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Written Questions and Answers Submitted during Somerville/Cambridge McGrath Boulevard Virtual Public Information Meeting on 3/25/25

How to read this document:

Written question or comment submitted during the meeting is written in bold italics

Answer from the project team is written below.

Can the chat be enabled.

We understand the concern and appreciate the feedback, which will be considered for future meetings. The chat feature is disabled to limit disruptions to the meeting and is the current MassDOT policy for the online meeting format

Is the plan to use the space between Medford Street and Somerville Ave Extension as a lay down yard as it is currently being used for the Poplar Street water storage tank?

That is private property so it remains to be seen if it could be used for lay down at this point.

The somerville Medford McGrath intersection looking south looked flat. Will there be ramp just south of tht area to go across the Green and Purple lines?

It will still ramp up to connect to the Squires Bridge over the rail lines. It will mimic the grade of the existing northbound McGrath as it connects near Poplar.

At Washington and McGrath is the intersection protected with raised buffers at all four corners of the intersection?

Yes

On the Somerville Ave image, can you clarify whether cars would still be able to travel down “Scary way” underneath the bridge? Currently, southbound thru bikes have to traverse an intersection where drivers could theoretically travel at high speeds but in practice there are few cars. It would benefit from explicitly removing cars from “Scary way”.

Somerville Ave Extension ("Scary Way") is an important connection into the Brickbottom neighborhood for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles. The current design plans to maintain vehicle access while also providing safety and connectivity improvements for pedestrians and bicycles.

Could there be concrete curbing between the bike lane and the lane on the bridge?

We are continuing to evaluate treatments for vehicle/bicycle/pedestrian separation that can be used on existing bridge decks

Can we have more robust material for the at grade cycletrack? The flex posts have limited street life and are often run over. Suggest using precast concrete curbs.

We are continuing to evaluate treatments for vehicle/bicycle/pedestrian separation that can be used on existing bridge decks and in other locations

Can we put a raised curb between the bike lanes and the car lanes?

We are continuing to evaluate treatments for vehicle/bicycle/pedestrian separation that can be used on existing bridge decks and at other locations

Could the reduction of the left from McGrath north on to Medford st/highland Ave from one to two lanes be considered? right now there is a major hazard of drivers all trying to merge together to get on to highland after taking the left since very limited traffic heads down Medford. as the design stands it would make the right lane with sharrows quite dangerous for bikes. reducing the left to one lane would also keep the traffic from backing into the intersection due to merging as currently occurs occasionally during rush hour.

The current design has one left turn lane from McGrath northbound onto Medford/Highland and 1 lane departing the intersection on Medford St through the Highland Ave intersection

Please remove the ped bridge but please make the street level crossing equally safe.

Thank you for your support for the removal of the pedestrian bridge and we will continue to work diligently to make the street level crossing safe

What is the expected pedestrian crossing time for the at-grade crossing planned at Otis St?

We do not have final signal timings, but the pedestrians will be able to cross in a signal walk signal.

Traffic calming is essential here.

Thank you for the input. We are continuing to evaluate traffic calming measures as we go through the design and will work to implement appropriate measures as feasible

The design is looking pretty spectacular, especially with the latest round of changes. Will there be bike signals, separate from pedestrian and car signals?

Thank you for the support! The bike signal question is currently under evaluation so we don't have an answer at this time but we will continue to provide updates as that progresses. There are a number of challenges with the MUTCD requirements for bike signals that need to be carefully evaluated in regards to the current design

Would it be possible to remove the painted median by the bus stop on Medford St. and instead construct a peninsula/"floating" bus stop?

Thank you for the question. We have received similar comments from others and are currently evaluating this option to see if it's feasible as we progress through the design.

A regular signal is much better than a HAWK.

Thank you for the input

Regarding Otis St, could MassDOT please commit to full signalization, not a partial HAWK signal? Somerville advocates are rightfully very skeptical of HAWK signals (originally designed for suburban Arizona with approximately zero pedestrians) in an urban context.) Your phrasing of "appropriate signaling" makes it challenging for the public to understand. Could you please confirm that this will be a full signal, not a HAWK signal?

It will be a full signal.

Regarding "Otis St", your diagram says "signalized". I think it is fair to assume that every involved Somerville resident would prefer full signalization over partial signalization. Could you please confirm that your design refers to full signalization?

Yes, it does.

What is the time line of Squire's Bridge replacement?

Squire's Bridge is currently at the bridge type selection design phase and is expected to be advertised for construction in Spring 2028 based on the current schedule

Is the USDOT grant at risk given the current administration?

It's possible but MassDOT is committed to funding the project regardless of the outcome of the grants

This looks very nice. I suggest you look into pre cast concrete curbing on the bridges for bike lane separation

Thank you for the comment. We are evaluating what treatments can be done over the Truss & Gilman Street Bridges where we are constrained by the existing bridges.

Will the signalized crossing at Otis street be a red yellow green, or a HAWK?

It will be a full red, yellow, green signal.

How long would construction be expected to take? Like 3-5 years or more like 10-15 years?

Most likely in the 4-5 year range.

Once construction begins, how long will construction be expected to take?

Construction is currently anticipated somewhere between 4-5 years.

If construction begins Fall 2027, when is the anticipated timeline for finishing.

Construction will most likely be in the 4-5 year range.

Did I see correctly that there will be no left turn lanes from McGrath Blvd, either going north or south, onto Washington Street? Right now it is possible to make these two left turns, albeit by making "wide" turns essentially swinging around to get under the overpass.

Correct. Those are low volume movements. Union Sq can be accessed from McGrath northbound via Somerville Ave.

Will you be providing the complete revised design at this time, or are you only ready with these specific changes?

We covered the areas that have been revised since our last meeting. We are still refining other areas as we coordinate with adjacent projects.

Why doesn't this plan reconnect Otis Street and perhaps Bonair Street?

This was discussed during the response to one of the live questions. We will continue to evaluate this

Foot bridges contribute to speeding cars and make the surrounding crossings more dangerous.

Thanks for this input

Have speed cameras been considered as a part of the project as a way to address speeding near intersections? Would that be a matter up to the city?

Speed cameras are not currently allowed under Mass state law and it would be up to the legislature to allow them

How much more to the project in funding would reconstruction of a new footbridge cost?

Answered live. The cost for replacing the ped bridge has not been fully determined but is not one of the controlling factors for the proposal for the pedestrian bridge

Can we get 10' wide lanes along the entire length of this boulevard? It is known to reduce speed from 11' and doesn't reduce roadway capacity at all

We will evaluate this. Thanks for your input

Can we get a commitment from Mass DOT that the depictions of grass in these slides will not actually be (non-native) grass or lawn?

Thank you for your concern. We will continue to work closely with our landscape designers and the cities to create an attractive and sustainable landscape design. We are not ready to make any specific commitments at this time but please continue to bring questions and concerns to our attention

'+1 to bus priority

Thanks for the input

I think we should embrace the at-grade crossing at Otis St. Not just for the added green space and the protection of Cremin Park, but most of all, because the footbridge says, "this is a corridor designed for

automobiles.” I think the plans for an at-grade crossing, tremendously narrowed by the removal of two automobile lanes, and further broken up by a protected median and cycle tracks, hopefully with a raised crosswalk, will result in a better design for pedestrians and cyclists in particular. It’s the only responsible way forward.

Thank you Mr. Connolly for your support!

Will the frontage roads be two way for bikes?

This is still being evaluated

Will it be possible to turn left from the end of Cross St to get onto McGrath Blvd southbound?

Cross St will be right turn only onto McGrath northbound. There will be a median crossing separating the northbound and southbound travel lanes.

The presentation shows median width for potential future bus left turns from McGrath SB to Washington EB. This bus movement will likely be in use later this year, so the designs should be updated to show the turn lane for buses with TSP.

Thank you for your feedback. We are continuing to coordinate with the MBTA and will update the design appropriately.

Why is there not better shade tree cover for the sidewalks on both sides?

Shade tree cover is being carefully evaluated to be implemented wherever feasible within the design

The large size of the intersections and the large medians there are concerning. Can the project team confirm that the pedestrian signals will be timed such that people can reasonably cross in one go? (no 2-stage crossings/having to wait at the median)

Yes, pedestrians will be able to cross in one move (single stage)

Thanks for addressing my median question, glad to hear that the median in some cases could potentially be used to help with future addition of bus (turn?) lanes.

Thanks for the question and support