TO:	MassDOT	DATE:	August 22, 2024, 3-5 p.m.
FROM:	Howard Stein Hudson	HSH PROJECT NO.:	2021055.08
SUBJECT:	Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Allston Multimodal Project Multimodal Local Streets Network Working Group Meeting Summary as of August 27, 2024		
:	**Core Working Group Representatives:** Corey O'Connor (MassDOT, Chair) Matthew Petersen (City of Boston, Co-Chair) Tom Nally (A Better City) Anthony D'Isidoro (Allston Civic Association) Elizabeth Leary (Boston University) Brendan Kearney (Walk Massachusetts) Wes Edwards (MBTA) Stacy Thompson (Livable Streets Alliance) Jessica Robertson (Community Representative Allston) Katarina Torres Radisic (Boston Center for Independent Living) David Loutzenheiser (MAPC) Albert Y Ng (Harvard University) Jason Palitsch (495 Partnership – not present)		

Overview

On August 22, 2024, the MassDOT team for the Allston Multimodal Project virtually held the first meeting with the Multimodal Local Street Network Working Group (WG). The project team provided an overview of the WG structure, rules, and goals. Next, the project team presented background information and an overview of the current concept plans.

Following the presentation, the discussion brought up key questions that the WG will need to explore throughout this process – including the WG's vision of the street network, integrating West Station into design, and refinements and limitations to the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) model.

The meeting concluded with the design team announcing upcoming meeting dates and a plan to send meeting agendas in advance for members to prepare.

Meeting Summary

Introduction to the Working Groups

PURPOSE AND GROUND RULES

- The project team created the WGs to solicit feedback from community representatives on certain elements of the project. MassDOT and the City of Boston (COB) will share feedback from the WG meetings with the executive deciding parties to help inform decisions on project design.
- WG members should come to meetings on time and be prepared to discuss the agenda items.
- Documents shared during WG meetings are generally not for public consumption. Certain documents can be forwarded to stakeholder groups to gather additional feedback.
- Specific designs for any alternative will not be finalized by the end of the WG meetings – there will still be room to add elements from other options and make changes during design development of plans to be used for project procurement.
- Certain elements of the preferred design will be controlled by Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) criteria.
- A 15% design level is needed to advance documentation and analysis for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Report (SDEIR), which are anticipated to be submitted in Fall 2025.

Concept Development

The interchange is one of the busiest in the City of Boston. The interchange sees ~63,000 daily users, and there are ~4,500 users/hour during each morning and afternoon peak. >50% of users have destinations outside of Allston/Brighton, so it's used for both local and regional travel.

FHWA CRITERIA

- The project is modifying an existing interstate interchange, so it must meet the requirements of the Access to the Interstate System policy:
    1. There must be no significant adverse impact on the safety and operations on the interstate facility or on the local street network. The modification must safely and efficiently collect, distribute, and accommodate traffic on the interstate system and local street network.
    2. The modification must connect to a public road only and provide for all traffic movements.

- MassDOT will submit an Interchange Modification Report in advance of the environmental filings. The report will assess impacts and demonstrate that the proposed design meets these criteria.
- FHWA has shared two major items to pay close attention to for this project:
    1. Pedestrian and bicycle safety for users across the eastbound ramp system.
    2. Queuing on the eastbound ramp system.

Design Goals and Street Network

The concepts were developed in response to FHWA criteria and feedback, and MassDOT/ City of Boston goals for local street safety and functionality.

- Local streets:
    - Contain queues within the block.
    - Consider turn restrictions.
    - Right turns controlled at signals.
- I-90 ramps:
    - Contain queues within the ramps.
- The I-90 Mainline:
    - Safe and efficient operations.

Discussion

WORKING GROUP GOALS

- Comments:
    - The goal is to create the most walkable, bikeable, and transit-friendly street network possible.
    - Let's push the envelope on what the FHWA will allow, and then work our way back from there.
    - The goal is to build flexible infrastructure that can accommodate various modes of transportation as they evolve.

STREET NETWORK

- Comments:
    - It's essential to consider the network design and identify which roadways should be designated for future bus corridors.
    - The street network needs to be configured in a way that distributes traffic so that certain streets are much more capable of accommodating pedestrians, cyclists, and

buses. These streets should also functionally be the most relevant for transit-friendly travel within the area and link to nearby connections.
  - The road designs should consider maintenance costs.
  - Guest Street is adjacent to the project area and is currently undergoing a lot of development.
  - Beyond lanes and intersections, we need to consider how curb space is managed to consider pick-up and drop-off zones, service access, and emergency access in addition to accommodating traffic. We should think creatively about how to utilize curb space to support a multifaceted urban community without creating conflicts or hazards for pedestrians and cyclists.
  - Things like protected bike lanes and bus lanes are also great for emergency access and make double parking more difficult.
  - The design should integrate elements that make it harder to engage in bad behaviors like double parking.
- Concerns:
  - Previous plans proposed eight lane cross-sections on multiple streets, which isn't acceptable for an urban neighborhood. The cross-sections should be a maximum of four lanes.
  - What's the MBTA's vision for West Station? Understanding this future vision is critical to design West Station appropriately. We need to ensure the station's design supports this vision and allows for potential future expansion given anticipated growth and development.

CTPS Modeling

- Inputs:
  - Socio-economic data (Land use assumptions)
    - Study area and region
    - Population/Households
    - Employment
  - Transit
    - Infrastructure improvements (West Station)
    - Service improvements (Commuter Rail, shuttle buses)
  - Pedestrian/Bicycle
    - Infrastructure improvements
    - Connectivity improvements
  - Roadway

        - Interchange improvements
- Outputs:
    - Trip generation (Study area)
    - Mode shares (Study area)
    - Transit (Study area)
        - Ridership data (Commuter Rail, shuttle buses, MBTA bus routes)
        - West Stations (Boardings)
    - Roadway
        - Traffic volumes
- The Study Area is broken up into Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs). The below TAZs are identified as areas with the greatest opportunity for growth between now and 2050 in proximity to the interchange.
    - TAZ 238: Harvard Athletic/Recreation
    - TAZ 244: Harvard Business School Area
    - TAZ 245: Harvard Enterprise Zone
    - TAZ 246: Beacon Park Yard (Terra Firma)
    - TAZ 6200: Beacon Park Yard (Air Rights)

Discussion

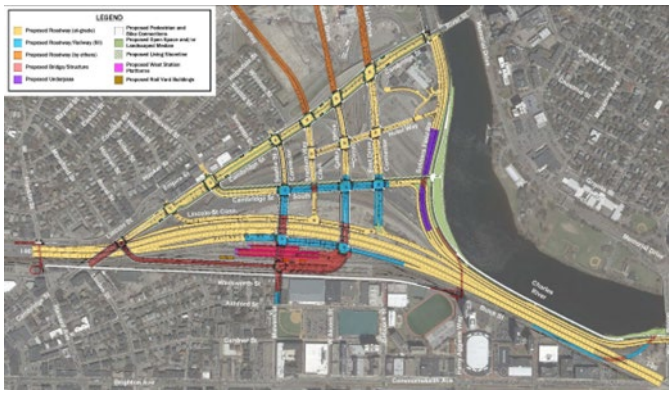
- Comments:
    - The project team is currently focusing more on rail infrastructure as it is planned over a longer planning horizon than bus infrastructure. The bus service is more flexible and will be addressed in more depth in the future.
    - The current CTPS modeling includes various shuttle options to Harvard, Central, Kendall, Lechmere, and Ruggles with a frequency of every five minutes during peak periods.
    - The project team has refined the TAZ characteristics to better capture travel via transit, biking, and walking.
- Concerns:
    - The current CTPS model does not account for any new MBTA bus service between now and 2050.
    - The MBTA should consider adding bus routes connecting West Station to areas like Watertown and Cambridge.
    - The model seems to assume a high volume of people driving. It should instead plan for more transit-oriented development.

Interchange Alternatives

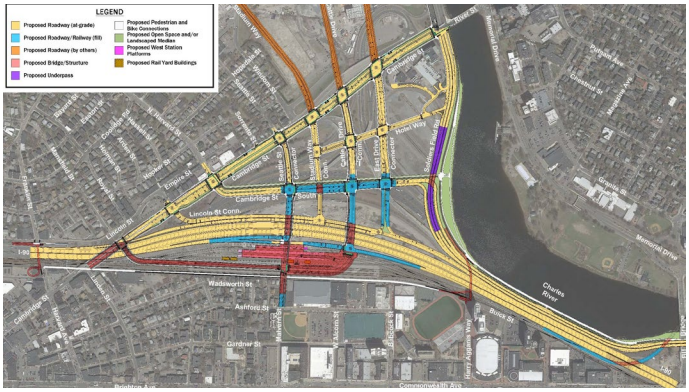
- The northern part of the network (north of Cambridge Street south) is essentially the same for all alternatives.
- The difference between alternatives lies in the I-90 ramp connections, which will impact how traffic circulates through the proposed networks.
- Each alternative is designed to provide three distinct entry and/or exit points for both eastbound and westbound ramp traffic. Multiple connection points will help to disperse traffic, thus reducing congestion.
- The splitting of flows across different branches can allow for narrow intersection cross-sections:
  - Reduces conflicts.
  - Fewer lanes needed to queue on the street network.
- The plans will be updated with the new CTPS modeling to reflect circulation changes related to adding West Station Way to all alternatives.

3L REALIGNMENT INTERCHANGE ALTERNATIVE

- The eastbound ramp is above-grade on retained fill.
- The eastbound ramps will connect to Seattle Street and Cattle Drive.
- The westbound ramps will connect to Stadium Way, Lincoln Street, and East Drive.
- This design significantly reduces the I-90 interchange's footprint and distributes traffic more evenly across intersections.

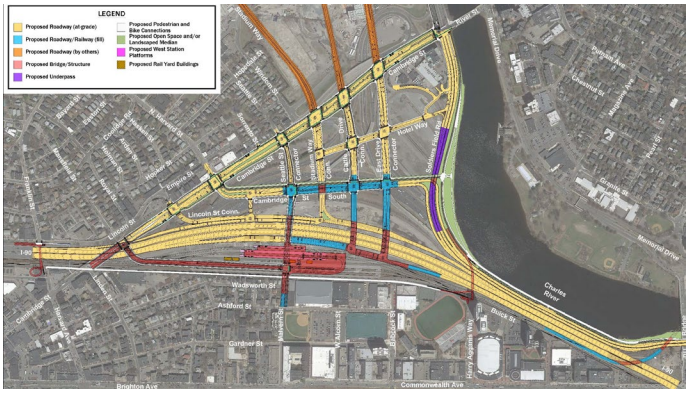


3L MODIFIED INTERCHANGE ALTERNATIVE



- The eastbound off-ramp splits into two separate ramps:
  - An elevated ramp to Seattle Street.
  - An at-grade ramp that travels under Seattle Street and then elevates to intersect with Cattle Drive.
- The eastbound on-ramp access from Seattle Street is removed to eliminate conflicts between pedestrian, bicyclists and eastbound ramp traffic.

3 BRIDGE INTERCHANGE ALTERNATIVE



- The eastbound ramp will travel under Seattle Street and then elevate to intersect with Cattle Drive, and then would continue onto East Drive via a proposed bridge structure.
- A third bridge would travel over I-90 to connect East Drive to the eastbound ramps.
- The westbound ramp connection to East Drive is removed.
- Cattle Drive does not connect to the West Station bus concourse or West Station Way.
- West Connector has been added to the network to provide a third connection point to the westbound ramp system (on-ramp only).

Discussion

- Comments:
  - The plans will be refined to incorporate new traffic flows and aim for narrower cross-sections and more pedestrian-friendly roadways.
  - The project team is actively working within the Beacon Park Yard regional framework plan – a process that includes extensive community and technical planning.
  - The planning for lane use and bus services needs to align closely.

  - Later WG meetings will incorporate more conversations about land use.
- Concerns:
  - It seems like the alternatives add a lot of circuitous routing, which contributes to traffic congestion. A more direct approach could improve traffic flow.
  - The barrier should go between SFR and I-90 (vs between SFR and PDW path) because I-90 generates more noise than SFR.
- Concerns:
  - Noise studies have been conducted and found that putting a sound barrier will not have significant impacts on noise volumes.
  - The noise wall may reflect sound and instead create an echo along SFR and the PDW path.

Next Steps

POTENTIAL FUTURE MEETING TOPICS

- An overview of the characteristics of each TAZ and how they shape the project team's decisions.
- Updated concept designs that include West Station Way.
- How the Beacon Park Yard regional framework plan Is integrated into the concepts and its effect on desire lines and overall design.
- The MBTA's future vision for West Station.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- The WG will meet on September 5, 12, 19 and 26, from 3pm to 5pm.

Meeting Attendees

Name	Working Group Role	Affiliation
Corey O'Connor	Working Group Chair	MassDOT
Matt Petersen	Working Group Co-Chair	City of Boston, Transportation Department (COB)
Anthony D'Isidoro	Core Working Group Member	Allston Civic Association (ACA)
Albert Y Ng	Core Working Group Member	Harvard University
Brendan Kearney	Core Working Group Member	WalkMassachusetts (WalkMA)
David Loutzenheiser	Core Working Group Member	Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)
Elizabeth Leary	Core Working Group Member	Boston University (BU)
Jessica Robertson	Core Working Group Member	Community Representative Allston
Katarina Torres Radisic	Core Working Group Member	Boston Center for Independent Living
Stacy Thompson	Core Working Group Member	Livable Streets Alliance (LSA)
Tom Nally	Core Working Group Member	A Better City (ABC)
Glen Berkowitz	Working Group Member (Alternate)	A Better City (ABC)
Chris Calnan	Project Team	Tetra Tech
Erin Reed	Project Team	HSH
Jim Keller	Project Team	Tetra Tech
Kyle Whiting	Project Team	Tetra Tech
Melissa Dullea	Project Team	MBTA
Michael Gordon	Project Team	VHB
Michael Hall	Project Team	Tetra Tech
Michelle Boucher	Working Group Chair (Alternate)	MassDOT
Nicole Sharma	Project Team	HSH
Rick Plenge	Project Team	VHB
Ryan Cullen	Project Team	VHB
Stephen Simoglou	Project Team	MassDOT

Susan Harrington	Project Team	MassDOT
Tamerlie Roc	Project Team	HSH
Taylor O'Neill	Project Team	HSH
Wesley Edwards	Project Team	MBTA
Ruth Bonsignore	Working Group Member (Alternate)	Harvard University