



City of Cambridge

Executive Department

YI-AN HUANG
City Manager

CMA 2025 #232
IN CITY COUNCIL
September 15, 2025

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Please find attached a response to AR 25-42 relative to the pedestrianization of Lower Bow Street from the Cambridge Department of Transportation Commissioner, Brooke McKenna.

Very truly yours,

Yi-An Huang
City Manager





To: Yi-An Huang, City Manager
From: Brooke McKenna, Commissioner
Date: September 11, 2025
Subject: Awaiting Reports 2025-042

In response to awaiting reports 2025-042, requesting that the City Manager work with relevant City departments to continue to work with stakeholders in the area including Harvard University and the Harvard Square Business Association to pursue options for pedestrianization on Lower Bow Street and to report on the option for automatic bollards for Winthrop and/or Bow Street, we report the following:

Lower Bow Street, between Dewolfe Street and Plympton Street, has been closed for construction for several years, without causing significant impacts on the safety or functionality of the surrounding traffic patterns. This has demonstrated that from a traffic perspective, this location is an excellent opportunity for pedestrianization. In addition, during COVID, the adjacent restaurants, with front doors on Mt. Auburn Street, had robust outdoor dining on Bow Street with great success.

We have started conversations with stakeholders, including the Harvard Square Business Association, an adjacent restaurant owner, and Harvard University about pedestrianizing this area, with accommodations for vehicle access as needed. There is general agreement to move in this direction.

Given that activation of pedestrian spaces is key to their success, we plan to start the pedestrianization in the spring, to coincide with the start of the outdoor dining season. Between now and then, we will continue conversations and planning, including convening an even wider group of local stakeholders to discuss the details of how we will move forward.

We have not yet determined exactly what materials we will use to block the roadway and will work closely with stakeholders to determine the best path forward. However, the City continues to have serious reservations about the reliability, maintenance burdens, installation challenges, and costs of automatic bollards.