planned development.

Figure 4 shows the distribution of public comments received including how comments were submitted and to what specific theme they discussed.

Figure 4. Traffic Subthemes by Source





CUT-THROUGH TRAFFIC

Comments regarding cut-through traffic largely centered around concern that modifications to the Arborway could push new traffic into neighboring parallel routes, impacting low volume local streets. Specific concerns were raised regarding the potential for cut-through traffic on May Street, Rockwood Street, and Prince Street. Local residents expressed concern about increased volumes and speeding on these streets causing safety issues and impacting their residential character.

Response

Most of the side street connections will become a little more difficult under the preferred design alternative, thus deterring such a diversion. When it comes to May Street specifically, the analysis results show virtually no increase of delay or travel time for drivers approaching Kelley Circle from Pond Street; diverting to May Street would not provide a time-saving diversion. Furthermore, the design team will consider traffic calming measures on May Street that would deter that diversion even more.

The volume noted in the Traffic Report using Rockwood Street (due to prohibiting left turns from Pond Street to Francis Parkman Drive) is approximately 15 vehicles at the peak hours, or one car every four minutes. This volume during the peak hours is almost unnoticeable in an urban/suburban setting.

The preferred design alternative prohibits left turns from Arborway onto Prince Street, which will reduce its use as a cut-through and encourages traffic to stay on Arborway. However, the restriction necessitates reducing local access to Prince Street and the Pondside neighborhood, and requires further discussion with the relevant stakeholders.

GENERAL TRAFFIC CONGESTION

The remaining **25 traffic-related comments** expressed a range of concerns related to additional delay they expect to result from the installation of signalized intersections and the elimination of through traffic on the Arborway carriage roads. Specific concerns identified include existing congestion issues resulting from short-term safety improvement projects, the lane reduction on Arborway between Murray Circle and Forest Hills, new developments in the area increasing volumes, and delay resulting from intersection signalization and blocked intersections.

Response

HSH finalized the Traffic Analysis Memorandum (November 2024) that provided an executive summary that addressed the congestion issue before diving deeper into the effort that went into the analysis. The executive summary showed that the proposed improvements are expected to reduce the travel times of the major routes through the Project area when



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compared to the existing conditions. A reduction in travel time means that intersection delay will be shorter than that experienced under the existing conditions.

The same memorandum discussed the private developments that were included in the analysis at the time of completion. The only one that wasn't included was the proposed redevelopment of the parcel at 920 Centre Street, adjacent to Murray Circle. At the time of the 2024 memorandum's completion, the development at 920 Centre Street wasn't official and at the time of the last DCR public meeting (September 2024), that project was still at the Letter of Intent phase without any traffic study completed to get specific traffic volume information for use in our analysis. The traffic volumes will be incorporated into the analysis at 25% Design.

Historical and Environmental Resources

The Arborway represents a significant component of the Emerald Necklace, as designed by Frederick Law Olmsted in the 1890s. **53 comments** were received relating to the Arborway's status as a historical parkway, and associated parkway concerns. Comments in this theme expressed desire to maintain the historical character of the parkway, increase parkland, reduce vehicle lanes, and preserve trees. **Figure 5** shows the distribution of public comments received including how comments were submitted and to what specific theme they discussed.

Figure 5. Historical and Environmental Resources Subthemes by Source



MODE SHIFT

22 comments specifically addressed concerns about the number of lanes proposed and an overall desire to reduce vehicular traffic on the Arborway to make the area more of a park and less of a transportation artery. Comments referenced local and state goals to reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and promote alternative transportation options. Comments on this theme expressed a desire to reduce the capacity of the roadway to meet these goals, while also increasing parkland and reducing impervious areas.



Response

DCR agrees with state and local goals to reduce VMTs; however, each project has specific goals that need to be met. The Arborway is an arterial that connects many communities to and from Boston, and there are no major highways on which to reroute traffic. Given that a major goal of the Project is to avoid conditions that route traffic onto local roads and into neighborhoods, keeping most of the vehicular traffic on the Arborway while increasing parkland and improving bicycle and pedestrian safety fits within the Project's goals. The preferred design alternative expands the total park area, and reduces overall travel lane-feet and impervious area. Furthermore, walkers and bikers will notice an additional upgrade to their park experience, as accessible parkland is increased by approximately five acres.

HISTORIC CHARACTER

14 comments focused on the historical character of the roadway. Concerns centered around the removal of the rotaries, and the perception of creating a highway in a park. Commenters compared the preferred design alternative to other nearby signalized intersections, such as the signal at Forest Hills station, and expressed concern about the number of lanes at the intersection and volumes of traffic degrading the character of the roadway. Commenters associated with the JPA/JHA neighborhood groups also largely expressed desire to retain the existing rotaries.

Response

As contributed by the Emerald Necklace Conservancy when recounting the legacy of the original Architect of the Arborway, “(Olmsted) designed (and named) the “parkway” as a way to separate commercial vehicles from recreational ones.” The current parkway, as expressed by stakeholders, presents conditions that limit the ability for all to enjoy the Arborway as a parkway. Given the volumes of regional traffic, both the existing rotaries and modern roundabouts cannot process the volumes without encouraging diversion of traffic onto local streets. The current rotaries are significantly larger than modern roundabouts, locking up usable park space within their centers, and do not provide the same safety benefits for bicyclists and pedestrians. Maintaining the existing geometry would conflict with the modern and historical goals of designating recreational space for all users.

OTHER COMMENTS

The remaining comments in this category addressed specific concerns regarding areas of parkland being created, the number of existing trees being impacted by the preferred design alternative, and ideas for utilization of new space, including playgrounds, green infrastructure, and Bluebikes stations.



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Response

With the preferred design alternative, the overall increase to pervious area is approximately 1.8 acres, but with existing inaccessible pervious area in the middle of the rotaries, the usable parkland area is increased by approximately five (5) acres. The number of trees removed has not been finalized yet, but preserving mature trees was a significant factor in determining the new parkway alignment. This will be calculated and published in the 25% Design submission. New plantings are proposed to fill gaps in the tree canopy, provide understory plantings, and promote biodiversity. Additionally, recommendations for the maintenance and protection of existing and new green spaces will be provided by the design team. Site amenities such as Bluebikes stations, playgrounds, benches, and wayfinding signs will be considered, and incorporated as the design progresses.

Walking and Biking

As a key corridor in the Emerald Necklace connecting the Arnold Arboretum to Jamaica Pond, the Arborway is a high demand bicycle and pedestrian corridor. **35 comments** were received specifically concerning accommodation for bikes and pedestrians, in addition to general safety concerns discussed in the safety section. **Figure 6** shows the distribution of public comments received including how comments were submitted and to what specific theme they discussed.

Figure 6. Walking and Biking Subthemes by Source



CROSSINGS

Safety at vehicle crossings was a top concern identified in this category of comments, representing **15 of the comments**. Key issues raised in these comments were safety at the mid-block crossing of the main Arborway, along with safety at the unsignalized crossings where the carriage roads will join the main Arborway. Comments also addressed a general concern about the number of lanes that will need to be crossed at each intersection, and concerns about vehicles blocking crosswalks.



Response

As the design progresses, the design team will continue to analyze the safety of the mid-block crossing and all other crossings. Measures such as raised crosswalks, exclusive pedestrian phases, and pedestrian activated signals are being considered to improve safety and comfortability. All crossings at signalized intersections will be timed appropriately so that slower pedestrians can navigate the intersection safely.

BIKE PATH ROUTING

12 comments provided specific routing feedback for the proposed bike paths. General themes include a desire for two-way bike connectivity on both sides of the Arborway, and a desire for straighter routes between intersections. Comments also addressed connections to other nearby bike lanes and the potential for bike infrastructure on connecting City-owned streets.

Response

The bicycle and pedestrian facilities at the new Murray Square intersection will be reconsidered to provide direct pathing on Arborway and a safer connection from Centre Street while maintaining existing trees. Bicyclists can travel in both directions in advisory bike lanes on the northbound and southbound carriageways and on a bidirectional bike path by the southbound carriageway. The design team will coordinate with the City of Boston on bicycle facilities outside the Project's limits.

MODE SEPARATION

The remaining **8 comments** expressed a desire for better bicyclist-pedestrian-vehicle separation. Concerns were raised about the safety of bike-pedestrian interactions on shared use paths, and a desire was expressed for greater separation from vehicles where possible.

Response

Separated bicycle and pedestrian facilities, or widened shared use paths, will be considered along busy, desirable routes. However, the increased impervious area due to separating or widening must be analyzed considering one of the Project's goals is to maximize green space in the parkway.



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Safety

Safety was a key concern raised across all comment categories. **27 comments** specifically focused on safety concerns, primarily relating to a desire for traffic calming along the corridor and highlighting existing safety issues on the corridor. **Figure 7** shows the distribution of public comments received including how comments were submitted and to what specific theme they discussed.

Figure 7. Safety Subthemes by Source



TRAFFIC CALMING

13 of these comments suggested various forms of traffic calming which could be implemented in areas of the corridor. Specific treatments suggested including speed humps, reducing speed limits, and installing raised crosswalks and raised intersections. Commenters expressed a desire for coordination with City agencies to install traffic calming measures on side streets in parallel with the Arborway Parkway Improvement Project to reduce speeding and cut through traffic.

Response

Speed control on the Arborway main barrel and Carriageways are being considered as the design progresses. The current plan presents several locations where traffic calming and high visibility treatments such as raised crosswalks are proposed to encourage slower speeds. Additional traffic calming measures on side streets to reduce speeds and discourage cut-through behavior are also being coordinated with the City of Boston.

OTHER SAFETY CONCERNs

The remaining comments in this category addressed a variety of specific safety concerns, including desire for a median on the Arborway between Murray Circle and Forest Hills, concerns about drivers understanding of advisory bike lanes, and general concerns about speeding and signal adherence on the Arborway and Jamaicaway.

Response

The design team will weigh the benefits of implementing a median and/or pedestrian refuge islands on Arborway at the eastern leg of Murray Circle against the potential for tree removal

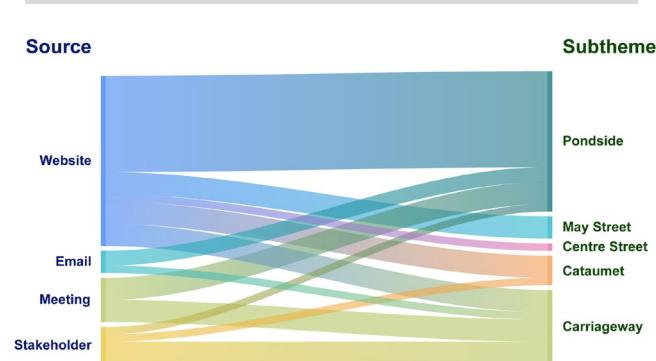


and a reduction in accessible parkland. To reduce confusion about advisory bike lane operations, guiding signage and striping will be proposed.

Neighborhood Access

The Arborway serves as the primary access route for many residents, including the Pondside neighborhood, May Street, and residents directly abutting the Arborway. **39 comments** were received expressing concerns about access to these areas and other local streets. **Figure 8** shows the distribution of public comments received including how comments were submitted and to what specific theme they discussed.

Figure 8. *Neighborhood Access Subthemes by Source*



PONDSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD

Access to the Pondside neighborhood, including Prince Street, Orchard Street, Dunster Road, and Eliot Street, was a key concern raised at the public meeting and was mentioned in **17 comments**. The primary concern was how drivers traveling southbound on Jamaicaway/Arborway would be able to access these streets without the U-turn that is currently provided at Kelley Circle.

Response

Connections to the Pondside neighborhood are being reevaluated and will be discussed with relevant stakeholders as the project progresses through 25% Design. The design team did evaluate a reconfiguration of the Jamaicaway and Eliot Street intersection and the Pond Street Extension to improve access. While permitting the southbound left turn from Jamaicaway to Eliot Street and Prince Street simplifies the connection to residences on those streets, it also encourages cut-through traffic to bypass the proposed Kelley Square intersection and raises concerns about added delay and congestion on Jamaicaway.

ARBORWAY CARRAIGEWAYS

10 comments focused on access to the Arborway Carriageways. Comments in this category expressed a desire for clarification on how local access to these properties will function, and how



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emergency access will be accommodated, and the desire for full signalization of the midblock intersection to allow for left turns into the Carriageways.

Response

The proposed dead-end design on the Carriageways will eliminate cut-through traffic and improve bike and pedestrian conditions. Emergency vehicles (ambulances, fire trucks, etc.) can still enter and exit the Carriageways at their ends using “Authorized Vehicle Only” driveways, like the existing configuration at the southern end of May Street. Turnarounds are provided for all other vehicles to exit the Carriageways.

OTHER NEIGHBORHOOD ACCESS CONCERNS

The remaining comments in this category included comments that expressed a desire for a signal at the intersection of Cataumet Street and Pond Street, concerns about emergency vehicle access to May Street, and concerns regarding turn restrictions at intersections.

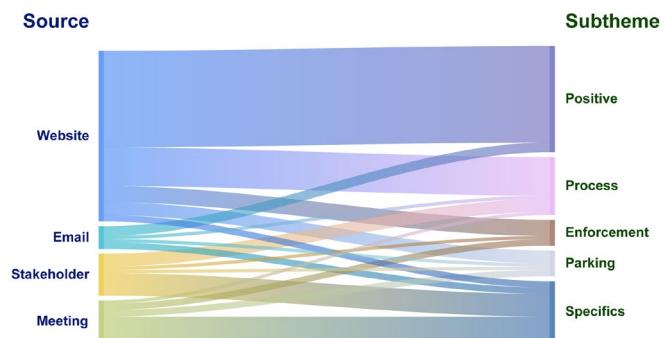
Response

Due to the low volume to/from Cataumet Street, and its proximity to the proposed traffic light, adding another traffic light at this intersection is not feasible, but this will be further reviewed for any potential refinement as the design progresses. Emergency vehicle access to May Street will be reviewed to both maintain access and discourage cut-through traffic.

Other

The remaining **84 comments** addressed a range of themes. **33 comments** were received that expressed support for the Project overall, including positive feedback regarding the increased parkland, improved bike and pedestrian connections, and improved safety. Comments also expressed a desire for rapid implementation of the Project, and interim short-term traffic calming or safety improvements. **Figure 9** shows the distribution of public comments received including how comments were submitted and to what specific theme they discussed.

Figure 9. Other Subthemes by Source





PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

18 comments were focused on the project development process. Comments in this category included desire for a faster design process, increased outreach and engagement with local abutters including signage posted along the roadway, more coordination with neighborhood groups and City agencies, and an updated traffic study.

Response

As of July 2025, the Arborway Parkway Improvement Project is currently within the 25% Design stage. DCR and the design team are meeting with stakeholders and local neighborhood groups to finalize the design so the 25% submittal documents can be finalized. DCR implemented short-term signage and striping improvements recently in 2024.

OTHER

The remaining comments provided specific feedback regarding parking (**8 comments**), a desire for increased traffic enforcement (**8 comments**), and location, project development, or design-specific questions (**17 comments**) including bus stop locations, jurisdiction questions, lane widths, and utilities.

Response

Parking will continue to be evaluated as the design progresses, but generally parking lanes will not be removed within Project limits. Parking on the Arborway along the Arboretum and near the Arborway Gate of the Arboretum will be maintained. DCR agrees that more traffic enforcement is needed and supports legislation to permit automated traffic enforcement.

Design specifics, such as lane widths, will be outlined in upcoming engineering submissions.

Next Steps

Following this in-depth review of the public feedback, DCR and the design team will coordinate to incorporate the public feedback and resolve outstanding design issues. A breakdown of all comment themes and subthemes is shown in **Figure 10**. The team anticipates submitting a 25% Design package in early 2026. Further collaboration and engagement with the public will take place following the 25% Design stage.



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Figure 10. Count of all Comments by Themes and Subthemes

