
To: Michael O'Dowd
Project Manager

Date: April 5, 2016

From: Nick Gross
Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis
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HSH Project No.: 2013061.14

Subject: MassDOT Highway Division
Allston I-90 Interchange Improvement Project
Task Force – Site Walk
Meeting Notes of March 30, 2016

Overview

On March 30, 2016 members of the Allston I-90 Interchange Improvement Project team and MassDOT staff associated with the job held a site walk at the request of several members of the project's task force. The site walk was attended by 11 task force and community members including staff from the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA), Boston University (BU), Harvard University (Harvard), Brookline Transportation Board, and Allston residents. The purpose of the site walk was for both task force members and project team staff to walk the project site together in order to discuss constrains, community concerns, and experience the existing conditions firsthand to gain a stronger understand of the impacts associated with each of the 3 proposed alternatives. These include the MassDOT 3K-4 Alternative, the A Better City (ABC) Alternative, and the Amateur Planner (AMP) Alternative.

The site walk route and agenda was influenced by task force member, Galen Mook who was unable to attend but submitted his request prior to the site walk. Particular concerns put forward by Galen included the discussion of a north-south bicycle and transit connection, the general proximity of the project to the neighborhood, and whether or not interim safety improvements could be made to Pratt, Linden, Cambridge, and River Street. In an effort to support Galen's request, the project team based its site walk around the streets mentioned above with a specific stop at Malvern Street to discuss the potential of a north-south transit connection. 11x17" overview images of each concept, previously distributed to task force members through their work with the project were also provided at the walk for reference.

Cambridge Street

The site walk began at the Beacon Park Yard (BPY) entrance tunnel on Cambridge Street. A suggested route for the site walk was agreed upon to cover areas on the western end of the project as well as the adjacent streets on the southern side of the BPY such as Pratt and Linden. On Cambridge Street, Project

Manager Mike O'Dowd explained that the project team is working to consolidate the cross section by eliminating left-turn lanes where feasible as well as realign the skewed intersection at Lincoln Street. It was noted that Empire Street had been looked at to alleviate this problem however this idea was dismissed due to the residential nature of this roadway.

Concerns were raised by task force members that additional north-south connections needed to be provided in addition to North Harvard Street in order to connect Cambridge Street to Western Avenue as a way of spreading out traffic volumes. It was explained by Harvard staff present that in addition to the north-south connections of Stadium Way and East Drive, Harvard is looking at a third connection known as Cattle Drive. Questioned as when these connections would be built, taskforce member Joe Beggan explained that their timeline is currently unclear. Task force members reemphasized the idea that if North Harvard Street is the only north-south connection when the project is built, residential cut-through traffic will likely occur using Hopedale to Seattle Street, to Seattle Connector in order to access the Turnpike when traveling from points north.

A discussion of potential bus connections across the BPY utilizing West Station was also brought up by task force members. It was questioned whether a transit connection from North Harvard Street to Allston Village could be viable to provide a straighter route for the existing MBTA 66 Bus. It was explained by the project team that this option was likely unattainable due to the location of the West Station platforms. It was suggested to the project team that in order to mitigate noise to the residential houses on Pratt and Wadsworth Street, West Station could be designed to act as a noise barrier in itself. It was also suggested by task force members that the location of West Station be moved further west however the project team and BRA staff both agreed it makes most sense to push the station as far east as possible to maximize future flexibility and provide sufficient distance, as defined by MBTA commuter rail operations, from the Boston Landing station in Brighton.

The idea of a vehicular connection off of the Cambridge Street Overpass was also brought up by a task force member to connect to West Station. It was further explained that this connection could increase the feasibility of decking over the western portion of the BPY and likely aligned with Harvard's IMP. While BRA staff agreed it would be preferred to see less traffic on Cambridge Street, it was explained that this connection would only modestly impact this roadway due to the origination point of the vehicles in question. The traffic model projections were discussed and explained by project staff that the model was calibrated to meet 2015 conditions with a 30% projection to the year 2035.

Cambridge Street Overpass

A brief stop was made on the Cambridge Street Overpass to discuss the active rail lines, location of West Station, and future noise barriers on the southern side of the BPY. It was explained that the southernmost track is active and a noise barrier was identified to be set 10' south of the rail line as part of the South Station Expansion Project. It was further explained that there are currently four tracks serving the BPY, two will be designated to serve West Station, and two tracks will continue to serve existing commuter rail

lines as well as support facilities. Also, the project will move the southernmost rail line, closest to the neighborhood, 10 feet to the north providing additional relief to the abutting properties.

It was questioned by task force member Harry Mattison if any analysis had been done looking at the potential of creating a vehicular connection off of Cambridge Street to West Station in an effort to support future air rights in the form of a deck. MassDOT was unaware of this connection and explained that it was the first time the concept had been brought to their attention. It was made clear that the deck Harry Mattison referred to was different than the general idea of decking over the rail yard that has been discussed thoroughly throughout the task force process.

While MassDOT has stated that it is not their position or intention to build a deck, the projects goal remains to not preclude any future decking opportunities that may become available for the land owner, Harvard University. It was also questioned whether the portion between West Station and the Turnpike between the bus loop could be decked. BRA staff explained that decking would likely enhance the urban experience while reducing rail and highway noise however ultimately the decision would be made by the land owner in the future.

Linden Street

The third stop of the site walk took place on Linden Street which was recognized by the MassDOT project team as a major residential cut-through for vehicles traveling north from places south such as Commonwealth Avenue, Brookline, and in some cases points east towards Kenmore Square. It was questioned whether connections utilizing Linden, Malvern, Harry Agganis Way, or Babcock Street were being looked as designated transit routes. MassDOT explained that they were looking at these connections for potential vehicle routes, noise impacts, and transit operations although no decision had been confirmed as a preferred alternative route. It was further explained by MassDOT staff that the bus operation analysis would be likely available sometime in May and continued coordination between the Boston Transportation Department (BTD) will take place looking at Linden and Malvern Streets.

Pratt Street

The group continued from Linden Street onto Pratt Street and walked its entire length to Ashford Street. It was noted by many members of the group that the Turnpike noise was surprisingly quiet while the noise from Cambridge Street was recognizable due to and down shifting of trucks. It was suggested by task force members that the lack of noise from the Turnpike may have been a result of the wind direction. 48 Pratt Street was identified as being the closest building to the BPY. An existing fence line was visible behind the houses adjacent to the BPY and it was explained that the proposed noise barrier could be as high as the second story windows of the abutting residence depending on the final result of the noise analysis.

Malvern Street

The fifth stop took place on the corner of Malvern and Ashford Street. MassDOT staff noted that the house located at 9 Sawyer Terrace and adjacent to the proposed shared-use path connection along Malvern Street to West Station was eligible for the National Register of Historic Places making impacts to it something to avoid. The right-of-way (ROW) along Malvern Street was also discussed and agreed that if a transit connection is provided along Malvern Street parking would be removed. Several of the walk attendees noted that Malvern Street is quite small and that introducing general traffic or even a regular flow of transit buses to it would represent a substantial change in the roadway's character and potentially those abutting it to the west.

Babcock Street

The sixth and final stop took place on Babcock Street. It was explained that all streets north of Gardner Street were owned and maintained by BU. It was also explained that BU intended to maintain the existing usages along Ashford Street as a layover and access point for athletic buses for traveling sports teams. As it has been explained previously, due to the steep grades along Babcock Street, a stair and elevator is the proposed connection to West Station. Various schemes of connections both transit and vehicular were discussed from Commonwealth Avenue across to Cambridge Street South. Further analysis will be presented at future task force meetings.

Next Steps

The next task force meeting will be held at 6:00 PM on Thursday, April 7, 2015 at the Fiorentino Community Center located at 123 Antwerp Street, Allston. This session will feature a review of the revised evaluation criteria, as well as the initial presentation of the shadow and noise analysis. All task force sessions are open to the public.

Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
Gerald	Autler	BRA
Joseph	Beggan	Task Force Member
Glen	Berkowitz	ABC
Nathaniel	Cabral-Curtis	Howard Stein Hudson
Bill	Deignan	Task Force Member
Guus	Driessen	Brookline Transportation Board
John	Fallon	MassDOT
Nick	Gross	Howard Stein Hudson

Elizabeth	Leary	Task Force Member
David	Loutzenheiser	Task Force Member
Clancy	Main	Task Force Member
Harry	Mattison	Task Force Member
Tom	Nally	Task Force Member
Mike	O'Dowd	MassDOT