



June 30, 2014

To: Mike O'Dowd
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RE: **MassDOT Highway Division
Allston I-90 Interchange Improvement Project
5th Taskforce Meeting
Meeting Notes of July 16, 2014**

Overview

On July 16, 2014 the Allston Interchange Improvement Project taskforce held its fifth meeting. The taskforce is composed of local residents, business owners, transportation and green space advocates as well as representatives of local, state, and federal governments. The purpose of the taskforce is, through the application of members' in-depth local knowledge, to assist and advise MassDOT in developing an implementable design for the reconstruction of the I-90 Allston Interchange, the Allston viaduct and Cambridge Street in the vicinity of the interchange. The chance to reconfigure the interchange has emerged through the opportunities presented by the implementation of All Electric Tolling (AET) and the structural deficiency of the I-90 Allston viaduct. MassDOT sees the project not only an opportunity to improve safety on the Turnpike by straightening it and addressing a structurally deficient bridge, but also to improve safety and connections for all modes of travel in the area around the interchange, particularly along Cambridge Street which has been noted by local residents as dangerous and acting as a barrier between Allston and the Charles River. Another major goal of the Allston Interchange project is to provide the commuter rail conditions necessary for the expansion of South Station and the eventual creation of West Station in the old Beacon Park yard as well as the inauguration of Diesel Multiple Unit (DMU) service along the Grand Junction line from Allston into Cambridge and Somerville. While the agency has not yet secured the funding to build West Station as part of this project, and therefore cannot formally declare its intent to construct it along with the rebuilt interchange, MassDOT is actively seeking to secure funding and will continue to plan for the station as part of the project.

The meeting summarized herein primarily addressed the process flow chart developed by the project team at the taskforce's request, the current draft evaluation criteria, and the initial concept design for Cambridge Street. With regard to project flow chart, generally speaking, taskforce members appreciated having the process laid out graphically. The top concerns associated with this document and the process it represents were one, that there be adequate time given for the taskforce to engage in an iterative, interactive process with MassDOT and its design team, and two, that any goals stemming for any parallel land use planning exercise undertaken by the City of Boston in the form of the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) be provided with a path to work into the process outlined in the flow chart.

Discussion of the evaluation criteria took up a significant portion of this taskforce session. While several taskforce members offered new specific thoughts, the main discussion points associated with the criteria were:

- The idea that input from the taskforce, such a desire to use the project to reconnect Allston's neighborhoods to themselves and the Charles River or that Cambridge Street should be made into

more of a neighborhood street, should rise to the level of the project's overall purpose and need statement; and,

- That expanded definitions of what the evaluation criteria mean are needed by the taskforce to ensure that their input has been heard and incorporated by the project team.

Based on this conversation the group decided that taskforce members would have until the 6th of August to provide additional evaluation criteria suggestions to the project team. During this period a set of expanded evaluation criteria definitions was provided to taskforce members to assist them in their thinking.

Generally speaking, the initial design of Cambridge Street was well-received by the taskforce members. Areas of interest for further discussion include continued refinements to bicycle accommodations, particularly around the intersections, shortening pedestrian crossings and more generally trying to reduce the cross-section as much as possible. A number of taskforce members also noted their wish for further discussion regarding the width of the roadway's median. How the redesigned Cambridge Street will handle current and future traffic volumes was also briefly discussed.

Detailed Meeting Minutes¹

Opening Remarks

- C: Ed Ionata (EI): Good evening everyone and thank you for coming out to the fifth Allston taskforce meeting. As most of you know I'm Ed Ionata with TetraTech. We are going to start tonight off by reviewing the agenda, we'll then move onto some taskforce administration items, followed by a review of the project flow chart which resulted from a discussion at the last taskforce meeting. We have decided to eliminate groups 1 and 2 and now plan to go through the selection criteria with group 3. We also have a presentation on the Cambridge Street design alternatives and a quick Soldiers Field Road update. The website is up and running and the minutes from the last taskforce meeting have been posted. Are there any questions about the website or accessing the minutes?
- C: Matthew Danish (MD): I have a quick comment about the website. I don't believe the times or locations of upcoming taskforce meetings are posted on the website. I think that would be useful for folks who would like to attend and who are not on the taskforce team.
- A: EI: We will look into that for you.
- A: Nathaniel Cabral-Curtis (NCC): That's typically a block on MassDOT websites. I would assume that it would be there, but I will double check for you and if it isn't there I'll ask that it be added.
- C: EI: We have already run into some issues regarding the next meeting date. Mike would you like to fill the team in?
- A Mike O'Dowd (MOD): Nate and I were just discussing that the Fiorentino Community center is unfortunately not available on August 5th or August 6th. We want to hear from you in terms of what works best for everyone. We could push the next meeting off a week if that would work better for everyone. We'll let you think about it but we would really like to keep the same location, it seems to be very convenient for most people. What does everyone think?
- C: NCC: We originally thought August 5th would work but unfortunately it won't. There are a bunch of classes and functions going on in the early portion of August here at the community center. We couldn't get Wednesday the 6th which was booked and the 7th didn't work either. Currently we are holding

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.

Monday the 4th and we understand that Monday nights are hard for most people. I don't want to spend a lot of time on it right now but if folks are strongly against Monday the 4th we are going to have to push it off to the following week. It's your call.

- C: MOD: We are suggesting that we push it off to the following week, Wednesday the 13th is available. If there are no objections we'll go ahead and book the August 13th.²
- C: El: Are there any other administrative taskforce items, issues, concerns or questions?
- Q: Wendy Landman (WL): A couple meetings ago Kairos Shen offered to have the Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) coordinate a meeting with MassDOT to look at some of the big picture issues along with some of the folks from the community. Has that happen and if so, is it feeding into the current process? I'm hoping you or the BRA can speak to how that will all work. My understanding was that a few of members of the taskforce team would be part of that discussion.
- A: MOD: Everything up until your last comment I agree with. With regards to scheduling a meeting with the City of Boston, the BRA, and elected officials that meeting has been scheduled. It has been a difficult process in scheduling this meeting. Our administrator Frank Depaola wants to participate in the discussion, people are on vacation, there have been various conflicts but we do have a meeting scheduled for next week. We will be discussing the various proceedings of the taskforce. The reason I said I agree with everything until your last comment was because I do not believe there will be any taskforce members present at the meeting. I will keep you up to date on that and follow up with this at the next taskforce meeting.
- C: El: Two meetings ago Kairos offered to bring a group together to talk about urban planning issues inside the project area. That meeting, if it happens, needs to be preceded by Boston Transportation Department (BTD) officials, City of Boston officials and other elected officials.
- Q: Another Disidoro (AD): I recently read in an article in the *Boston Globe* that mentioned that Mayor Walsh has elevated this project to become a top priority. I was wondering if anything in this article surprised or worried you.
- A: MOD: Nothing in that article surprised me. As I mentioned before and will state again the City of Boston is a major stakeholder in this overall project. The fact that the Mayor has offered his highest level of staff to participate and work with us to develop what they feel to be the best transportation infrastructure for this particular neighborhood is a great thing to hear and we welcome it.
- C: El: In the meantime the mission of the taskforce has not changed. We are striving to reach a preferred alternative by the fall. The flow chart will describe what we've done, where we've been and where we are going.
- Q: AD: The latest focus on community aspects seems to have ignited a different perspective. Does that change or expand the scope of work for the taskforce?
- A: El: I wouldn't say so, no. The initial mission with any transportation infrastructure project like this one is to consider the land use and development around it. I know it was a great desire among this group to know what will happen with the land and how it will be developed. The best thing we can do as part of this taskforce is to develop a transportation network that foresees future development to the extent possible and doesn't make the mistake of precluding future development.

² It was ultimately agreed to by the taskforce to meet on August 13th. At the time of this writing, an email reminder has been sent regarding this date.

C: MOD: The reason why everyone is here is because MassDOT is concerned with your concerns. You are the ones who live, work, and pass through this neighborhood on a daily basis. We want to make sure our transportation plan addresses your needs and concerns.

Discussion of the Project Flow Chart

C: El: We're now going to switch gears to the flow chart.

You should all have a copy of this in front of you. We took a crack at describing the flow of the project and put a timeline along the left hand side which roughly aligns with each taskforce meeting. The color coding works as follows. Green represents conceptual and alternative developments; blue represents analysis, and orange for decision points. Prior to this taskforce being assembled there were some preliminary investigations on viaduct conditions, studies on the All Electronic Tolling (AET) system and South Station rail improvements. The concepts were developed based on this criterion and were further developed into both suburban and urban type interchange concepts. The suburban interchange concept has since fallen off the table because of the lack of support. There are three design features; Glen touched on one of them with his nice presentation on the viaduct, another is relocating Soldiers Field Road and the third is how Cambridge Street will look. As we continue through the flow chart and move to the last meeting we spent a lot of time discussing bicycle and pedestrian connections. I'm not sure if it came across this way but the bicycle and pedestrian connections can be applied universally to all the concepts that are presented.

C: Chris Calnan (CC): With all of the concepts we are trying to make sure the multimodal aspect of the urban concepts creates accommodating and improved pedestrian and bicycle conditions. As Ed said, the pedestrian and bicycle improvements will be applied to all concepts moving forward.

C: El: We have had some great discussions here in this room regarding design details. There is always concern to not put forward a feature that we think can be applied to all the alternatives. We don't want to run into an engineering problem later on and have it disrupt the analysis. Right now we are at the meeting number five and we are continuing to develop conceptual alternatives. There has been discussion on the commitment to merge the planning of West Station and this project. Mike would you like to touch on this?

A: MOD: We sat down with our planning group and the MBTA to discuss where West Station stands right now, the location of the platform, some of the amenities and the facilities that need to be provided in order to maintain a layup and layover area for commuter rail cars. It was a good discussion and critical for determining the location of West Station so we can plan for a north to south connection. We are getting close to finalizing the location of this connection.

C: El: Right now we are at taskforce meeting number five. As mentioned we are continuing concept development and preparing to screen alternatives. After the initial screening we will spend at least one meeting discussing all the alternatives, eliminate non-performing alternatives, take a closer look at the short list of preferred alternatives and as we close out the taskforce we will come to a consensus of a preferred alternative. Once a preferred alternative is reached the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process will start with its own public input. This is how we see it playing out and we are still striving to reach a preferred alternative by the end of October.

Q: Glen Berkowitz (GB): Thank you for doing this, I think it started with Harry so a thank you to him too. I suggest adding a box between meetings four and five called minimize and mitigate abutting neighborhood impacts. You have various alternatives that show the realignment of I-90 and the commuter tracks but you leave them at grade on the west side of the project. In order to provide the pedestrian and bicycle connections you have to go way up in the air which creates convoluted paths. If we did other things with the mainline and commuter rail other than just leave them at grade that could

help both bicycle and pedestrian connections but also help mitigate noise and other impacts to the abutting neighborhoods. Where would you see that kind of iterative process taking place?

- A: El: I would see it from this meeting going forward through the initial screening. One of the things we are trying to do is take the alternatives we have and enhance them as much as possible. We are going to continue to tune these alternatives as we move forward. In my mind we haven't been bogged down by design details or constructability. It is a good test for conceptual ideas because we want to make sure there isn't a fatal flaw in a generic concept which is what typically goes into the front end of MEPA analysis along with a list of commitments. We want to have an early test because if we were to reach 75% design and you discover some things don't work correctly it would create a real problem. Up to this point we've gotten into tremendous detail that wouldn't be typical in similar project.
- C: Mark Gravallesse (MG): When we discussed the screening process internally we looked at all the items that would go into each one of them. We thought this would flush out the good and bad for all the different alternatives and we acknowledged that we are going to see across the board for a preferred alternative that will go into the MEPA document. The preferred alternative may be a combination of some of the concepts that have already been developed.
- Q: GB: Ed, would one of the ways of answering the question be looking at the big green dots where it says the word modify?
- A: El: Yes. From meeting five to meeting eight there will definitely be some iteration and I think that is where the valuable input comes in. We're running at a pretty brisk pace with a pretty brisk target time. Once you start narrowing it down to a smaller list of alternatives the goal is that the raw transportation system works as best as possible. Once we start narrowing in we hope to pull in ideas that were brought to the table earlier on in the process.
- C: CC: Now that we have the survey we can look at I-90 coming off the viaduct and the ramps going over or under I-90-. If they become part of the conceptual refinement we can show the verticality and not just the plan. Glen, to get back to your original question regarding the blue boxes I think issues like noise and neighborhood cohesion are aspects to how these things would get scrutinized. It will be part of the scoring matrix.
- C: El: All of the three remaining alternatives are equally good, equally bad, or equally neutral. You might assume that MassDOT will pick the alternative that the traffic works best for. For most people in this room you may say that none of the alternatives are good enough. We want to focus the conversation on whether the alternatives presented are good, neutral or bad. We want to hear more suggestions on how to make the alternatives truly good from a pedestrian, bicycle, community and transit perspective.
- C: WL: To follow on Glen's point, the concern I have is that if we get through one of these concepts and I am thinking as a pedestrian and walking perspective, issues regarding getting across the site and river conditions, how much is non-negotiable? In the context of the fact that we are spending hundreds of millions of dollars on a highway project at a minimum there are certain things that I think have to be accomplished as part of this project. MassDOT is a transportation agency; it's not a highway agency. I think the land use and the urban design planning of this is absolutely as important to the metropolitan area as the highway planning. When do we get to the point when we say the neighborhood building and community enhancement goals carry as much weight as the design of the highway lanes?
- C: El: The two large blue boxes are when we get to that. It seems like in order to meet the mission that MassDOT has laid out we are not going to know what the development looks like, nor is that something we fundamentally need, nice though it would be. The test is looking at what gets left behind as part of this project. Does it support future development, does it give you connections now, and do the roadways lay out in such a way that preclude future development or restrain future development. If all we end up building is one of the alternatives, we want to make sure it does not prevent or preclude any future

development. If we waited until a plan for all the land use in the area was finalized, we would be waiting a very long time.

Q: WL: Is your analysis going to show how these parcels will be developed or at least begin to show it?

A: El: It will have land and developable area and we have some projections on what the maximum square footage development in this area would be. To say we are going to put out an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) or an Environmental Impact Form (EIF) and say this is what development is going to happen here, I don't think is going to happen.

Q: AD: Working with the BRA would be beneficial to the entire project don't you agree? It is important for the City to have an understanding of what the development is going to be in order to get on the same page along with the same expectations.

A: MOD: Wendy, a lot of what you asked actually jumps further into our presentation. It is very important for us and the taskforce to have an understanding of land use and property ownership. Harvard owns the majority of the property, we have stated this many times. How Harvard intends to use and develop that property will be coordinated with the BRA. MassDOT really doesn't have much say over that. The best we can do is go off what Harvard says is anticipated. We will work with CTPS and Harvard to determine the expected development and the expected transportation use.

C: El: This all ties back to the connector roads to the Turnpike and onto Cambridge Street in relation to trip generation and parcel development. The goal of our analysis is to assume that BRA and Harvard will come up with a plan that creates a dense level of development.

C: MOD: Up until a month ago we didn't know whether or not West Station would be part of this project and where it would be located. CTPS had to know these two factors in order to account for the survey and traffic model. Mike Hall has projects going into his calculations that are 20 years out.

C: Sarah Hamilton (SH): I would like to suggest a screening alternative called aesthetics and urban design. I think this is an important factor to consider. Another could be open space and parkland.

Q: Galen Mook (GM): I want to sum up the understanding of who has the final say. If we like a preferred alternative and Harvard says no, does that trump all of the work we've been doing. If it does, how do we encourage the conversation to happen here in this room with Harvard and the taskforce team? How do you envision that playing out in the end?

A: MOD: Although Harvard is the primary landowner MassDOT will have the final say.

C: El: We are anticipating that the BTB, BRA, and Harvard will agree and come to a consensus of what is preferred. We are hoping the preferred alternative will fall somewhere in the middle of both sides so everyone can agree.

C: Harry Mattison (HM): Thanks for putting this together Ed. I'm looking at the two blue boxes that say "decision" and I don't understand it.

C: El: These boxes are big decisions. Those are points at which we eliminate some alternatives to allow us to turn up the analysis on those that remain. Right now we are striving to get down to a shorter list of feasible alternatives.

C: HM: It doesn't make sense to me because there are hundreds of decisions being made. There are fundamental decisions such as changes to the Cambridge Street overpass that is going to have an impact a lot of stuff.

C: El: That's a great example. Chris, does that change decisions across the board?

- C: CC: We would look at something like that and say it really doesn't influence whether we pick 3F or 3G, it's an element that's part of Cambridge Street.
- Q: HM: What do you consider as three of the top driving decisions?
- A: George Batchelor (GB): Harry, you are correct that there are hundreds of decisions being made. The purpose of the flow chart is to organize and show through the color scheme the significant milestone decisions and when they will take place. There are many decisions leading up to these milestones points. At some point we will reach a short list where we won't be looking at anything else. It's somewhat abstract and it can sound arbitrary but it will reach a point where we say these are the three alternatives and then to the point of one preferred alternative.
- Q: HM: Where is the list of the things that need to be decided and how they need to be decided?
- A: El: I have two things that might help answer that for you, Harry. The first is that Joe is going to go through the selection criteria and the second is that Brian will discuss the Cambridge Street alternatives.
- C: HM: Someone is making decisions somewhere about all these different options. There are tons of decisions that are being made and we don't know what decisions you're making because we can't understand the width of the sidewalk here or whether there is going to be a bicycle lane there. My point is that this needs to be more transparent collaborative process. I want to talk about decisions that are made such as why 3E is better than 3F.
- C: El: When you see alternative options presented there will be a description answering how we got to that point.
- C: HM: I'm not asking you to evaluate an option you've already made. I'm asking you to show us how you make the decisions that lead to the creation of the options.
- Q: Jessica Robertson (JR): How do new ideas get incorporated into the options oppose to you saying, "These are your options, pick one among them?"
- A: CC: The comments and suggestions that are being made at these taskforce meetings are being factored into the concepts, developed, and refined. We are looking at the big picture view here and how the pedestrians and cyclists will circulate the area. Feedback is continually being refined in the concepts that are being advanced. As we look further we are working to make these concepts better and more detailed.
- C: GB: One specific decision that needs to be made and I think the project team thinks it has been made but the taskforce team wouldn't agree is eliminating the idea of depressing I-90. I reread the minutes from meeting three and on page four I'm not convinced we ever reached a decision. Before we talked about an interim structure and I'm not asking to advocate for depressing I-90 it just seems that you've already made the decision by the way you've presented it. The way you have been presenting it makes it sound like we all agree.
- C: HM: Another part of depressing I-90 is not only under the viaduct but pushing back closer to the neighborhood. On a berm 10, 20, or 30 feet makes a huge different. Once we get that information from you there is a lot of creativity that can happen. I don't think the taskforce has accepted that Allston should be a space for train storage. That's a big fundamental decision on where to store trains. It sounds like you've inviting us to challenge your decisions after you have made them; this should be more of a collaborative process.
- A: El: When we bring the alternatives to screen, we will bring a summary of why it is off or on the table. Why don't you let Joe walk through the evaluation matrix and see what you think?

Discussion of the Evaluation Matrix

- C: Joe Freeman (JF): Hello everyone, I'm Joe Freeman. Everyone should have received a handout. The first part is what I like to call the consumer report matrix; it is based on a scale of three points. It is our understanding that the suburban alternative has been ruled out by everyone. We have to document why we did that and that is shown on the left part of the sheet as a word summary. There is also the no-build section at the very far left of the page. Ordinarily we would throw this out but legally we are required to document it. The urban interchange alternatives are where we are focusing our attention now and how we go about scoring those.
- Q: WL: It appears that none of the alternatives meet the purpose and need requirements. Can you talk more about that?
- A: JF: The purpose and needs refer to the core principals of why this project is happening. When we look at the option groups and see some alternatives have fallen out there are reasons why this has happened. There are plusses, minuses, and what we call neutrals. Options 3B and 3C have solid reasons why they have fallen out, mostly safety issues including long queuing up onto I-90. Under multimodal connectivity 3B and 3C score badly because they have no access to West Station. In terms of land use and community cohesion we are hoping to address this with neighborhood enhancements. Another item we are looking at is how much land will be available with the change in the interchange area, certain alternatives make a big difference for example option 3C has a much larger footprint and therefore received a minus ranking compared to 3B which is somewhat less and more of a neutral alternative.
- Q: Tad Read (TR): Is the idea that the taskforce would review and bless this set of criteria and then use it moving forward? Is this our one shot? It was on the agenda but it was never discussed.
- A: JF: We can discuss it now.
- C: TR: It's hard to determine exactly what the criterion is with just a word or two. I don't see anything regarding reduced Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) and I think that's important to see here. I'd like to see some language in here regarding environmental sustainability and CO₂ reductions.
- A: JF: CO₂ reduction is something we would analyze under the broader rubric of air quality. Decreasing congestion is one way we go about addressing that as part of this project.
- Q: TR: You mention that there's a document either developed or being developed that elaborates on these criteria?
- A: JF: Yes, we do have something like that in development.
- C: TR: I think having that would be helpful, because I think it's hard to evaluate how well these criteria are put together without that document because I personally could use some more explanation as to what these criteria are. Another area that's sort of missing here is regional transit service and enhancing regional transit connections. I'm not sure if that's part of the criteria here, but I think we could use some more time to look at that. In terms of the concerns Glen and Wendy were raising earlier, if the BRA is allowed to move forward with a planning process that is parallel to this one, and through that process we come up with up with some objectives such as enhancing Allston's access to the River, how would we then circle back around and incorporate some of that into these criteria? Again, I think we have an example here of putting the cart before the horse.
- A: JF: Remember, this isn't final. We're presenting this to you today so you can see how things are developing, but we certainly have the time and you have the opportunity to provide more input on these as we go.

- Q: Jessica Roberston (JR): So are you saying that the slide up there right now represents your purpose and need for the project and is the same thing which would go to MEPA and NEPA?
- A: JF: Purpose and need, yes.
- C: JR: Because I think there is a big difference between the impetus for the project and the goals for the project. The things you have up there is the impetus for the project: the viaduct is falling down therefore we need to rebuild it.
- A: JF: That would make it a reason or a need why we have to do the project.
- C: JR: Right, but I think the reason why we need to do a project now is very different from the goals of the project. We've heard many times about what taskforce members see as the goal for the project. You have a list of five bullets for "meets purpose and need," and that doesn't have anything about for example, neighborhood cohesion, interconnectivity across the project area which I think for many people around here is one of those deal breaker items so I would hope that we could separate the impetus items, such as replacing an aging highway structure, that all of the alternatives will do automatically or else they wouldn't be alternatives, from goals for the project which are at the bigger picture level of really serving the community.
- C: GM: Maybe it makes sense to have two slides, one after the other, one which details the need of the project and one which covers the goals associate with it.
- A: JF: When we talk about purpose and need, we are thinking from a MEPA/NEPA perspective. That's a standard, required part of the environmental document. Traditionally, when we talk about a project, some criteria wind up being more important than others; I'm not a big fan of weighting because scoring with numbers often gets too complicated. A good alternative is a good alternative and will rise to the top.
- C: El: Joe, I think the answer here is that the time is upon us to draft the purpose and need document that includes what you've heard here tonight. We likewise need to draft a document that addresses the detail behind some of these criteria that provide some description and definitions.
- C: Joe Orfant (JO): Listening to this discussion, I think a fundamental issue is one of perspective. I think your team is doing an excellent job of doing what they have been tasked to do which is design a transportation project. What the larger community is asking is that you design this project from the community in rather than looking out from the project. The neighborhood is asking about how this will impact its residents. This project is going to be here for 50, 60, 70 years. It wants to know about larger goals because it wants to know about more things than just the transportation project; things like improving transit, open space, and connections within the area. Those elements should have equal footing with the more conventional transportation planning things like fixing the interchange.
- C: AD: Tad used a term just now which I hadn't heard before, but that I think is important and that is "parallel planning process." I think you ought to work together on that. At some point the BRA needs to get on the agenda so that we react to that. I don't want to slow this process down, but I think it's important to undertake some serious planning in concert between the two agencies.
- A: TR: That's the topic of the conversation which we're going to have next week.
- Q: Alana Olsen (AO): So, Joe, if I heard you right when you were answering Jessica's very well-put question, thank you for saying that Jessica, what you're saying is that the reason these criteria area written this way is because you need to answer a set of MEPA/NEPA questions. If that's the answer to the question, then that's fine, but what I want to know is when do we get to the meaty stuff that I'm interested in discussing? Where on the flow chart is the collaborative discussion that Harry brought up

tonight? That we've asked for over and over again? When does that happen? We are halfway through the planning process and I don't feel like we've gotten to make any really constructive decisions.

- A: EI: To get to that point, we need to have some better defined alternatives. The collaborative part you're discussing comes when you tell us what you do or don't like about a given alternative or when you tell us that we have go back to the drawing board on something or we need to mix elements of the alternatives together. What's driving these alternatives is trying to get the traffic and transportation to work, because if that doesn't work from the beginning we're not doing what we need to do.
- Q: AO: I guess that's part of what's driving this, but you have talked a lot about how our input is helping to shape these very nuanced alternatives which we're being shown and I don't do a lot of taskforces so I don't know but is this sort of an arbitrary exercise and a process that you guys need to get through? I don't get it.
- A: JF: This is an important part of going through the environmental documentation process. It is certainly not arbitrary or just a box we're checking off.
- Q: AO: So, Joe, there's no way to accomplish what you want to do along with what we want to accomplish? Can we somehow do both at the same time? Is this an A to B scenario or can we take a step back and have the larger conversation between MassDOT and the BRA and really develop purpose and need and then design from there or can we do it all at once?
- A: MOD: That's a lot. Let's go back to April for a minute, I'm trying to take some mental notes and recall things that were said back in April so bear with me. We started off with something like 14 different alternatives, and while I missed one meeting for which I apologize, I don't think we have received much by way of commentary on those alternatives either in meetings or via email outside of a ready dislike of the suburban types. The reason I bring up April, and Nate help me on dates here if you would.
- A: NCC: The first public information meeting was April the 10th; the first meeting of the taskforce was May the 9th.
- A: MOD: O.K. good, April 10th we had a meeting to kick off the project. We talked about quite a few things there and perhaps I didn't articulate it quite well enough, sometimes I am lacking in those particular abilities, but we talked about reasons for the project: viaduct deficiency, we have one and we want to correct it. That's a reason for the project and indeed you just mentioned it. Safety improvements – we have some, automatic, all electronic tolling; and that's up and coming. That will be going forward; we have contracts out there that will make sure that gets followed through. Improvements to the MBTA; we intend to do that. These are reasons for the project. However, back then in April, there were a number of things that were given to us, and they were reiterated at the second taskforce session. The community wants to see speeds reduced. That directed us away from groups 1 and 2 and towards focusing our energies in group number 3. That was clearly communicated to me. Eventually tonight, we'll be hearing more about group 3 so I'll need to ask you to stick around a little beyond 8PM. I would like to reduce speeds and I think the roughly 150 people who showed up at the April meeting wanted to achieve the same thing. Community, neighborhood, potential for business and economic development, multimodal, accessibility, these are all themes the community wanted to see us carry forward into the project. We showed all three groups of alternatives at that first meeting, 150 people told us to skip over alternatives groups 1 and 2 pretty quick and we did. They asked us to start with group 3 and improve it which is what we have been going. There is an opportunity to improve groups 1 and 2 so they could meet the purpose and need, but they won't meet the project goals as you have given them to us. That's what I am trying to get across to you tonight. I'm not sure if I am making that clear, but is our goal based on these discussions and if you are not hearing it, it's certainly not for lack of taking into account the comments received at the April meeting, these meetings, and the conversations I had in the community about this last fall.

- C: AO: That was a good summary of what's happened, and I was just trying to build on what you've heard 500 different ways and from 17 different taskforce members, which is that we don't need that the goals we have given you are being reflected in the evaluation criteria for the project and we want to see them added and fleshed out further. What I need to understand is getting our goals reflected in your document is coming next or whether this is our one shot to get that done right. I really thought you were totally delivering on understanding our goals for this until I saw that slide. Maybe that's something that can be fixed relatively quickly.
- A: El: I think it is something we can fix. I think we have a pretty good grip on what people are after. We can always add criteria.
- A: MG: What's on the screen right now, those are just words. We are hearing you and when you see the designs which are driven in a large part by what you have told us already, we'll modify them if we need to, based on the comments you give us. A lot of the focus on community and how this will impact the neighborhood, that really focuses on Cambridge Street and we have a detailed concept to show you which is based on what you have told us, and we want to show it to you when we get done with this discussion. So just to let everyone know, we have some very nice things to show you tonight.
- Q: HM: Mark, I don't think we're asking you to add another six things onto a list which is already 35 items long. I think what we're asking for is some shared definitions of what these things mean because what does parks mean to you guys and what does it mean to get a green circle for parks? I have no idea and I don't know what Tom or Matt or Alana thinks of getting a green circle for parks is either and it's such a mess over there now that for community cohesion, it doesn't take much for you to say "hey, look we made it better." We could be looking for community cohesion that's a thousand times better than that and it seems like something where you'd like to have us all on the same page. I don't want to end up in meeting seven and you're saying "hey, this one's good enough because we gave it all these green circles" and we say "you're insane, we think that's so far away from what we were expecting our goals to be for this project, whether it's for community cohesion or bicycle routes or pedestrian routes or noise." I guess the question is when we work together to decide what we mean, rather than have you guys public to us something in the future when you decide to and if we don't like it then we can try to challenge it. I guess my question is when does that discussion happen?
- Q: MOD: Quick question for you: has everyone seen what was just called the "consumer reports," happy face, sad face type of thing? Has everyone seen the criteria that were handed out? I believe it was one of the June taskforce meetings. That's on the website. Has anyone offered any comments as to whether they agree, disagree, or would like to add more?
- C: El: I think the point that is being made here is that people saw them; nobody is saying they didn't see them, but they don't know what they mean.
- C: JF: We'll get the definitions out; that will help.
- C: GB: I don't think that's all we need. We need more. We need criteria which are based on more modern language than the way these are worded. If Joe is saying you can't change these...³
- C: El: Joe isn't saying that at all.
- A: JF: No, we can definitely change them.
- C: GB: O.K. then things like "does it meet MassDOT GreenDOT principles?" could be listed with its three sub-principles that GreenDOT is all about. One item with three sub-items might incorporate six items that are already on the list using more modern language. Alternatively, if I live near the railroad tracks and I've been living with noise for the last 55 years and I want to see options that minimize noise to my

³ Here, Glen was interrupted by Ed and Joe at the same time.

neighborhood or I live by the highway and I want to see mitigation or design to address that. I see noise, but it's under something called environmental, not "quality of life" or "human beings" for example. So I don't know if the words are the right words. There might be other criteria which encompass what the group is thinking.

- A: El: I get it: before you can give a good comment, and know if your concern is in or out, you need a better definition for these criteria.
- C: GB: I just don't see a category called "people" or "human beings." I don't need a definition to know that I don't see anything in the context of human beings and residents and people who about the site. I guess I'm trying to encourage you that a true criteria list would make reference to it in a bold faced heading.
- A: El: O.K. so let's let Joe take a moment to take a crack at re-crafting these.
- C: WL: I'd just like to mention one more thing, and I'm glad Glen mentioned GreenDOT. I want to mention the mode shift goal of MassDOT which has received a lot of recognition and is very important. Somewhere in here, perhaps under traffic or multimodal, I keep waiting to see the parts of the alternatives that really look forward and not just trying to create the highway and look at how you use the investment in the Massachusetts Turnpike to think about bus rapid transit that serves the broader region and I realize that there are an awful lot of things to accomplish in the neighborhood, but it's important to think regionally, broadly, and think about how that fits in to the picture. So far we haven't talked about that and that makes yet another reason for this project.
- C: Tom Nally (TN): I'd like to suggest a possible approach to this that looks at the steps that can be followed. We do need to better define the criteria. Apply the criteria to evaluate the alternatives that we have in front of us, the group 3 alternatives, come back to us, report and say this is what we've found by doing the analysis. You can then have a discussion, saying what's on the mark and off the mark, and looking at plusses and minuses and look at those alternatives that seem to be most promising, and then look at their minuses and figure out how to address those minuses to make them better. If the queue length is a problem, how can you adjust the queue length? If there are problems with the intersection locations, where can they go? Determine what we want to achieve, find the things that are holding us back, and try to make those things better.
- C: JR: One more important piece to add on to that is at some point we need an opportunity to voice ideas that are not in any of the alternatives yet and I think because we're always reacting to things you have thought of, we might miss something there.
- Q: GM: Thinking of this openness opportunity that we are looking for is, I kind of want to shift the question to being about when we can talk about this outside of the taskforce? Particularly, I mean having a second public meeting and where that might fit, hopefully before meeting nine so that we can get beyond the comments from the 12 of us talking around the table every two weeks, and when would you be willing to go back to the Jackson-Mann Community Center and pack the room again and sit there for 3, 4, 5 hours while the Allston residents who can't be here either give you the negative, neutral, or positive because they should be the ones who give you the green star for some of this stuff. So, I guess the two questions are, are you able to take the input of the residents in a public meeting and where might it fit?
- A: El: Typically, that comes in the MEPA process. Public input to MEPA through a meeting, comment letters, and that's typically after you have a preferred alternative. That's probably in October.
- A: MOD: Galen, to this point in time, I would have hoped that we had taken in account what I heard from many of the residents, businesses, and civic associations, commuters, users of the Mass Turnpike and Cambridge Street, in our attempts to show that groups 1 and 2 do not meet the goals and objectives that have be communicated to us, nor do they meet the purpose and need and that there is a group 3 which requires some improvements and enhancements and using the input of this group for comments

and questions to help us improve upon them. I thought that we were there a taskforce meeting or two ago when the majority of this group agreed that groups 1 and 2 don't seem to meet what they desire for this overall project and that group 3 is worthy of being improved upon and enhanced. As far as the public meeting, whether it be 3 hours, 4 hours, 5 hours it doesn't make a difference to me, I'll sit and I'll listen and I hope you know that, but when we have the next meeting, I want to be able to deliver something to the community that indicates that we heard them during our sit down with them in April. I'd like to be able to show them how we eliminated groups 1 and 2 because they do not meet the goals for the project as given to us by the community or our agency purpose and need. I'd like to be able to say, we have group 3 and within it, there might be four or five different variants that we're looking at with the taskforce and this is how we are both screening them and trying to improve on the strongest candidates and then ask the audience what they think. That's what I'd be looking for in a next public information meeting. If we can have that meeting take place in September or October, then fine, but I want to be able to deliver something and say that we made some progress.

- A: NCC: Mike, please feel free to correct me here if this is not right, but Galen, one of the things that was in the ground rule document that we gave to you, and we encourage you to do this, and I'd call out Paola who isn't here tonight, but who has done it a few times with me, she's had people to come her as the resident representative for Royal Street, she's had people ask "I want to know about this or that." You're welcome to do that. We'd love for you to do that. You're getting these materials, take them home, spread them out on the table and share them. As your friends and neighbors what they think. We'd love to get that from you. It's one of the key reasons we have the taskforce. Anything I said out of line there, Mike?
- A: MOD: Right on the money.
- A: NCC: Thank you.
- C: GM: If I can just belabor the point some more: it matters on this timeline, whether it is August or September, that we come together as a larger group, DOT and the taskforce and come to the public before we get to the orange box and after the first big blue box, reaching out to the community and bringing them into the process. I have friends who are concerned about this and airing everything in a public information meeting has an important openness to it. It's important for people to voice their opinion to you directly and not just through me. Ideally that would happen before eliminating alternatives and sometime after the first blue box. My personal recommendation would be to reach out to our community members, representatives, councilors and bring the greater public into the conversation. I have friends who are interested in the project and we do talk about it but that is much different than holding a public meeting that is advertised in the *Boston Globe*.
- C: MOD: While you are waiting for further definition and clarification I ask you to feed us all of your concerns and screening criteria over the next few weeks before the next taskforce meeting. We have confirmed that this meeting will take place on August 13.
- C: HM: Can you provide some way for the taskforce to discuss this amongst ourselves. There have been emails sent asking questions and requesting information that never get answered. I don't think it's fair for you to shift the blame onto us.
- C: NCC: I'm sorry if the communication has not felt welcoming. Besides Glen's email this afternoon I can't think of an email that I have received and not responded to. If you have specific questions that you feel you have voiced in an email and have never received an answer send it to me and Ed and I will work on it. I am happy to be the focal point for any and all items you want to send us regarding evaluation criteria. Some of the agenda items that have been incorporated into the evaluation criteria have been pulled directly from the meeting minutes that Nick and I have compiled.
- C: HM: We just want responses.

C: GB: I'd like to make a proposal to try to make Harry and Mike happy. I think Harry raises a good point in questioning what you are going to do with 40 separate emails. I'd like to amend the request. We know our next meeting is August 13 and I suggestion anyone who wants to send you an email with selection criteria get it to you a week before the meeting, August 6.⁴

A: MOD: Sounds like everyone is in agreement.

Discussion of Cambridge Street

C: Brian Ackley (BA): I'm Brian Ackley with TetraTech. I want to talk tonight about Cambridge Street and remind you that it is a large independent part of this project. It is not completely independent because of the relation of the intersections along Cambridge Street to the I-90 mainline. We are going to use the Complete Streets design approach in all alternatives of Cambridge Street moving forward. Cambridge Street is unique in that it has multiple functions. It services the interchange, it is a main commuter route, it is a transit route, and it also services adjacent communities. Under the guidance of the Complete Street design we plan to enhance access and safety for all users. The plan will incorporate more crosswalks, introduce bicycle boxes, cycle tracks and enhanced pavement marking. We will be providing narrower travel lanes separation between all modes of transportation, safe bus stops, on-street parking and using National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) as primary guidance. Cambridge Street is owned and operated by the City of Boston and therefore the design will be coordinated with BTM. The plan shown here is the same plan that is posted on the back wall. The design includes a cycle track with a textured surface that separates the bicycle traffic from pedestrian traffic. Shown here is a mid-block cross walk with rectangular rapid flashing beacons. There is a lot of repetition moving through the corridor. At most intersections the cycle track comes to grade and a bicycle box is provided for a desired left turns. The green area shown is reserved for planting and lighting amenities. This final image shows the entire length of Cambridge Street and shows how the sections along the corridor are broken up. The elevated crest over the existing ramps for the I-90 mainline will no longer be need and Cambridge Street will be at the same elevation all the way through.

Q: El: Brian, am I correct in saying that all of the things you just mentioned regarding Cambridge Street will work will the alternative options?

A: BA: Yes

Q: AD: Is it safe to assume that all of sidewalks and crosswalks will be ADA compliant?

A: BA: Yes, that is a given.

Q: JR: It sounds like you haven't gone over these plans with Vineet and his team yet. I'm wondering what kind of feedback you want and are expecting from us to analyze?

A: MOD: Anything and everything you're prepared to give us Jessica.

Q: Vineet Gupta (VG): I wanted to ask if the design of Cambridge Street that was just presented to us was created as part of the taskforce process. I'm trying to figure out how you got to this point because it is a very high level of detail.

A: BA: We've reached this point through the process of the taskforce. We've been hearing comments and a vision of Cambridge Street from the taskforce and we have incorporated those ideas into this detailed plan.

Q: VG: I think it's great that you're doing this and I want to work with you to get the best design. I think we need to step back a little and make sure that some of the assumptions that influence the design are

⁴ Here, the group nodded their assent.

agreed upon by the neighborhood and the City. One example would be the width of the median; does it really need to be that wide?

- A: MG: I think that is all very important and we are coordinating a meeting with the City sometime next week. Please keep in mind that this plan presented tonight is highly conceptual. We wanted to present this concept tonight to show everyone that we've been listening to them and bringing their thoughts and ideas into the plan.
- C: Mike Hall (MH): To help visualize the differences between the existing conditions on Cambridge Street and the proposed conditions on Cambridge Street we've prepared a representative cross-section. Shown here is the existing cross-section just east of North Harvard Street looking east. The total cross-section is 97 feet today. For comparison purposes we are going to show the different functionalities of cross-section by using a color coordinated scheme. 73% of the cross-section is taken up by vehicular use and only 15% is dedicated to pedestrian and bicycles. Now I will show you the proposed cross-section and as you can see it is much wider. The proposed cross-section is 140 feet wide and uses more space for pedestrian and bicycle accommodations. We are providing a buffer between bicycles and pedestrians. In terms of percentages the green space dedicated to pedestrian, landscaping and bicycles is going from 15% to 43% of the entire cross-section. The yellow space dedicated to vehicular travel lanes is going from 82% to 54%. This will vary up and down the corridor a bit so we did a calculation of existing versus proposed of the entire length of Cambridge Street. We found for the entire corridor that the areas in green are going to go up from 15% to 43% and the yellow zone is going to down from 82% to 54%. Although the cross-section is going to get a bit wider, the elements that are driving the widening are primarily not vehicular; they are things like the cycle tracks, sidewalks, and green space. As such, we see this as a substantial community benefit.
- C: MD: The center median that is shown in green is not pedestrian space. I think it is totally useless and I would not count it as green.
- A: MH: It is shown in green because it will be vegetated with trees and plants.
- C: MD: I still think the width of the median is unnecessary and contributing to the widening of the entire corridor.
- C: AO: I want to pull away from the specific comments and say that I think this plan is really in line with the community goals. It would be nice to ride my bicycle down this street. Cambridge Street actually goes all the way to Union Square so I would hope the character in this section of the corridor is reflected throughout the entire corridor. Thank you.
- A: MOD: Thank you Alana; those are things that we will discuss.
- C: WL: It's clear that you're trying really hard. It's important to talk with the City about land use and urban design. Although you are incorporating new bicycle lanes and sidewalks, widening the corridor is actually not one of the long term goals for this neighborhood. It is important that the conversation of land use is incorporated regarding both sides of Cambridge Street.
- C: MH: The challenge this team has is that dealing with a corridor that has multiple functions. We have to strike a balance and the truth is Cambridge Street is still going to connect the highway ramps even though we want to give it the feeling of a larger local street.
- C: WL: I think this goes back to the issue of the tradeoffs. Understanding the benefits and the tradeoffs is very important.
- C: VG: To echo what Wendy is saying, I think you guys are on the right path, this is a huge effort and this is going to help us make some decisions. This plan and cross-section is a great starting point.

Q: GM: The cross-section is 140 feet, is that correct?

A: MH: Yes

C: GM: A 140 foot crosswalk requires an enormous amount of time to cross the street. Please minimize that.

C: George Batchelor (GB): We struggled a little bit on how best to communicate the width of the cross-section. One of the larger issues with this project in terms of connecting Allston to the river is that you have an interchange between the two. The interchange isn't going to go away, what will happen is that the interchange will redistribute traffic along Cambridge Street. This is a good news-bad news scenario.

Q: GM: Fair enough, my comment still stands. My first question is, are there limitations to the width? My second question is why does this plan not connect to the river?

A: MH: I'm not sure if there are any width restrictions but the intent is to keep the south side curb at the same location.

A: MG: To answer your second question, the River Street and Western Avenue project has that intersection in it. We are in discussion with MassDOT to incorporate pedestrian and bicycle accommodations.

Q: GM: Is it possible to expand the scope to include that intersection because the funding is not currently available.

A: MG: We may not need to. If it doesn't get done as part of the River Street project then we will need to bring it into this project.

C: Joseph Beggan (JB): Part of the challenge that we have been running into is the way certain things are phrased and processing things differently. This is an area that is going to be a new district. This area is going to turn into a new neighborhood and it will be an urban neighborhood. We don't want to limit for squeeze how the ability to form the neighborhood. The goal is to eventually knit together both sides of the tracks.

C: VG: I want to touch on the comments about traffic along Cambridge Street and the necessary width. I don't think it is necessary to dump all of the traffic from the I-90 mainline onto Cambridge Street. Let's figure out a way to make new connection and relieve some of the pressure off of Cambridge Street without having to widen the road.

C: GB: I agree with much of what has been said regarding you making bicycle and pedestrian improvements good. If I was riding my bicycle from Harvard to the river on a cycle track at reach intersection I would have to ride off the cycle track and curve down towards the road to be in a bicycle lane. I am going to label that "good" meaning that it a conventional, good, Complete Street design with which I would be content. I would like to encourage your team to show us not just a good example but a set of great improvements as an alternative. By great I mean a shared-use off road path, chapter 11, 11-10 of the *Highway Design Manual*. I think you should develop an alternative that doesn't bring cyclist down to the street at each intersection.

C: MH: We have worked up about five or six different alternatives for the cycle track configurations for each intersection design. We don't have time to show you them all tonight.

Q: HM: Could you go back to the plan view. Can you compare how cars are traveling onto the turnpike today to the way they will go through this system over the Western Avenue Bridge.

- A: MH: As you do today, depending on which option the drivers may turn left here or they may turn left here to access the highway. Coming from Allston near Union Square depending on the alternative they can turn right here or they can turn right here depending if they are going east or west.
- C: HM: Specifically if you were coming from Genzyme.
- A: MH: We are controlling that movement with a traffic light.
- C: El: It sounds like your question is, will this many lanes handle the demand for existing traffic?
- A: MH: We are trying to control all right turns and improve safety for bicycles and pedestrians at those right turns. To answer your question, the traffic volumes are so high that we will probably need two right turning lanes to make that work.
- C: HM: To suggest that you have stop at a light now to make a right turn compared to the existing conditions where you don't have to touch your break to turn right seems like a lot of traffic congestion that is not needed. I don't see how any of this works. You're making it so much harder to get on the turnpike compared to today.
- C: GB: As it come back to the cross-section you've showed us two right turns and only one left turn. Many of us question that assumption and many of us want to get into the details with you. There is no way a single left turn at those intersections can accommodate the traffic demand.
- A: MH: Depending on the alternative we may need two left turn lanes.
- Q: HM: Are you actively working with Harvard?
- A: MOD: Yes, we are actively working with Harvard.
- C: El: Chris, can you give us a 30 second Soldiers Field Road update.
- C: CC: Soldiers Field Road is a major element of this project. We now have survey and we are looking at how we can realign Soldiers Field Road and create more green space next to the river. We'll continue to work on this and hopefully we'll come back next meeting with a better update and plans that show you some alternatives. It's still on the table and we are still working through the details.
- C: MOD: The next meeting is August 13. Thank you.

Next Steps

The next taskforce meeting will be held at **6PM on Wednesday, August 13 at the Fiorentino Community Center**. The Fiorentino Center is located at 123 Antwerp Street in Allston.

Appendix 1: Meeting Attendees

First Name	Last Name	Affiliation
James	Antonizich	TetraTech
Dennis	Baker	HNTB
Jo-Ann	Barbour	Charlesview Inc.
George	Batchelor	MassDOT
Daniel	Berez	BRA
Glen	Berkowitz	Taskforce Member
Andrew	Bettinelli	Taskforce Member
Craig	Cashman	Taskforce Member
Jim	Cerbone	MassDOT
Jim	Curley	Taskforce Member
Donny	Dailey	MassDOT
Matthew	Danish	Taskforce Member
Anthony	Disidoro	Filling in for Paul Berkeley
Stacey	Donahoe	MassDOT
Vineet	Gupta	Taskforce Member
Sarah	Hamilton	Taskforce Member
Mark	Handley	Taskforce Member
Marc	Kadish	Taskforce Member
Havera	Kershner	Community Resident
Bill	Ko	Community Resident
John	Laadt	Taskforce Member
Wendy	Landman	Taskforce Member
Elizabeth	Leary	Taskforce Member
Aleksandar	Loncarevic	TetraTech
Will	Luzier	Taskforce Member
Christine	Marini	BPD
Harry	Mattison	Taskforce Member
Anne	McKinnon	Community Member
Ian	Mckinnon	TetraTech
Galen	Mook	Taskforce Member
Tom	Nally	Taskforce Member
Alana	Olsen	Taskforce Member
Richard	Parr	Filling in for Paola Ferrer
Tad	Read	Taskforce Member
Jessica	Robertson	Taskforce Member
Zachary	Shedlock	Mass Art
Pete	Sutton	MassDOT
Robert	Tremouille	Community Resident