

# Defining the Issues and Establishing Shared Goals

The foundation to any solution lies in defining the issues accurately. In the case of the Mount Auburn Street and Fresh Pond Parkway corridors, this meant analyzing the existing conditions, as well as casting a very wide net to capture as many community comments as possible. The design team accomplished this by walking through the project area with representatives from the municipalities, state agencies, and

elected representatives, and using the first public meeting and an online tool to solicit input. The team engaged the stakeholder group to publicize the invite to the public meeting on their neighborhood listservs and publish an online WikiMap to collect comments from those who weren't able to attend the meeting.

## Site Walk

To kick off the project with the relevant municipal and state staff and elected officials, the design team hosted a walkthrough of the project area on April 14, 2016. This event solicited feedback from key staff from multiple agencies and the Town of Watertown and the City of Cambridge to help the project team understand many of the maintenance, safety, and operational issues that have been gathered over the years, as well as planning work that had already been accomplished. Key staff are also often aware of key neighborhood issues as they are the ones who get the calls from the public.

In addition to learning details of ongoing projects such as Watertown's Mount Auburn Street redesign, the DCR's Cambridge-Watertown Greenway, and the City of Cambridge's Redesign of part of Huron Avenue just east of the project area, the team also witnessed a few safety

concerns first hand. A small crash was witnessed at Mount Auburn Street and Fresh Pond Parkway, wherein a driver braked to avoid a crossing pedestrian and was rear-ended by a second car. As the walk-through arrived at the driveway of the BB&N School, children were being let out for the day and parents' cars were lined up along the southbound side of Gerrys Landing Road, some circulating as they could not find a free space to wait in.

A main topic of discussion was the significant delay faced by inbound buses in the morning peak hours. Elected officials reported complaints of buses being caught in traffic on this 3,500-foot stretch of Mount Auburn Street for well over 10 minutes. Buses were also described as overcrowded, and passing by people waiting for the bus in the morning—making the service less reliable for local residents as a commuting choice.



*With an eye toward the desired improvements for buses 71 and 73, the catenary wires which power these buses were discussed during the site walk. This discussion was continued as the short-term design alternative moved forward over the course of 2017.*

## First Public Meeting

The project's first public meeting was held on June 1, 2016, at the Shady Hill School gym, located at 56 Coolidge Avenue in Cambridge. The meeting was designed to gather input from local residents and to start building consensus on existing conditions. A short presentation on the data the project team had gathered so far was followed by an open house during which residents gave feedback to the project team.

There were five stations in the open house: Walking/ADA, Bicycling, Transit, Driving, and Neighborhood Environment and Local Businesses. Attendees had the opportunity to write down comments, concerns, and suggestions on sticky notes and place them on the map at the associated location. A representative of each station reported back to the full room. Common themes found on the maps after the meeting included speeding and poor air quality on Fresh Pond Parkway, pedestrians avoiding crossing Fresh Pond Parkway if they could, and a very confusing design “down by the river” at the three-legged interchanges connecting Gerrys Landing Road, Memorial Drive, the Eliot Bridge, and

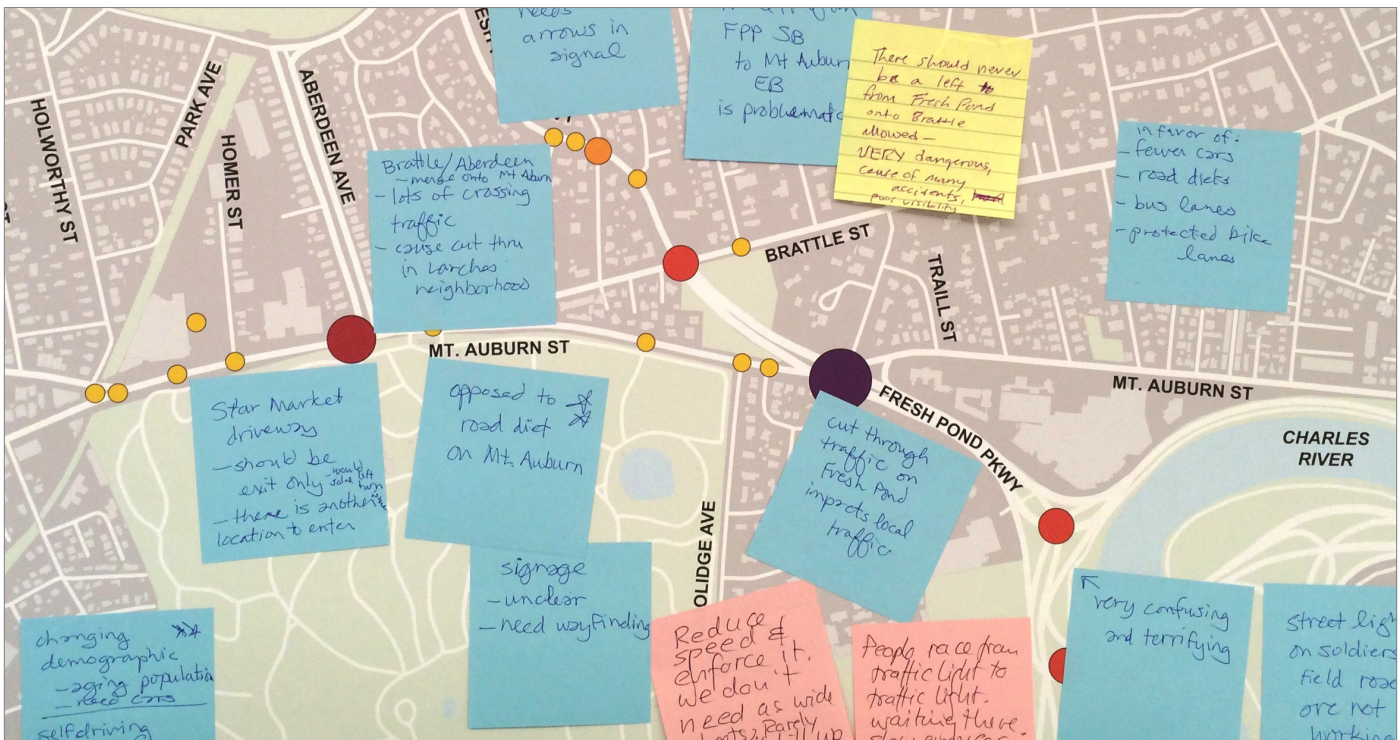
Greenough Boulevard. Slow, crowded buses were also mentioned many times with emphasis.



I AGREE, I HAVE NEVER BIKED ON MOUNT AUBURN STREET EAST OF HERE DUE TO HOW STRESSFUL IT SEEMS. TURNING LEFT FROM MOUNT AUBURN STREET ONTO BRATTLE IS STILL PRETTY BAD, ALTHOUGH ONCE ACTUALLY ON BRATTLE IT'S GENERALLY OK.”



*The most popular comment on the Mount Auburn Corridor Study WikiMap.*



One of the several boards where feedback was collected at the first public meeting.

## The Shared Goals

At the second meeting of stakeholders on June 23, 2016, a set of shared goals were presented for approval by the community. The goals were developed from the hundreds of comments gathered from the walk-through, WikiMap, and first public and stakeholder meetings. These results were

presented to the stakeholder group, and the language of the Shared Goals was expanded at this meeting to include four new changes noted by the community: connectivity, clarity, calm traffic, and the need for traffic enforcement in the corridor.

The shared goals established and agreed upon by the stakeholders present were:

- Calm traffic, provide clarity, and reduce crashes and severity of crashes.
- Improve connectivity and air quality, and expand mobility choices by:
  - Measuring people, not cars.
  - Reducing transit delays.
  - Improving safety, access, parking, and comfort for bicycles.
  - Maintaining mobility for motor vehicles.
  - Improving safety, attractiveness, noise, and comfort for pedestrians and residents.
- Address cut-through traffic in the Larchwood, Huron Village, and Coolidge Hill neighborhoods.
- Offer short- and long-term solutions.
- Acknowledge enforcement and special uses by BB&N, Mount Auburn Cemetery, Mount Auburn Hospital, Shady Hill School, and Tufts Health Plan.

The shared values established were:

- Equity
  - Design for everyone's needs, including the disadvantaged.
- Flexibility
  - Designs responsive to:
    - Peak and off-peak;
    - School pick up and drop off;
    - Funeral processions; and
    - Emergency vehicle access.
- Balance
  - Try to balance goals that may conflict.

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