



TO:	MassDOT	DATE:	August 23, 2024, 9-11 a.m.
FROM:	Howard Stein Hudson	HSH PROJECT NO.:	2021055.08
SUBJECT:	Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Allston Multimodal Project Multimodal Connections Working Group Meeting Summary as of August 23, 2024		

Core Working Group Representatives:
Francisco Lovero (MassDOT, Chair)
Michael Murphy (MassDOT, Co-Chair)
Elizabeth Leary (Boston University, BU)
Casandra Xavier (Accessibility Advocate)
Matt Peterson (City of Boston, COB)
Harry Mattison (Community Member)
Albert Ng (Harvard University, HU)
Tom Nally (A Better City, ABC)
Galen Mook (MassBikes)
Joe Cornish (Boston Landmarks Commission)
Rita Arcand (Depot Building Property Owner)

Overview

On August 23, 2024, the MassDOT team for the Allston Multimodal Project virtually held the second meeting with the Multimodal Connections Working Group. The Working Group (WG) discussed feedback on concept designs for four configurations of the Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge, as well as concept plans for the Southside Buffer Path between Cambridge Street and points to the east.

The main topics of discussion were:

- Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge Feedback; and
- Southside Buffer Path.



Meeting Summary

Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge Connection – New Concept #4 Feedback

PROJECT TEAM COMMENTS:

- The project team reminded attendees that plans shown are in draft form, and subject to changes based on feedback and structural feasibility.
- The project team looked at a couple of different variations of the U-turn and the Cambridge Street connection options based on feedback from the previous meetings.
- The project team explored adding a Y-connection to the Cambridge Street Bridge at the location of the bypass road, in addition to the proposed alternative four from the week prior. Additional concept development would be required to determine feasibility of this connection.
- The project team also explored providing additional ramps to directly connect the Southside Buffer Path to Cambridge Street. With the western ramp at 4.5%, users would have to make a hairpin turn to connect to the buffer path, and the connection entrance extends beyond the Franklin Street Bridge. A steeper version with 7.5% grades and level landing areas would connect closer to Franklin Street. For the eastern ramp, there would be portions that would require narrowing of the Southside Buffer Path due to constraints with ROW, tracks, and the Cambridge Street Bypass Road. Additional concept development would also be required to determine feasibility of this connection.
- The western ramp option of the connection from Cambridge Street down to the Franklin Street/ Southside Buffer Path entrance may obscure the views from the depot.
- The project team shared maps representing the proportion of travel volumes of pedestrians and cyclists on the existing Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge. Data shows that nearly all pedestrians travel north onto Franklin Street, while a majority of cyclists make their way to Cambridge Street and continue toward Harvard's campus. While the bridge direction is north and south, overall pedestrian movements tend to be east and west.
- The major movement for cyclists tends to be north and south, coming from Harvard Ave and continuing north on Franklin Street. However, the majority of cyclists approaching the bridge westbound (from Commonwealth Ave - Brighton Ave) continue west on Lincoln St towards Watertown. Few cyclists or pedestrians use Linden Street today, though approximately 15% of pedestrians use Highgate Street.
- The project team also confirmed that there will be three tracks of rail rather than four in the vicinity of potential Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge alternatives.



- Three tracks also bring an additional 15 feet, allowing for the ramp to be shifted north of the property line, making room for a substantial buffer there. If positioned against the property line, it opens up a buffer to the north.
- Jim Keller added that the two Commuter Rail lines are currently required during construction staging to the extent feasible, however, there is potential the U-turn option (without additional stair crossing) could be constructed early stages if one commuter rail line would be sufficient throughout construction. Early construction of U-Turn option feasibility needs further study.
- The project team has not yet explored traffic calming measures on Lincoln Street.

DISCUSSION:

ACCESSIBILITY

Comments:

- WG members would like to see the grading profiles from the Southside Buffer Path to the Cambridge Street/ Harvard Ave intersection up to and over the Alternative 4 Cambridge Street Connection bridge, over the bridge, and down the ramp to the Lincoln/ Franklin intersection.
- WG members would like to see the profile ratings for each of the options.
- WG members want to provide the same accessible path for all users, and ensure that all users have a similar experience on public infrastructure. They appreciate single alignments.

PATH EXTENSION

Comments:

- WG members highlighted the importance of a continuous and level buffer path that extends to the developments near Boston Landing and the New Balance building on Hano Street. This was in response to discussion surrounding potential routing of Southside Buffer Path to connect and terminate with Cambridge Street should the Alternative 4 Cambridge Street Connection bridge become the preferred alternative.
- WG members said if the path was extended to connect users from the west on the Braintree Street bikeway corridor, they would be open to certain changes to the design. If Cambridge Street is an accessible slope and serves as an accessible path connection, then the WG would be open to having a slightly steeper connection up from Franklin Street to the Cambridge Street connection.
- WG members' goals are to provide a shorter path to get users from Braintree Street to the Cambridge Street Bridge and over the turnpike.



TRAFFIC CALMING/SIGNALIZATION

Comments:

- A WG member asked if a signalized intersection was being explored in the prior design.
- A WG member asked if there would be a traffic calming treatment for the northern side of Lincoln Street.
- WG members would like to see a signalized traffic calming treatment on Lincoln Street, similar to the Somerville Community Path for bike and pedestrian corridors.
- Matthew Petersen provided an update about the cross section on Cambridge Street. The City's signals team confirmed that they have no problem with the two-lane cross section of Cambridge Street eastbound starting after Linden Street – they prefer it. They don't want an added lane at Linden. They would rather have that two-lane section start after some section of one lane that continues beyond Linden Street, so that it's not like an added lane. The desire is not to make it easier to cut through Linden, but to make it a little more difficult. This would mean for that section of Cambridge Street, west of Linden, there would be more real estate for a fully separated facility on the north side and remove some of the pressure on that mixing zone area.
- WG members are not opposed to adding signals at Linden Street if they are coordinated and managed properly.

Concerns:

- WG members expressed concerns about the current plans for mitigation of pedestrian/bicycle conflict, traffic calming measures, and the signalization of crossings. WG members stressed that these measures are important for pedestrian safety.

RAIL LAYOUT

Support:

- WG members appreciated the updated rail layout.
- WG members consider the change from three tracks instead of four as an improvement. They would like the project team to continue refining this idea.
- WG members expressed that having the track removed on the loop is a big help to consider an alternative.

Comments:

- WG members questioned whether three rails were necessary as there are currently only two tracks leading in from Newton.



- The project team reported that there will be expansions on the aforementioned section, and three tracks is the minimum.
- WG members reported that there is no space between the New Balance buildings and would like to see the drawings.

PROJECT TIMING

Support:

- WG members expressed that an advantage of the U-turn would be the staging because it could be built sooner rather than later and not depend on reconstruction of the Cambridge Street Bridge.

Comments:

- WG members would like the project team to consider the Lincoln Street switchback and Franklin Street bridge as a bundle.

Concerns:

- WG members expressed concern about the timing for option four having to be constructed after the Cambridge Street Bridge reconstruction project is completed.

U-TURN ALTERNATIVE

Support:

- The progressed U-turn alternative is well received by the WG.
- WG members appreciate that the project team is seeking to minimize and negate impacts to the Depot and its parking lot.
- WG members appreciate the efforts made to alleviate the width constraint at the railroad on the U-turn option.
- WG members expressed that an advantage of the U-turn would be the staging because it could be built sooner rather than later and not depend on reconstruction of the Cambridge Street Bridge.

Comments:

- WG members expressed that a lot could also be done with landscaping and the final design of the curve.
- WG members reported that the U-turn option could continue to see improvements.



- WG members reported that if the decision is made to move the U-turn forward because it minimizes impacts to the property owners, it would be desirable to make that Mansfield Street ramp up to the Cambridge Street crossing desirable.

Concerns:

- WG members expressed concern that U-turn design throws the desire line further west than what a lot of the residential neighborhoods within, specifically the Franklin Street area where users are going to want to go.

LOCAL CONNECTIONS

Support:

- WG members expressed that a direct connection to the Southside Buffer Path would be a real benefit.

Comments

- WG members reported that there is a demand up and down Harvard Avenue up to Franklin Street, and across the pike for pedestrians. They see that as being one of the potential benefits of a Cambridge Street connection.
- WG members would like to see the desire lines for users who are biking and walking on Cambridge Street, on the sidewalk and the bike lane and the other protected bike lane, as they're going towards the river on Cambridge Street.
- WG members would like to see data about the percentage of bikers staying on Cambridge Street or taking alternative routes.
- WG members expressed that there is no good way to connect the Cambridge Street connection down to the People's Pike and have it be any better than what the U-turn would do.

Concerns

- WG members questioned the connections to Harvard Street, Franklin Street intersection sharing bicycles and pedestrians, if indeed the property line does not shift, it would be a constrained opportunity to accommodate bikes and peds getting down to that intersection from the connection there, as we see today on this drawing for option four.
- WG members expressed concern about adding a crosswalk where Cambridge Street meets the sidewalk at Linden Street, regardless of the footbridge design because it would be a complex and chaotic mixing area between pedestrians, bicyclists, skateboarders, etc.



- WG members are concerned that data is missing for people who are heading over the River Street Bridge into Cambridgeport, and people who are going up to Harvard, North Harvard Street into that neighborhood area.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Support:

- WG members responded favorably to the pedestrian bridge plans.

Comments:

- WG members are looking forward to discussing landscaping options adjacent to the Allston Depot site.
- Matthew Petersen intends to check with the Boston Landmarks Commission on the feasibility of pedestrian bridge options next to the historic site.

Data Aggregation – Pedestrians and Bicyclists

PROJECT TEAM COMMENTS:

BICYCLISTS

- The data set represents an average Thursday in Fall 2023.
- The data set does not show volumes, but rather a proportion of flows.
- The project team looked at the northbound and southbound Franklin Street Bridge segment near Lincoln Street.
- Northbound
 - Leading up to the bridge, 83% of northbound bikers are coming from Harvard Avenue, 15% of them are coming from the west along Cambridge Street.
 - After you cross the bridge, 61% of bikers are then going up Franklin Street and 40% of them are continuing all the way across the river into Harvard Square. The other remaining ~40% are headed down Lincoln Street.
 - A lot of bikers are making it all the way to the Charles River, 31% from there, they're sort of distributing down the paths along the Charles River on the south side.
 - 15% are making it all the way into Watertown, headed up to that new Greenway path going into Cambridge from there.
 - 35% come from Harvard Ave all the way from Brookline, 36% coming through the BU area.
- Southbound



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- Southbound flows are similar to northbound flows
- Eastbound/westbound
 - Although the bridge movement is a northbound/ southbound movement, a portion of demand is actually along a regional desire line that is eastbound/ westbound. This represents about 26% of the total bikers that we see crossing the bridge.
 - The majority of this demand is served by Lincoln Street.
 - To the west over 50% are hitting the Charles River area closer to Watertown, 25% are heading west into Watertown and Newton, 35% are actually crossing the river into Watertown.
 - To the east bikers are headed into the Kenmore area, some going toward downtown. Some are going onto the Esplanade, headed toward downtown.
 - 6% are crossing the BU bridge into Cambridge and onto the Paul Dudley White path on the Memorial Drive side. 22% are headed down toward Fenway and maybe in the Longwood area as well. 6% are headed in the Longwood area.

PEDESTRIANS

- This dataset is northbound movements only but reflects northbound and southbound within a few percent of each other.
- 96% of pedestrians are traveling onto Franklin Street and only about 3% of pedestrians are using Lincoln Street.
- 14% of pedestrians use Highgate Street.

DISCUSSION:

Support:

- WG members believe that the future conditions will have better and safer options.

Comments:

- WG members would like to see the desire lines for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling on Cambridge Street.

Concerns:

- Some WG members are concerned that the data sets don't apply to the future condition. The future condition will have a Malvern Street connection, People's Pike, and West Station Way.
- Some WG members are concerned that the project team is considering that pedestrians will still use the same travel habits in the future.



- A project team member clarified that the maps shown only refer to existing conditions and are not meant to predict the future.

Southside Buffer Path

Project team members presented the working group with plan overviews and cross-sections of the proposed Southside Buffer Path. These included cross-sections of the path at Allston Depot, Cambridge Street, and multiple locations to the east (residential abutments). Connections are planned between the path and local streets at Franklin Street, Malvern/Seattle Streets, and Agganis Way Ped/Bike Bridge.

PROJECT TEAM COMMENTS:

- New rail alignments with three tracks allow for 30ft width for the buffer path. Multiple options are available for orientation and landscaping throughout the corridor.
- Various wall treatments can be explored for the noise wall along the path to avoid excessive graffiti. Options include public art, landscaping, and form liner.

DISCUSSION:

Support:

- Group members look forward to the option of a linear park along the Southside Buffer Path.

Comments:

- WG members were interested to see the possibility of connecting future developments with the path. The City is anticipating future developments in this area.

Concerns:

- Several WG members raised concerns about the safety and comfort of pedestrians on the buffer path. They questioned the intended lighting setup and possibility of additional street connections between Agganis Way and Malvern Street.
- WG members expressed concern about seeing a minimum or subminimum sidewalk on new infrastructure.
- WG members expressed concern about an at-grade path connection at Malvern Street requiring additional right-of-way. It would require a 10.5-foot channel between two walls for users to get from Ashford Street to an at-grade path. The WG does not find a five and a half to six-foot sidewalk acceptable when it will be one of the only connections over the railroad.



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- Matthew Petersen also mentioned that he has heard from the Disabilities Commission that 500 feet is a long distance to be at 4.5% slope. City Hall Plaza is an example of this where they have heard complaints. They would like to see a 1% slope or break up the grade layers.
- WG members expressed concern for plans to allow maintenance vehicles to cross Worcester Line tracks near West Station and suggested exploring Babcock Street as a secondary access point.

Next Steps

UPCOMING MEETINGS

As the WG meetings continue, the project team will:

- Continue discussion with MBTA, Amtrak, and CSX regarding the future of existing rail yard.
- Continue to refine concept ideas.

FORMAT

- Extend invitations to WG members for future meetings on Zoom.
- Request for hybrid meeting option for those who can attend in-person.
- The WG will not meet on August 30.
- Next WG meeting to be held on **September 6, 2024**.

TOPICS

Working group members expressed that they would like to cover the following topics in future meetings:

- A timeline of future rail yard development decisions.
- A narrowed track layout between Newton and Boston Landing.
- Refined concept designs.
- Grading profiles from the Cambridge Street, Harvard Ave intersection up to the bridge approaches, over the bridge, and down the ramp to the Lincoln Franklin intersection.
- Grading profile ratings for each of the concept options.
- A signalized traffic calming treatment on Lincoln Street.
- The desire lines for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling on Cambridge Street.



Meeting Attendees

Name	Working Group Role	Affiliation
Bronwyn Shields	Core Working Group Member – Harvard University (Alternate)	Harvard University
Chris Calnan	Project Team	TetraTech
David Andrews	Project Team	BRR
Don Kindsvatter	Project Team	Urban Idea Lab
Douglas Arcand	Partnering Party	Property Owner
Elizabeth Leary	Core Working Group Member – Boston University	Boston University (BU)
Etty Padmodipoetro	Project Team	Urban Idea Lab
Galen Mook	Core Working Group Member	MassBike
Glen Berkowitz	Working Group Member – A Better City (Alternate)	A Better City (ABC)
Gregory Boles	Project Team	VHB
Harry Mattison	Core Working Group Member – Community Representative	Local Resident
Jim Keller	Project Team	TetraTech
Jimin Kim	Project Team	HSH
John Sugrue	Core Working Group Member – Harvard University	Harvard University
Katie Mancinelli	Project Team	VHB
Maddy Declerck	SME	MassDOT
Matthew Peterson	Core Working Group Member – City of Boston	City of Boston, Transportation Department (COB)
Mike Murphy	Co-Chair	MassDOT
Richard Lenox	Project Team	WSP
Rick Plenge	Project Team	VHB
Rita Arcand	Partnering Party	Property Owner
Rob Cahoon	Project Team	VHB
Simon Martinez	ASL Interpreter	
Stacey Donahue	Project Team	MassDOT



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Susan Harrington	Project Team	MassDOT
Taylor O'Neill	Project Team	HSH
Tom Nally	Core Working Group Member – A Better City	A Better City (ABC)
Wayne Amico	Project Team	VHB
William Wilson	Project Team	HSH