



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

BRIAN MURPHY
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

IRAM FAROOQ
Chief of Policy & Planning
Deputy Director for
Community Development

To: Richard C. Rossi, City Manager
From: Brian P. Murphy, Assistant City Manager for Community
Development
Date: January 20, 2015
Re: Status of the reconstruction plan of Pearl Street

Pearl Street is being reconstructed from Mass. Avenue to Granite Street beginning in the fall of 2015. The project will include roadway as well as sidewalk and pedestrian ramp reconstruction. The project provides a unique opportunity to improve safety for all modes through traffic calming and increase enjoyment of the street as a public space.

Two options for how to reconstruct the street have been developed based on an extensive data gathering and analysis process, including two public meetings and an on-line survey. The two options, which differ only in terms of how parking is regulated, were presented at a project open house on November 26, 2014. All background data for the project is available on the project website at:

www.cambridgema.gov/PearlStreetReconstruction

The two options include the same construction elements and differ only by parking regulatory changes on the west side of the street. Both options include the following new elements:

- New crosswalk at Auburn Street southwest corner
- Relocation of existing crosswalk at William Street from southwest corner to northeast corner of the intersection
- New crosswalk with curb extension at northeast corner of intersection with Decatur
- Raised intersection at Erie Street
- Curb extension to provide improved access in front of 303 – 305 Pearl Street
- Raised intersection at Chestnut Street
- New crosswalk on the southwest corner of intersection with Henry Street
- Reconstruction of existing raised intersection at Granite Street

Base Plan Option

The base plan includes three new crosswalks and curbs extensions on the east side of the street to increase pedestrian visibility and shorten crossing distances. It also includes two raised intersections at Pearl and Erie Streets, and Pearl and Chestnut Streets, to help slow vehicle speeds and give pedestrians priority in crossing. Parking regulations remain unchanged.



Daytime Bike Lane/Complete Streets Option

This option includes all of the elements above plus a Monday-Friday daytime parking restriction on the west side of Pearl Street from 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM. This provides space for cyclists and MBTA buses during the time of day with the highest traffic volumes and lowest parking demand. Parking would be allowed on the west side of the street during street sweeping on the east side. There are approximately 137 spaces available on the east side of the street, which would be available at all times and approximately 108 parking spaces that would be restricted during the daytime. There are a total of approximately 1,348 on-street parking spaces available in the immediate vicinity, including a block in each direction on side streets to Brookline Street and Magazine Street. A parking demand study demonstrated that there are sufficient spaces available for people during the daytime, with approximately 40% of the spaces in the area available. During the overnight hours, when all parking will be available, approximately 25% of the spaces on Pearl Street plus 20% of the spaces on the side streets are available.



The Daytime Bike Lane/Complete Streets option seeks to promote and enhance sustainable transportation for all ages as well as to increase public safety, consistent with city goals. It does so by providing better separation between cyclists and vehicles as articulated in the draft Cambridge Bicycle Network Plan for Pearl Street, to meet the goal of enabling cyclists of all ages and abilities to choose to bicycle safely and comfortably. Pearl Street is an important street for access to the neighborhood and to the Morse School and Lindstrom Field, as well as to Central Square, the River, and the BU campus. A marked bicycle lane that is next to a curb (not parked cars) increases safety, both in perception and in reality. This plan would address some of the most common causes of bicycle crashes, including “doorings” and “sideswipes.”

The provision of the space is valuable for transit riders as well, enabling buses to operate more smoothly and effectively. Buses will be able to easily pull in and out of bus stops without impeding through traffic.

Another issue this proposal addresses is the common occurrence of crashes between motorists and parked cars. Since daytime hours are when there is more traffic, this should be measurably mitigated.

An option including a full-time bicycle lane or a fully separated bicycle facility such as a cycle track would require restricting parking on the west side at all times. In the case of Pearl Street, since the more important times for clear cycling facilities are during the daytime hours, when the levels of traffic and bus travel are highest and demand for parking is demonstrably reduced, the proposal was

deemed a viable compromise in order to accommodate resident desires for on-street parking during the overnight hours.

While the implementation of a daytime parking ban on one side of Pearl Street would result in some changes to residents' parking patterns, it is not comparable to the twice monthly impact of street cleaning as only one side of Pearl Street would be restricted, not all of the adjoining streets within the street cleaning district which covers most of Cambridgeport west of Sydney Street. During street cleaning days where parking is banned on the east side of Pearl Street, it is proposed that parking be permitted on the west side of the street.

Next Steps

A fact sheet for the project will be disseminated widely to all interested parties, including the project mailing list, those who have contacted the City directly, and neighborhood groups, as well as being posted on the project web site. There is broad consensus on the construction elements of the plan and the development of those plans is proceeding so that the project can be bid on schedule. A decision on the final parking regulation for Pearl Street does not need to be made before fall 2015. Additional time will be taken to more closely examine the implications of both options, involving additional data collection, and seeking additional input through a variety of outreach strategies.