



To:	Michael O'Dowd Project Manager	Date:	August 12, 2019
From:	Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis Howard Stein Hudson	HSH Project No.:	2013061.14
Subject:	MassDOT I-90 Allston Multimodal Project Task Force Meeting Site Walk Meeting Summary of July 30, 2019		

Overview

At the June 20, 2019 meeting of the I-90 Allston Task Force, MassDOT announced that it would be repurposing the group's two summer meetings – July 18th and August 14th – to introduce the project to Turnpike and Commuter Rail users in MetroWest and Central Massachusetts and to allow the project team to make progress in a number of areas of analysis needed to advance project development. It was also noted at that time that MassDOT would work to arrange a site walk which it was agreed by task force members would be useful both in terms of making use of the time over summer and introducing new task force members to the site and its challenges. The I-90 Allston Task Force, originally constituted in 2014, is composed of local residents, elected and appointed officials for Allston-Brighton and other impacted communities, area advocates, and representatives of major institutions in the project area. As of 2019, representation from MetroWest and Central Massachusetts has been added since the project is expected to impact these portions of the Commonwealth once in construction. The goal of the task force is for members to work through the many details associated with the project with MassDOT's project team, advise the agency with their local knowledge, and serve as a two-way conduit between the project and the group or groups each task force members represents.

The walk met on July 30th beginning at the touch down point of Lincoln Street pedestrian bridge. Participants then walked over the bridge, turning left at Pizzeria Regina, and traveling along Cambridge Street to the intersection of Cambridge Street and Soldiers Field Road between Genzyme and the Double Tree Suites Hotel. From there, the walk progressed along the Paul Dudley White

path adjacent to Soldiers' Field Road to the Boston University Bridge at which point the tour concluded. Several stops were taken along the way to discuss points of interest.

The tone of the walk was one of positive engagement with several task force members expressing their appreciation for the challenges faced by MassDOT and its project team. The walk was undertaken, as luck would have, on a day of high heat and humidity. Several attendees expressed their thanks to the members of the DOT and consultant team who participated. The agency and its consultant team likewise appreciate those who took the time and made the effort, given the weather.

Agenda

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Detailed Meeting Minutes¹

1st Stop – Franklin Street Footbridge at Pizzeria Regina

The group's first stop was the Franklin Street footbridge at the top of the ramp connecting to Cambridge Street. The group first discussed the importance of the Franklin Street footbridge as a direct bicycle and pedestrian connection between Brookline and Allston-Brighton and Cambridge. If the footbridge is used, cyclists and pedestrians can make a relatively straight and more comfortable connection from Harvard Avenue to Harvard Square via the bridge, to Franklin Street, to North Harvard Street, and JFK Street in Cambridge. Going back to the early days of project development in 2015, it has been a goal of MassDOT to reconstruct the Franklin Street footbridge as early as possible in construction of the overall I-90 Allston multimodal project given that the bridge represents an important connection for the neighborhood and does not meet accessibility standards in its current configuration.

¹ Herein "C" stands for comment, "Q" for question and "A" for answer. For a list of attendees, please see Appendix 1. For copies of meeting flipcharts, please see Appendix 2.

The group next discussed Worcester Main Line tracks where they pass by Pizzeria Regina and under the Franklin Street footbridge. As it is current envisioned by the project team, these tracks will be shifted to the south (towards Brookline) early in the construction to allow I-90 to be moved onto a temporary alignment to allow demolition of the existing I-90 Allston Viaduct. Columns and piers for the future Franklin Street footbridge will need to be placed to avoid conflict with the rail line or highway. While MassDOT and its project team are committed to keeping the Worcester Main Line open at its full, two-track capacity for as much of the project's construction as possible, some periods of single-track operation will likely be required. To facilitate this condition with as few impacts as possible to train schedules, a new switch will be added between the two Worcester Main Line tracks between New Boston Landing and the Franklin Street footbridge. This will allow for an inbound train to stop at New Boston Landing and allow an outbound train to clear the single-tracked stretch thereby avoiding slow-downs in service. MassDOT is also looking at ways to stage construction so that when impacts to I-90 are high, impacts on the Worcester Main Line will be low and vice-versa to help keep overall corridor mobility at a reasonable level. This part of the conversation wrapped up with a brief discussion of the Houghton Chemical spur. From 2014 to 2018, the use of the spur to deliver materials to Houghton Chemical limited how much Soldiers' Field Road could be pushed away from the river. As of November 2018, this line is out of service allowing the alignment of Soldiers' Field Road carried by the project's current concept: 3K-L.

The group next discussed possible ways to make the Franklin Street footbridge comply with current accessibility regulations. One option involves taking of property to allow for a ramp to touch down at the current Ace Ticket building. Another option involves beginning the ramp at the intersection of Harvard Avenue and Cambridge and then carrying it up to a new Franklin Street pedestrian bridge on a similar alignment to today's structure. This ramp would run along the edge of the Pizzeria Regina parking lot and result in the loss of some restaurant parking. A complicating factor in these deliberations is that the Pizzeria Regina is in a historic Boston & Albany railroad station designed by Henry Hobson Richardson; the parking lot enjoys the same historic designation as the station.

2nd Stop – Cambridge Street opposite Linden Street

The group's next stop was Cambridge Street opposite Linden Street. Task force member Galen Mook, representing Mass Bike, noted the importance of having a safe pedestrian and bicycle crossing at this point. Galen commented that the four lane cross-section of Cambridge Street at this location makes "courtesy crashes" a particular problem at this location and that one potential solution might be to remove one northbound (towards Cambridge) lane from Cambridge Street given the way northbound traffic enters this section of the roadway from across Harvard Avenue. Mike O'Dowd, the project manager, noted that while a bicycle/pedestrian crossing of Cambridge Street at Linden

Street is not currently in the design for 3K-L, the project team is well aware of the desire for this crossing and is actively working to figure out a safe way to introduce it provided that the site distances can be made to work.

In making its way across the Cambridge Street viaduct, the group stopped briefly at the Mansfield Pathway. The pathway starts on Lincoln Street opposite Mansfield Street and then zigzags up the embankment of the Cambridge Street viaduct to allow cyclists and pedestrians to get onto the elevated section of Cambridge Street without having to go all the way to the intersection of Lincoln Street/Cambridge Street. Galen commented that this pathway is almost as important to area cyclists and pedestrians as the Franklin Street footbridge. Mike replied that he expects this footpath will be rebuilt by the project largely as it is today but regraded to meet current accessibility requirements. Moving further towards the river, the group briefly stopped at the intersection of Lincoln Street/Cambridge Street and discussed bicycle connections from Lower Allston into the future street grid in Beacon Park Yard. In earlier iterations of the design, the separated bicycle facility which will provide a connection to the Paul Dudley White path along Cambridge Street South had tied into the neighborhood at Lincoln Street. 3K-L places the connection at North Harvard Street. This change was largely driven by the decision to position South Cambridge Street opposite North Harvard Street rather than off-setting these roads into two separate intersections along Cambridge Street. Positioning the bicycle crossing here creates a more direct cycling route.

3rd Stop – Cambridge Street around Seattle Street

The group next stopped on Cambridge Street near Seattle Street. Mike explained that the proposed West Station would be approximately 800 feet south (towards Brookline) from Seattle Street. Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis, the project team's public involvement specialist explained that under 3K-L, Cambridge Street will be reconstructed as a "complete street" with fully protected intersections,² a tree lined-median, and a row of trees down both sides of the street. Off-street bicycle facilities separated from pedestrian sidewalks would also be present on both sides of the road. The street itself would be two lanes in each direction with turning lanes. The bridge over the current highway on and off-ramps would be removed allowing for a flat walk or ride to the Charles River. Pallavi Mande, task force member representing the Charles River Watershed Association, asked how the new street trees would be watered. Mike confirmed that it would be MassDOT's intention to capture rainwater for the trees and Nathaniel suggested that a treatment similar to what MassDOT has

² Fully protected intersections use small islands at each corner of the intersection to shorten crossing distances for cyclists and pedestrians, slow turning vehicles, and ensure that drivers face crossing pedestrians or cyclists directly rather than at an angle. The main goal of this is to ensure that non-motorized users are not struck in a "right hook" accident by turning vehicles.

recently installed for new street trees at the Casey Arborway would be used. This approach channels rainwater to the base of the tree using a system of small gutters in the pavement immediately around the roots. Galen made two comments noting the importance of protecting small residential streets like Seattle from cut-through traffic and underscoring the value of exclusive bus lanes in helping to speed transit trips to West Station. Mike noted that MassDOT is and will continue to work with the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) to determine how best to protect smaller streets from cut-through traffic once the new street grid is implemented. Regarding getting transit buses to West Station, MassDOT is still determining the most appropriate routes and how best to move them through traffic.

At this location, Pallavi passed out a flyer generated by the Charles River Watershed Association articulating her organization's priorities for the I-90 Allston project. She highlighted their concerns that Harvard create an open space corridor through its Enterprise Research Campus connecting down through the I-90 Allston project and out to the river. Ideally, this corridor would serve as a "blue-green" open space not only providing a pleasant walking area, but also a mechanism to reduce impervious surface area, decrease the urban heat island effect, and manage storm water without resorting to heavily engineered solutions. Pallavi commented that the university's current plan to address storm water at their new campus is chiefly based on engineered solutions – large culverts discharging to the Charles River – and that the Watershed Association will be attempting to convince them to take a more nature-based approach.

4th Stop – Along the Paul Dudley White Path

The group's next stop was the Paul Dudley White Path at the River Street Bridge. Mike explained that 3K-L currently maintains a right-turn only lane which will allow traffic to exit Soldiers Field Road and go over the bridge into Cambridgeport. This will allow a modest expansion of the pathway at this location and address "The Narrows" a spot where the Dudley White path has an extremely constrained cross-section which frequently causes bicycle-to-bicycle accidents. Earlier concepts had eliminated this exit entirely, routing traffic to Cambridge through the new street grid, however Cambridge residents had reacted strongly against the modest additional vehicle delay despite the significant improvement for cyclists and pedestrians that total elimination would have allowed. As such, the project team has adopted the compromise, right-turn only option carried by 3K-L.

Moving further towards the Boston University Bridge, the group stopped at the future location of where the proposed temporary trestle would carry Soldiers' Field Road over the river during construction and where the future Soldier's Field Road viaduct would begin its climb. The location of both elements is approximately where the current Soldiers Field Road bends to the left to head

towards downtown Boston. The temporary trestle will run from around the Salt Creek outfall to just before the Boston University Bridge. Standing over the Salt Creek outfall, Galen commented that it would be an ideal location for a water taxi to bring people from downtown Boston to the Allston area.

5th Stop – At the Boston University Bridge

At the Boston University Bridge, Jim Keller of Tetra Tech, explained the reasoning behind the proposed, temporary Soldiers' Field Road trestle. The area of the project along the existing I-90 Allston viaduct, known as “the throat,” is constrained between the Boston University property line and the Charles River. This area is also host to I-90, Soldiers Field Road, the Worcester Main Line, and the Grand Junction Line. Placing I-90 below Soldiers Field Road in this area will be extremely challenging due to, among other factors such as utilities present in the area, a simple lack of space.

Pallavi then asked about restoration of the riverbank and what the “attitude” towards restoration is in terms of habitat, stormwater management, and flooding. Reprising her earlier theme, Pallavi briefly discussed stormwater management plans associated with Harvard University's Enterprise Research Campus and asked about how the project would engage the school about its approach to addressing stormwater. Both Jim and Mark Fobert (also of Tetra Tech) suggested that bank restoration would most likely take place at the end of the project given the many “moving parts” in the throat area. They posited that riverbank restoration would be built into the project based on the need to implement the temporary trestle and that it would likely look a lot like what DCR has already undertaken on the Cambridge bank of the river between the Boston University and Massachusetts Avenue Bridges. One advantage associated with elevating Soldiers' Field Road is the ability to collect water which falls on the new viaduct and treat it in the proposed open space before discharging it into the river. Jim noted that Harvard University's new campus will have its own system separate from the drainage for the roadway network. Pallavi commented that Harvard's approach is entirely engineering based and depends on “one big culvert” providing an outfall to the Charles River. Chris Calnan, project manager for Tetra Tech, noted that while the project team is aware that Harvard is working with Boston Water and Sewer Commission (BWSC) regarding drainage for the Enterprise Research Campus, MassDOT sees drainage of that area as being between Harvard and BWSC without any linkage to the environmental permitting for the I-90 Allston project. Chris remarked that the project is aware that Harvard is potentially looking to increase the diameter of pipes draining the future development parcels south of Cambridge Street, but that it's up to the university to manage its own storm water treatment. Pallavi responded by encouraging MassDOT to look at “plant-based” solutions to stormwater management rather than simply leaning on engineered solutions which cannot be readily upgraded without significant construction impacts.

Following this conversation, the walk concluded, and all participants departed.

Next Steps

The I-90 Allston Multimodal Project task force will next meet at 6:00PM on September 12th, 2019 at the Fiorentino Center. The Center is located at 123 Antwerp Street off Western Avenue in Brighton.

Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Nathaniel	Cabral-Curtis	Howard Stein Hudson
Chris	Calnan	Tetra Tech
Deneen	Crosby	Crosby Schlesinger Smallridge
Rose	Determan	Charles River Watershed Association
Mark	Fobert	Tetra Tech
Hannah	Kane	State Representative/I-90 Allston Task Force
Jim	Keller	Tetra Tech
Pallavi	Mande	Charles River Watershed Association/I-90 Allston Task Force
Meghan	Monson	Allston-Brighton CDC
Galen	Mook	Mass Bike/I-90 Allston Task Force
Tom	Nally	A Better City/I-90 Allston Task Force
Emily	Norton	Charles River Watershed Association
Mike	O'Dowd	MassDOT
Stefan	Poltorzycki	Office of Councilor Ciommo
Chris	Smith	Office of Denator DiDomenico
Audrey	Wallace	Charles River Watershed Association
Maddie	Wolters	Charles River Watershed Association