



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

LOUIS A. DePASQUALE
City Manager

April 7, 2022

To the Honorable, the City Council:

I am writing to provide you with an update on the MassAve4 project and am asking for your approval for the approach and timeline for implementing separated bike lanes on these critical segments of Massachusetts Avenue, as outlined in the attached report and summarized below.

The Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) identified four segments of Massachusetts Avenue where installing separated bike lanes is challenging due to unique complicating factors, which include the MBTA's overhead bus wires, the median and major bus stops. The four segments are collectively referred to as the MassAve4. The CSO requires that the City Manager and City Council approve a recommended approach and timeline by May 1, 2022 or separated bike lanes are required to be installed via quick-build methods.

Recommendation – The recommendation is to implement separated bike lanes through **partial construction for the segments of Massachusetts Avenue with the overhead MBTA bus wires and median (Segments A and B) and full construction for the Harvard Square bus stops (Segments C and D)**. These recommendations were developed through an extensive community engagement process including two well-attended virtual meetings, five in person pop-up events, an on-line survey and review meetings with the City's Bike, Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committees. City staff, including the Economic Development Division of the Community Development Department, have also been meeting with local businesses, business groups, the Commission for Persons with Disabilities and neighborhood associations to review the Cycling Safety Ordinance. A full summary of the community engagement process is included in the attached report.



Through the community engagement process, City staff heard strong support for the small businesses that are a key piece of what makes this corridor so special. The recommended construction approach removes the median and allows the separated bike lanes to be implemented and one side of parking to be maintained (if the MBTA overhead bus wires are also removed). This ability to maintain 40 to 50% of curb uses such as accessible parking, customer parking, loading, and outdoor dining is one of the key drivers behind the recommendation to move forward with construction and was strongly supported by the community.



Recommended Approach

Segments A & B

Partial Construction is recommended for Segments A & B, as it best meets the needs of the community while also offering a shorter implementation timeline than full construction.

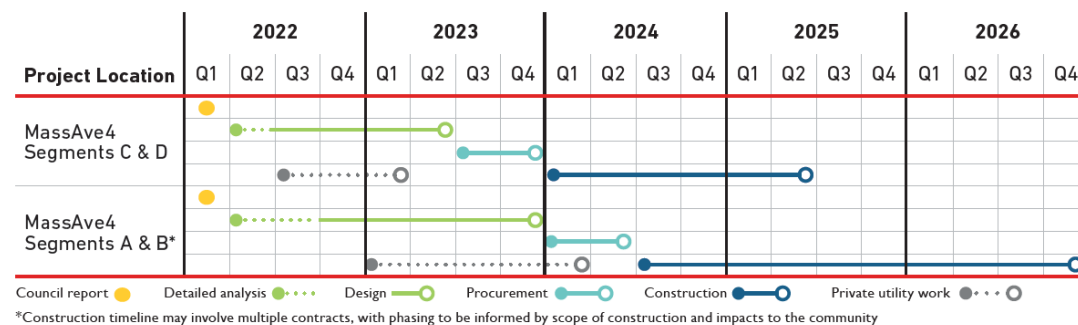
Some small segments in constrained areas may require full construction such as the Walden Street intersection, which has been considered in the proposed cost and timeline estimates.

Segments C & D

Full Construction is recommended between Plympton Street and Garden Street to provide safe and comfortable facilities for all users through these high volume bus stop areas.



Estimated Implementation Timeline



Pending City Council approval, the MassAve4 segments will proceed into the design stage to determine the design specifics for each segment. The community will have multiple ways to provide feedback on the segment designs through engagement opportunities such as pop-up events and community meetings. Implementation will be phased along with other major construction projects in the city to reduce disruptions during construction.

The schedule and cost estimates provided in this report are based on the information available at this time. Detailed construction phasing will be further developed as the design progresses and we understand more about the scope of the improvements and impacts on utilities.

The timeline for completion of the improvements is based on the best available information. As we work with the community to develop the detailed designs, we will have more information on the full scope of the projects and also develop a strategy for how best to phase the improvements to mitigate the impacts of construction. The estimated budget for these projects (\$40M for Segments A & B and \$15M for Segments C & D) is being included in the recommended budget that will be forwarded to the City Council in May.

Status of MBTA Overhead Bus Wires – The MBTA has discontinued the electric trolley buses, de-energized the overhead bus wires, and appropriated \$25,000,000 for the renovations of the bus facility at Trolley Square to support the Battery Electric Buses (BEBs) that will be replacing the electric trolley buses. As part of these renovations, the MBTA has committed to removing the entirety of the overhead system (wires, poles and electrical conduit), but is currently scoping the work to determine what portions will be completed with in-house crews and what portions will need to be contracted out. City staff is meeting regularly with the MBTA to coordinate on our various projects; however, the timeline for the removal of the system is not yet finalized.

Annual Updates – Beginning in 2023, City staff will provide an annual update on the status of the MassAve4 projects as part of the annual report to City Council on the implementation of the Cycling Safety Ordinance.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Louis DePasquale".

Louis A. DePasquale
City Manager

LAD/mec