TO:	MassDOT	DATE:	September 6, 2024, 9-11 a.m.
FROM:	Howard Stein Hudson	HSH PROJECT NO.:	2021055.08
SUBJECT:	Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Allston Multimodal Project Multimodal Local Connections Working Group Meeting Summary as of September 6, 2024		
:	**Core Working Group Representatives:** Francisco Lovera (MassDOT, Chair) Michael Murphy (MassDOT, Co-Chair) Albert Ng (Harvard University, HU) Brendan Kearney (Walk Massachusetts) Casandra Xavier (Accessibility Rep.), not present Elizabeth Leary (Boston University, BU) Galen Mook (MassBike) Harry Mattison (Community Representative) Joeseph Cornish (Boston Landmarks Commission) Matthew Peterson (City of Boston, COB) Rita Arcand (Depot Building Property Owner) Tom Nally (A Better City, ABC)		

Overview

On September 6, 2024, the MassDOT team for the Allston Multimodal Project virtually held the third meeting with the Multimodal Connections Working Group. The Working Group (WG) discussed feedback on concept designs for the Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge, as well as concept plans for the South Side Buffer Path between Cambridge Street and points to the east. The WG also discussed designs for the Agganis Pedestrian Bridge.

The main topics of discussion were:

- Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge Follow-up,
- South Side Buffer Path Feedback and Questions; and
- Agganis Pedestrian Bridge.

Meeting Summary

Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge – Feedback

The meeting started with discussion on the Franklin Street Pedestrian Bridge:

Discussion

- Project Team Comments:
  - A matrix is being developed to describe the four options for the bridge.
  - Concept profiles for the U-turn design with 3 tracks were shown, with paths of different lengths and slopes. The project team is working with a 16-foot minimum width for the bridge.
  - A minimum of 14.5 feet is required for clearance over the highway and 18.5 feet over rail lines.

- Comments:
  - Concerns have been raised regarding the exits from the bridge. The Cambridge Street connection option is feasible, but it won't function well if it is fed into an unimproved Harvard Street intersection.
  - The matrix should include:
    - A more nuanced desire line column that analyzes the designs' ability to provide connections where current desire lines currently exist, and future lines after developments get built out.
    - A column analyzing the designs' connection to the South Side Buffer Path.
    - Consideration of confluence at Harvard Avenue.
    - A column analyzing impacts on businesses and residents during and after construction.
  - The columns and associated screening categories may warrant different weighing to emphasize which screening criteria are more important.
  - The project team was encouraged to consider the two connections of Mansfield Street and Franklin Street as one associated system.
  - The Disabilities Commission at the City of Boston stresses the importance of equal accessibility for all users rather than just different access points. This brings question to the revised U-turn option, as the accessible route is significantly longer than the stairs.

- The City stressed importance of crossing at Linden Street and current unsafe conditions for the existing desire line.
- The question was raised as to the feasibility of installing a temporary pedestrian bridge structure during the construction of the Cambridge Street Bridge if the Cambridge Street Bridge connection was chosen. Something that would provide an accessible connection over the turnpike in the interim as mitigation.
- The project team was encouraged to analyze all of the clearance differences between the highway and the rail and see if there are any opportunities to shorten the distance and identify potential tradeoffs. Evaluate with perspective of a person using a mobility device. Pedestrian bridge profiles would be helpful.
- The City of Boston noted that they are compiling a list of locations where they will be evaluating the opportunity to make improvements to City streets/intersections surrounding the Project to compliment and support improvements made by MassDOT.

South Side Buffer Path

Project team members presented the working group with updates to plan overviews and cross-sections of the proposed South Side 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 members also presented visual representations of grade changes along the path.

Discussion

- **Project Team Comments:**
  - There are three potential connection points along the South Side Buffer Path that would provide greater connectivity: at Cambridge Street, along the Malvern Street Transitway between Ashford Street to the proposed residential developments, and West Station.
  - The Urban Idea Lab team is working on Sketchup renderings of South Side Buffer Path concepts. These are striving to complete them by the final meeting of this working group.

- Rail layouts provided in plans take into account the 30-foot allotment for the South Side Buffer Path, while specific discussion on the layouts of those tracks will take place in the rail working group with Amtrak, MBTA, and CSX.
- A pathway connection from Ashford Street to the South Side Buffer Path would require a narrowing of the Malvern Street Transit Way and associated pedestrian realm and bicycle facilities. It would also introduce a more significant lane shift along Malvern Street at the Ashford Street intersection due to the different width right of ways on the north and south legs of the intersection.

- **Support:**
  - It is good to see alternatives with softer slopes working for more users. That is a step in the right direction.

- **Concerns:**
  - While the 30-foot width is an improvement from previous discussions, it would be preferable to see more space to accommodate adequate transportation facilities along with landscaping.
  - City of Boston prefers permeable pavement rather than permeable pavers and wants to ensure green spaces are designed to accept stormwater.
  - City of Boston also suggests a maximum length of 50-75' between landings even for slopes of 4.5%.
  - Concerns about isolation and tunneling along the South Side Buffer Path were stressed by multiple attendees. Suggestions to explore additional access points along the path.
  - Concern expressed by at least one attendee that a plaza-level path alternative might preclude future additional connections to the path if property to the south is redeveloped in the future
  - Attendees expressed disappointment that the rail group has been postponed, as decisions made in that group influence other plans.
  - Concern for conflict between buses and pedestrians where the South Side Buffer Path meets the Malvern Street transitway. At the intersection of the two, priority should be given to vulnerable users going through the intersection. This may require a creative signal that rests in walk for the path crossing.

Agganis Pedestrian Bridge

Project team members presented the working group with plan overviews for the Agganis Pedestrian Bridge. These included an Eastern and Western Alternative connecting Harry Agganis Way and the South Side Buffer Path over the rail, I-90 and Soldiers Field Road, with the Paul Dudley White Path.

Discussion

- **Project Team Comments:**
  - A three-rail track alternative, combined with the lowering of I-90, would provide space to allow the pedestrian bridge to ramp up, cross over the rail, and then touch down and connect to the Paul Dudley White Path with much more accessible grading and no switchbacks. The team is continuing to look at ways to make the bridge lower as designs progress
  - Nickerson Field driveway and scoreboard can remain in their current positions with these designs.
  - A ped/bike connection was considered part of the Multimodal project at the time of RCN grant application.

- **Comments:**
  - Attendees provided generally positive feedback regarding the designs presented.
  - The project team was encouraged to consider a connection between the BU student village to the river.
  - The City of Boston would like to see grading profiles for the pedestrian bridge and stressed that a smoother ramp grading would be preferred to a straight incline with landings.
  - A 16-foot crossing for this connection seems rather narrow for the Agganis Way bridge over I-90 given the high traffic expected along this bridge. It will be a major link for Allston residents, but also travelers from Brookline, Watertown, and other points to the west. A wider pedestrian promenade was suggested.
  - Consider connections from Coolidge Corner via Babcock Street.
  - Attendee suggested considerations for what the project could provide for decking and destination accommodations, recognizing it is understood that this transportation connection is not that purpose, and the connection was not previously considered for funding under the Multimodal Project. Example locations cited include at Harvard by the Science Complex and Mass. Ave over the Turnpike.
  - Attendees requested visuals including descriptions of where the footbridge will be on retained fill as that may dictate what types of landscaping will be possible.

- **Concerns:**
  - The design adds several turns to the path of those traveling from Brookline via Babcock Street. How travelers will cross Comm Ave to get to the Agganis Pedestrian Bridge should be considered.
    - The City is interested in coordinating with the Town of Brookline and MassDOT to look at the Agganis Way/ Pleasant Street/ Comm Ave intersection for solutions to improve that flow.

Next Steps

- Based on feedback from this meeting, the project team will:
  - Explore refinements to concept designs.
  - Continue to development of South Side Buffer Path renderings.
  - MassDOT will take consideration to following up with this working group once rail configurations are worked out.
  - Next WG meeting to be held on September 13, 2024.

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)
Erin Reed	Project Team	HSH
Francisco Lovera	Chair	MassDOT
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
Joseph Cornish	Core Working Group Member – Boston Landmarks Commission	Boston Landmarks Commission
Leng Woo	Project Team	Urban Idea Lab
Maddie Declerck	SME	MassDOT
Mark Fobert	Project Team	TetraTech
Matt 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
Ryan Cullen	Project Team	VHB
Stacey Donahue	Project Team	MassDOT
Susan Harrington	Project Team	MassDOT
Taylor O'Neill	Project Team	HSH
Tom Nally	Core Working Group Member – A Better City	A Better City (ABC)
William Wilson	Project Team	HSH