



# City of Cambridge

## Executive Department

**YI-AN HUANG**  
City Manager

CMA 2026-187  
**IN CITY COUNCIL**  
June 22, 2026

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Please see attached a memo and supporting document transmitted from Brooke McKenna, Transportation Commissioner, relative to Awaiting Report 26-02 regarding school parking access.

Very truly yours,

Yi-An Huang  
City Manager





**To:** Yi-An Huang, City Manager  
**From:** Brooke McKenna, Commissioner  
**Date:** June 22, 2026  
**Subject:** Awaiting Reports 2026-02

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In response to Awaiting Report 2026-02 requesting that the City Manager work with the School Department, the Department of Public Works, and other relevant departments to ensure that all City Owned Parking lots, with a focus on school complexes, including the still under construction parking at Tobin/Darby Vassal school complex, could be made available for after-hours use by residents, we report the following:

In response to this policy order, the City has engaged in conversation with the School Department, who have in turn spent significant time evaluating the request and determining if it is possible to make school parking facilities available to residents in off-hours, while limiting access to the school building and maintaining safety.

The School Department has indicated they have serious safety concerns regarding opening underground parking facilities at the schools to the public. City staff joined School Department staff for a site visit at the King Open garage and shared some of the same safety concerns. As of now there has been no indication from the School Committee that they plan to take action to make the facilities available.

We are including here Superintendent David Murphy's response on this issue, as well as a memo from Chief Operating Officer Damon Smith laying out the physical safety concerns. Also included are the minutes from the June 12, 2025 School Committee Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee at which this topic was discussed.

While it does not seem like there is a path forward to make School parking available at this time, we will continue to look for opportunities to encourage and help private property owners to make privately owned parking more widely available.



David Murphy  
Superintendent  
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April 22, 2026

City Manager Yi-an Huang  
795 Massachusetts Ave  
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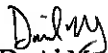
Dear Yi-An:

Thank you for your patience as we have reviewed the Policy Order 2025 #72. That review has included the consideration of this before the then-Buildings & Grounds Subcommittee last year, a tour with city officials of one of the facilities in question and internal discussions within our team. As I have discussed with Deputy City Manager Watkins, as outlined in the attached memo from the Chief Operating Officer summarizing those conversations, I believe there would need to be significant considerations taken into account were the school committee to authorize the general public's use of the parking garages located under the newly constructed schools, including King Open/CSUS. To date, no committee member has indicated an intention to move the governing body toward taking that action.

The primary reservation as articulated in the memo conveyed by Mr. Smith relates to the physical security of the garages. The underground parking facilities at the three newly constructed schools (King/PAUS, King Open/CSUS and Tobin/DVUS) each have numerous entrances and exits that are controlled by electronic key card. In the absence of a significant staffing commitment, we would have significant concerns about how the public could easily access the building in the manner that seems to be contemplated by this request. I believe I do speak on behalf of the school committee however when I note that we would be eager to accommodate any special requests either from the municipal government or community entities for particular events or occasions for which the use of our facilities could be helpful to the residents of Cambridge. If you think it would be helpful to either you or members of the city council for us to put together a group with representation from the city administration and/or community to consider specific times or ways we could support the need for safe and reliable parking, our team would be eager to do that.

Again to reiterate, the CPS team is eager to support the needs of the community in any way we can without compromising the operational integrity of the district's facilities. If we can find a way to ease the very real burdens that community members are experiencing in the vicinity of our schools, we would be happy to do so. Thank you.

Sincerely,

  
David Murphy



Damon Smith  
Interim Chief Operations Officer  
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## **Memo: CPS Parking & Public Access**

**To:** David Murphy, Superintendent  
**From:** Damon Smith, Interim Chief Operations Officer  
Vedad Konic, Director of Facilities

**Date:** February 4, 2026

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### **CPS Progress on Policy Order 2025 #72**

Following issuance of Policy Order 2025 #72, CPS administrative leaders met with the Department of Transportation to assess feasibility of opening CPS parking lots to the public during non school hours. In the spring of 2025 School Committee members, the Mayor's Education Liaison and Transportation department staff, went on a tour of the KO/ CSUS garage with CPS leaders to better inform the discussion about potential utilization of parking spaces. Following this event, on June 12, 2025 the Buildings and Grounds subcommittee of the Cambridge School Committee convened to discuss the matter. Notes from this meeting are available [via this link](#).

Following the KO/CSUS CPS parking lot tour, multiple meetings with leaders, and the Buildings and Grounds subcommittee meeting on 6/12, it is evident there are prohibitive operational, safety, and logistical barriers that make public access to CPS parking unfeasible at this time. The items below summarize a few of the challenges to opening CPS parking lots for public access.

#### **1. Security and Safety Risks**

Opening school parking facilities to the public presents major security challenges, particularly at sites where garage stairwells open directly into the building. Current facilities are designed for restricted use and require key card access, meaning significant adjustments would be necessary to allow for wider community use without compromising the safety of students and staff. Additionally, public access potentially provides opportunities for other matters and activities to occur in spaces that are not in public view or routinely monitored during non school hours.

#### **2. Operational Capacity and Staffing Constraints**

Due to existing responsibilities and duties, CPS operations teams would not be able to add public parking monitoring and guideline enforcement actions to existing work portfolios. Implementing public parking would likely require additional staffing and resources that are not currently available to manage new responsibilities, such as:

- Monitoring for vehicles left behind after hours.
- Arranging towing services to ensure staff are not disrupted during early-morning arrivals.
- Managing the logistics of overnight commercial or residential parking.

### **3. Logistical Challenges of Tandem Parking**

The physical layout of parking in many CPS garages is not conducive to general public use. For instance, the garage under King Open and Cambridge Street Upper School contains 80 tandem (front-to-back) spaces out of 105 total spots. Tandem parking also exists in both the CRLS and MLK/ PAUS parking garages. Managing these spaces typically requires drivers to leave contact information or utilize a valet system, which the district likely does not have the insurance or personnel to support.

### **4. High Existing Utilization**

The proposal to use lots when school is not in session does not take into account that CPS parking lots areas see consistent high usage throughout both the day and evening. The garage is considered a functional, active school space, and the limited number of regular (non-tandem) spots are often already reserved for central staff.

### **5. Liability and Management Responsibilities**

There is currently no clear framework for who would be legally and operationally responsible for a public parking program. Significant concerns remain regarding liability, the need for insurance to support complex parking arrangements (like valet services for tandem spots), and the potential for these new policies to interfere with core school operations.

I am available to discuss this matter further at your convenience.

June 12, 2025

**BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS SUBCOMMITTEE**

**Virtual Buildings and Grounds Subcommittee Report  
Thursday, June 12, 2025 at 5:30 p.m.  
Broadcast from the Media Studio  
454 Broadway, Cambridge, MA**

Called for the purpose of discussing the policy orders that the City Council has adopted related to exploring parking at CPSD secure parking lots and receive an update on Long-Range Facilities Condition Assessment.

Subcommittee Members Present: Member Rojas, (Chair), Member Hudson, Member Rachel

Other Members Present: Vice Chair Hunter

Others Present: Vedad Konjic, Director of Facilities; Lee McCanne, Chief Information Officer; David Murphy, Interim Superintendent of Schools; City Councillor, Patricia Nolan; Jeffrey Parenti, Assistant Commissioner for Street Management/Traffic Director, Cambridge Department of Transportation; Maggie Ravidou, Operations Manager, Office of the COO; Brendon Roy, Director of the Capital Building Projects Department for the City of Cambridge; Damon Smith, Interim Chief Operating Officer; Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler, City Councillor

**Chair Rojas** started the meeting at 5:30 p.m. and read the call of the meeting.

**Chair Rojas** highlighted the agreements of the meeting (below):

- Speak and listen from the heart (respect)
- Step up/step back (watch air time)
- Expect and accept non-closure (work in progress)
- Bike rack (list of things that are important but should be addressed another time)
- Public comment would be limited to 3 minutes to allow for a broader discussion.

**Chair Rojas** opened the meeting by asking attendees to share how they were spending their extra hours of daylight. He turned the meeting over to Interim Superintendent Murphy, who provided an update on the Long-Range Facilities and Conditions Assessment report completed by the DLR group. The report analyzes the school district's infrastructure, focusing on buildings built or renovated in the last 10 years.

Interim Superintendent Murphy discussed the financial capacity to launch building initiatives and the need for continued capital investment. He focused on the K-Lo building and explained plans to invest capital repairs to extend its shelf life. Interim Superintendent Murphy stated there will be a public meeting held on Monday, June 23, at to discuss the context of the school closure and the opportunities it presents. The public meeting will address specific investments planned for the FY26. He clarified that the K-Lo building will remain a Cambridge Public School building and emphasized the importance of community feedback. The community engagement process will be grounded in the goal of putting more CPS students in better positions to succeed.

Interim Superintendent Murphy turned the meeting over to City Councillor Patricia Nolan, who provided background on the origin of the City Council policy orders. The goal is to address parking challenges in the city by allowing public use of CPSD lots when school is not in session. **Member Hudson** raised concerns around liability, enforcement, and operational logistics related to community use of secure school parking lots. The discussion included the possibility of using underutilized parking areas, such as the garage under King Open, to support local businesses and residents.

June 12, 2025

## BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS SUBCOMMITTEE

**Chair Rojas** opened the floor for public comment. Given the time constraints, each speaker was allotted three minutes. The following caregivers and community members—Jason Alves, Anne Coburn, Patrick Magee—shared the following sentiments:

- Commercial use of CPSD parking spaces, stressing the need to balance school and community interests.
- The impact of lost parking on local businesses and proposed using King Open's garage to help alleviate pressure.
- Inquiries about updates on infrastructure planning and programming at other CPS sites such as Graham & Parks, Tobin, and Fletcher Maynard.

**Chair Rojas** turned the meeting over to Interim Chief Operating Officer Damon Smith, who provided insight on the use of parking at CPSD school buildings. He noted that there are 105 parking spaces total in the parking garage located under the King Open and Cambridge Street Upper School—including 20 single spaces and 80 tandem spaces (front to back). He stated that the garage requires key card access and adjustments would have to be made to allow wider community use. Mr. Smith emphasized the consistent high usage of the garage, reinforcing that it is a functional, active school space throughout the day and evening.

**Member Rachel** expressed appreciation for the public's desire to collaborate and support community parking needs, while emphasizing that student and staff safety must come first. She requested the Administration reach out to BPS to learn how they manage public parking access, including how they handle similar safety restrictions. **Member Hudson** suggested the district conduct a more detailed conversation with City Council to define who would be responsible for operational elements, such as managing overnight commercial/residential parking, monitoring for vehicles left behind, arranging towing services to avoid staff disruptions. She emphasized that CPSD's operations teams are already at capacity, and any added responsibilities would require dedicated resources. **Member Rachel** advocated for a full outline of possible parking models to avoid placing additional burden on school staff, particularly early-morning arrivals.

Director of the Projects Department, Brendon Roy emphasized the importance of ensuring that any policy changes do not interfere with school operations or compromise safety and security. He noted that CPSD is willing to collaborate with the city but reiterated that additional staffing and resources would be necessary to implement any expanded public use of parking facilities. Assistant Commissioner, Jeff Parenti explained that the City Council policy orders were intended to help alleviate neighborhood parking issues by exploring public use of CPSD lots during non-school hours. He acknowledged the security and operational concerns raised but emphasized the City's interest in continued collaboration with CPSD to find workable solutions.

**Vice Chair Hunter** raised safety concerns, noting that two garage doors open into the King Open school and most parking spaces are tandem, which requires drivers to leave contact info. She questioned how the setup could work without a valet and said the district likely doesn't have the insurance to support that. She added that the 20 regular spots are probably for central staff and urged the committee to think carefully before opening the garage to the public.

**Chair Rojas** closed the meeting at 7:00 p.m. by thanking participants and noting the need for continued community input, transparency, and urgency in addressing transportation and space issues.