



# City of Cambridge

## Executive Department

**LOUIS A. DePASQUALE**  
City Manager

**LISA C. PETERSON**  
Deputy City Manager

April 22, 2019

To the Honorable, the City Council:

In response to Awaiting Report Item Number 19-9, regarding a report on determining what facilities, parking changes, and other improvements to the pavement conditions are possible to make Cambridge's stretch of Webster Avenue a complete street, Director of Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Joseph Barr, Assistant City Manager for Community Development Iram Farooq, and Commissioner of Public Works Owen O'Riordan report the following.

As noted in the order, the City of Somerville has installed flexible separators and No Parking regulations on their section of Webster Avenue, creating a separated area for cyclists from Prospect Street to the Cambridge/Somerville city boundary. This change was implemented with limited coordination with Cambridge and leads to a change in the quality of the bicycle facilities at the transition between Cambridge and Somerville. It is therefore understandable that there is a desire for improved facilities in the approximately 500' between the City boundary and Cambridge Street.

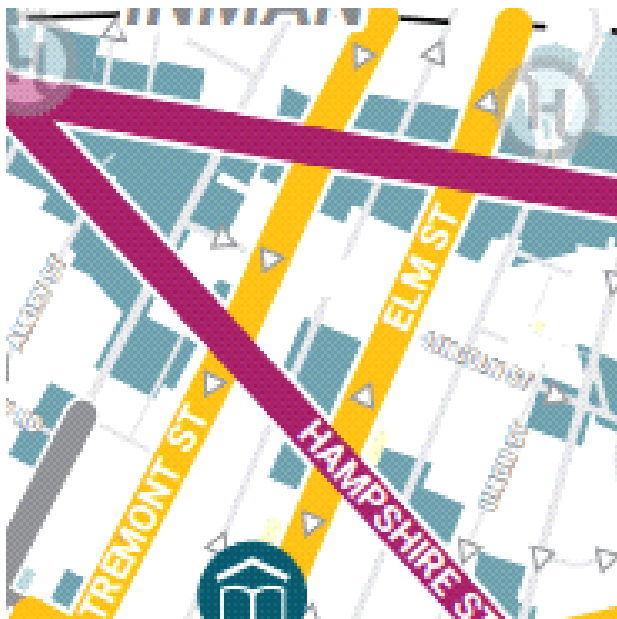
Implementation of separated bicycle lanes in the Cambridge segment of Webster Avenue would require removal of all parking on both sides of the street, as was done in Somerville. This approach is complicated in Cambridge due to land use, existing infrastructure, and ongoing construction.

- From a land use perspective, this segment of Webster Avenue is dominated by automotive-oriented land uses, specifically Phil's Towing (one of the City's two remaining towing contractors) and CLM Auto, both of which make heavy use of the on-street parking for movement and staging of vehicles. Although this use of the curb space could be designated as a No Stopping area, the realities of enforcing this restriction given the adjacent land uses would be challenging. In addition, because there are nine curb cuts within 320 feet along the west curb line. It would not be possible to provide significant vertical separation with flexible delineators.



- The existing sidewalk design in this area also presents a potential issue, since there is an existing curb extension on the east side of Webster Avenue that extends into the parking lane approximately halfway between the City boundary and Cambridge Street. This curb extension is proposed to be maintained and reconstructed as part of the of the 305 Webster Avenue residential development project, in order to enhance pedestrian accessibility and allow for additional high-quality street tree plantings. The curb extension would be an obstacle to a separated facility in this segment.
- In addition, approximately half the length of the east side of Webster Avenue is currently occupied by the construction barricades for the 305 Webster Avenue construction, which would prevent installation of any treatment until those barricades are removed.

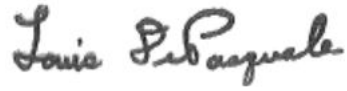
As shown in the figure below, the Cambridge Bicycle Plan’s bicycle network map does identify a north-south connection between the Cambridge/Somerville boundary and Cambridge Street (as well as connections farther to the south), using Elm Street in the northbound direction and Tremont Street in the southbound direction. These streets are designated as low-speed/low-volume connections (each has traffic calming elements), meaning that they would operate as streets that can be safely and comfortably shared with motor vehicles based on their operational characteristics. At the time that the bicycle plan was being developed, there was no indication that Somerville was planning to install flexible separators on Webster Avenue, so there was no specific facility with which to connect. It is also worth noting that to the south of Cambridge Street, Webster Avenue transitions into Columbia Street, which is a narrow two-way street with higher traffic volumes than Elm and Tremont; it is not included in the bicycle network plan, and is too narrow to fit separated bicycle lanes even if all the on-street parking were removed.



Based on this review of existing conditions and future planning efforts, our recommendation is to further enhance the current north-south connections included in the bicycle plan by adding any signs and markings necessary to communicate to both cyclists and motor vehicle drivers that Elm Street and Tremont Street are the lower stress/higher comfort north-south connections between Webster Avenue, Cambridge Street, and locations south of Cambridge Street. Although we do not expect to install separated bicycle lanes on Webster Avenue in this area at this time, we recognize that conditions may change in the future, including land use modifications that would

alter the nature of traffic and travel along the street and in the area. The City has recently initiated the process of updating the bicycle plan, which provides an opportunity to consider whether this segment of Webster Avenue should be included as a future connection in the plan.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Louis A. DePasquale".

Louis A. DePasquale  
City Manager

LAD/mec