



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Chief of Admin/Operations

MELISSA PETERS
Chief of Planning Strategy

To: Yi-An Huang, City Manager
From: Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager for Community Development
Date: November 14, 2024
Re: Awaiting Report 24-36 dated June 24, 2024 re. coordinated and timely communication related to interjurisdictional transportation projects

The State of Massachusetts owns and manages a wide variety of transportation facilities in Cambridge. These include transit lines, bus facilities, roadways, parkways, traffic signals, underground utilities, and many bridges on both state and local roads. These assets are owned and managed by different state agencies – Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), and Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) being the principal among them. Maintenance and upkeep of these facilities requires both day-to-day operations and from time to time, long-term infrastructure improvements.

State agencies have several major capital transportation projects in various stages of planning and design. Staff from CDD, Department of Public Works, and the Traffic, Parking & Transportation Department coordinate with them, particularly on issues affecting Cambridge streets, neighborhood and utilities. Our goal is to advocate on behalf of the City's goals as articulated by the City Council and City plans and policies and to help manage the impact on Cambridge streets and neighborhoods.

INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION

Generally, state projects follow steps that may differ from city projects, and they may move at a somewhat slower pace due to planning, inter-agency coordination, funding or other reasons. When State agencies undertake a project in or impacting Cambridge, they are expected to initiate public outreach to keep City staff and the Cambridge community informed. Given the longer-term horizon of many projects, there has not always been a regular schedule of updates.

To try and better manage the flow of information, we recognize the value of regular coordination to share updates on projects and advocate for municipal priorities. Given the large number of MBTA projects impacting Cambridge in 2024, we have begun to test this process with MBTA. City staff from the City Manager's office, CDD, DPW, and TPT have scheduled quarterly meetings with MBTA staff to get the latest information on their upcoming projects, coordinate on city projects affecting MBTA, and discuss issues of mutual concern. In addition, we have project-specific meetings for projects that are in active phases where work is anticipated in the short term and greater, more frequent coordination is needed. This is a coordination model that we are working to replicate with MassDOT and DCR starting in 2025.

ON-GOING STATE PROJECTS

The following is a list of the most notable State projects in or affecting Cambridge that the State is currently pursuing. Projects are listed by agency.

MBTA PROJECTS

1. **MBTA Track Improvement Program**: The program began in 2023 and is a major track repair and replacement initiative to eliminate 191 speed restrictions, as of November 2023, and bring all tracks into a five-year state of good repair by the end of 2024” according to the MBTA website. This program includes work on tracks on the Red, Orange, Green, and Blue lines to
 - Enhance safety
 - Reduce delays and disruptions
 - Improve train speeds
 - Deliver timely, reliable, and consistent service for riders

Status: Per the MBTA, as of June 2024, the project has reduced the percentage of track under speed restriction to 8%. It has replaced 12,973 ties and 82,796 feet of rail, with additional improvements including 130 speed restrictions eliminated and 43 minutes returned to riders.



Next Steps: Completing this program by the end of 2024 is important to Cambridge residents and workers so that trains on the Red and Green line work as efficiently as possible for trips within and outside of Cambridge. More reliable train service will enable more people to choose transit over making trips by car within or through Cambridge.

2. **Bus Network Redesign**: The MBTA is updating the bus network to better match service to where people live, work, learn, and play. The Bus Network Redesign plan will update bus routes and schedules based on analysis and has taken substantial community feedback into account. The proposed changes to buses in Cambridge will add more frequent service, make better connections for riders to surrounding communities, and maintain the existing most of the local bus routes within Cambridge. Cambridge staff have given substantial input to the MBTA in this

process and meets regularly with MBTA on implementation issues such as creating more space for buses to wait when needed, and places where drivers can access restrooms.

Status: Changes to bus service will start with Phase I in December 2024. In Cambridge, this will include

- Shortening Route 86 to serve only Harvard to Reservoir station in Brookline and Boston
- Several improvements to Route 109
 - Extending the route to serve Linden Square in Revere to Harvard, serving the section of today's Route 86 between Harvard and Sullivan Sq.
 - Improving the frequency so that buses arrive at least every 15 minutes
 - Extending the hours of service to 4:30 a.m. to 1:45 a.m. on weekdays and 4:45 a.m. to 1:45 a.m. on weekends
- Riders who travel on today's Route 86 through Harvard will transfer between Routes 86 and 109 at Harvard station upper busway to travel toward Sullivan or on Mass Ave at Dawes Island to travel toward Reservoir

Future changes for routes in Cambridge include:

- New all-day and all-week frequent bus routes serving Central, Kendall, and Lechmere Squares
- New frequent route between Kendall and Lechmere Squares where no MBTA bus currently travels
- New frequent and local bus service to eastern Cambridge on weekends
- Some reductions in hours of service on local bus routes like Route 68 on Broadway

Next Steps: These route changes will take place beginning in 2025 and continue in phases until 2029. [Here is the final report](#) on the Bus Network Redesign.

3. **Bus Shelter Program:** There are currently 66 stops with bus shelters in Cambridge that give bus riders a place to wait or sit out of the weather. Since 2004, The City and MBTA have worked together to provide shelters to riders where maintenance of the shelters is provided by an MBTA vendor and paid for through print advertising in shelters. Un-used advertising space has also been used many times for public service announcements of city programs. There are 40 stops with advertising bus shelters.

The MBTA currently has a new program and vendor to provide these services, with expanded options for real time bus arrival information for riders and different shelter sizes to fit in narrower spaces. Digital advertising is an integral part of this program to help pay for expanded amenities. Digital ads will be visible at all times on the new advertising panels, but, will not be moving or animated images. Real time bus arrival information would always be available on a separate screen in the shelter. Public service announcements will also be available to the city through an online portal where PSA submissions can be sent to the MBTA street furniture program. Additional digital advertising may take the form of stand-alone kiosks with digital displays showing advertising with real time bus arrivals in a dedicated space on a part of the digital display. These kiosks would also have wayfinding and mapping available with touch or button activation.



Status: The MBTA’s vendor is currently maintaining shelters in the city while the City negotiates a new agreement with MBTA on the specifics of new and replacement shelters, and the role of digital advertising.

Next Steps: After an agreement with MBTA is executed, city staff and MBTA will begin to review locations for new or replacement shelters based on higher bus boardings, shelter condition and other factors.

4. **Alewife Maintenance Tunnel:** The MBTA is designing a hi-rail access tunnel for vehicles to complete work along the [Red Line](#). Currently, the only access tunnel for these vehicles is at [Charles/MGH](#) station and the new tunnel will enable shorter and less frequent Red Line shutdowns, faster commutes, and bring the MBTA closer to a [state of good repair](#).

Status: After review of various sites, MBTA has chosen a location on IQHQ property near the loop road from Alewife Station to the Rt. 2/16 intersection. This location was identified by MBTA for allowing uninterrupted storage of Red Line trains, for being away from the neighboring residences and site access for construction. It is being designed with flood mitigation in mind.

From the MBTA website “The soil at the construction site is contaminated with asbestos, semi-volatile organic compounds, and potentially metals. To keep the surrounding neighborhood safe during construction, crews will:

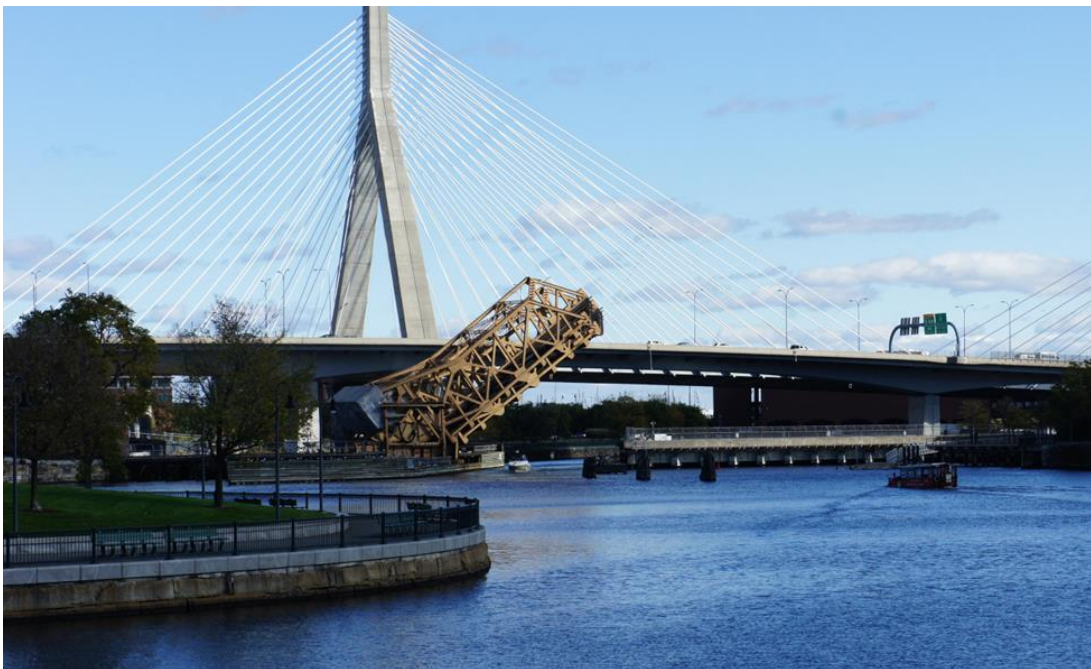
- Excavate soil under a plan approved by the [Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection \(MassDEP\)](#)
- Transport contaminated soil off-site immediately after excavating

Plan documents have been sent to the MassDEP Northeast Regional Office and are available on the MassDEP data portal.” [View the MassDEP data portal](#)

A recording of the public meeting on the project from Sept. 30 204 is here: [Public Meeting | Red Line Hi-Rail Access Tunnel Project \(Virtual\) | Events | MBTA](#)

Next Steps: City staff are continuing to meet with the MBTA on design issues and hazardous waste containment related to construction. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2026 and finish in 2028.

5. Draw One Bridge / Upstream Bridge: The MBTA is designing a replacement and expansion for the North Station Draw One Bridge to bring it to a state of good repair and increase safety for riders taking the [Haverhill](#), [Lowell](#), [Newburyport/Rockport](#), and [Fitchburg](#) Commuter Rail lines. The drawbridge crosses over the Charles River. It currently has two moveable spans with four tracks. Existing piers are supporting the spans already in place. The new drawbridge will have three moveable spans with additional tracks.



Status: In the past, the project considered options to include a bicycle/pedestrian connection that was a commitment of the Central Artery/Tunnel project. This connection is not currently being considered by MBTA and its not clear if another state agency is going to lead this project. City staff have met with MBTA staff to clarify the project plans and are coordinating with the City of Boston and Somerville to try and advance this priority project.

Next Steps: Cambridge staff will continue to coordinate with Boston and surrounding communities, as well as nearby businesses, to ask the state to assign the project to an agency and dedicate funding to the project.

6. Alewife Parking Garage Redevelopment: The MBTA's Alewife Garage has significant structural issues and needs replacement. To fund the replacement of the garage and station, the MBTA is looking to partner with a private developer to create a new mixed-use development to address multiple priorities as detailed on the MBTA website:

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- **Infrastructure Modernization:** Overhauling aging systems, incorporating state-of-the-art technology to improve service reliability and rider experience, including upgrading signaling systems, improving platform accessibility and real-time information displays.
 - **Multimodal Integration:** Connecting various transportation modes, including subway, bus, commuter rail, and last-mile solutions such as bike-sharing and electric vehicle charging stations.
 - **Climate Resilience:** Incorporating advanced flood mitigation strategies and green infrastructure to protect against climate change impacts.
 - **Transit-Oriented Development (TOD):** Creating a vibrant community hub, with potential for housing, retail, and office spaces directly integrated with the transit facility.
 - **Sustainability:** Prioritizing energy efficiency, utilizing renewable energy sources and implementing water conservation measures to minimize the station's environmental footprint.

Status: MBTA is looking to partner with a private developer in this redevelopment of the garage and potentially nearby parcels. They have initiated the early stages of the procurement and have been in close coordination with the City and the next stage of our Alewife planning work is expected to include close involvement of the MBTA and their selected development partner.

The City also worked with MBTA to secure funding for a commuter rail study for a station at Alewife which is now underway. The study will last approximately six months and the MBTA has agreed to share the results of the study with the public at the appropriate time.

Next Steps: A developer is expected to be chosen in 2025 to begin the redevelopment process planning, and a report on the commuter rail demand study is also expected.

MASSDOT PROJECTS

7. Reid Overpass/BU Rotary: The Reid Overpass over the BU Bridge rotary on Memorial Drive has had significant repairs in the past and will require additional work in the future or replacement. It could also be removed if the structure is deemed unnecessary from the transportation perspective. Funding is on the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that could be used for repairs, replacement or removal and reconstruction of the intersection.

Status: MassDOT has been gathering data and reviewing the existing conditions of the structure and area, as well as reviewing various intersection control strategies as part of its [ICE process](#). MassDOT has committed to hold one or more neighborhood meetings to review options before any design decisions have been made. The Cambridgeport Neighborhood Association held a meeting in October 2024 to gather neighbor's thoughts on traveling through the area by walking, biking and bus.

Next Steps: Additional information and community engagement are anticipated for the winter of 2025.

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8. Allston I-90: Since the spring of 2014, MassDOT and its Design Team have been developing a concept for the replacement of the Allston Interchange that is more compact and allows significant development of the surrounding Harvard-owned property.

The project, once complete will have many benefits and changes according to the project website that include:

- Improved livability, connectivity, and open space for residents of the Allston neighborhood
- Improved regional mobility and roadway safety with the straightening of I-90. The project will also shrink the Allston interchange.
- Replacing the aging Allston Viaduct, decreasing the need for traffic-impacting maintenance on this section of I-90
- Creating a new open space along the Charles River
- Complete Streets improvements to Cambridge Street
- Enhanced bicycle and pedestrian connections
- Significant transit enhancements with the new West Station and Commuter Rail layover facility, providing greater access and improvements to the Commuter Rail and local bus service
- Removing elevated bridge structure allows for an improved gateway into the city and enhanced neighborhood views.
- Allows for an attractive and highly desired pedestrian/bicycle connection from Agganis Way to Charles River.



Status: The planning and design for the project are on-going. Cambridge has had a staff and a neighborhood representative on the project task force for the last eight years. For Cambridge, important neighborhood priorities throughout the project have included reducing traffic noise from the Mass Pike, reducing the visual impact of the turnpike on the viaduct, and improving green space around the Charles River Basin. After many years of design iterations, a final design concept has been identified and gone through initial permitting. Currently, working-groups of

task force members are meeting with MassDOT on design details for some of the more difficult design challenges.

Next Steps: For next steps, MassDOT intends to file a joint MEPA Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Report and NEPA Draft Environmental Impact Statement which is expected in 2025. The environmental permitting process is likely to continue into 2025. No construction timeline has been released.

9. Alewife Brook Parkway Bridge

MassDOT's reconstruction on this bridge will include replacing the bridge superstructure which carries Alewife Brook Parkway, US Route 3, Route 16, and Route 2 over the MBTA Redline tunnel. The project goal is to improve the safety and capacity of the bridge while limiting impacts to the roadway users, abutting properties, and path networks in and around the project site.

Status: A public meeting was held in Feb. 27, 2024 and the presentation can be viewed at the link [here](#). MBTA is meeting with abutting stakeholders to continue coordination.

Next Steps: City staff are continuing to work with MassDOT to finalize detour plans for two weekend shutdowns of the Linear Path which goes under the bridge and connects to the Minuteman Bikeway.

DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION PROJECTS

10. BU Rotary Redesign: DCR is "actively working to introduce protective measures along Memorial Drive from Magazine Street to Audrey Street via the BU Bridge rotary to accommodate more than \$1.5 million in safety upgrades for pedestrians and cyclists". This work is immediately following the tragic death of a cyclist on the narrow sidewalk near the BU Boathouse.

Status: In the short-term, the DCR work consists of:

- Widening of the sidewalks leading to the BU rotary to provide a 10-12-foot-wide raised shared-use path for a total of approximately 1200 linear feet on the river side of Memorial Drive.
- Improving and reconfiguring wheelchair ramps and median islands at the intersection of Memorial Drive and the BU Bridge.
- Replacing nearly 700 linear feet of existing Boston Pattern Fence.
- Restriping the crosswalks to include the green paint for the bike crossings.
- Implementing a speed limit reduction to 25 mph along the BU Bridge corridor

Next Steps: In the long-term, DCR is working with MassDOT on the Reid Overpass project that will redesign the intersection of Memorial Drive and the BU Bridge. This project also involves the installation of new signal equipment.

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11. **Memorial Drive Reconstruction III:** The Memorial Drive Phase III project is just under one mile in length. The project limits go from the Eliot Bridge, just west of the Cambridge Boat House, to JFK Street at the Anderson Memorial Bridge in Cambridge.

According to the project website “The project includes numerous parkway and parkland improvements that will provide a safer experience for motor vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians that travel through this segment of Memorial Drive and the Charles River Reservation. One of the primary goals of the project is to reduce the existing parkway cross section from 4 lanes to 2 lanes in the parkway segment where traffic impacts will be minimal. Existing lane capacity and cross-section will not be altered at the western and eastern project limits where vehicle storage is needed to achieve acceptable traffic operations (see attached “Lane & Signalized Crossing Plan”). Minimal roadway lane changes are proposed at Gerrys Landing Road and JFK Street signal locations.

Project features include:

- New, updated traffic and pedestrian signals are proposed at Hawthorn Street where there is strong public demand for safer access to the Charles River Reservation.
- Two new mid-block crossings with pedestrian actuated signal control opposite Sparks Street and the westerly end of JFK Park will facilitate pedestrian and bicyclist access to/from the riverfront and parkland amenities.
- New historically appropriate, DCR standard, ornamental light poles are proposed to replace existing cobra head poles along the parkway.
- expanded parkland and new trees; a wider (11-foot) bike and pedestrian path; a new 5-foot stone dust path along the river for pedestrians only; 56 new native tree plantings; native shrub plantings;
- 24 new London Plane Tree plantings; improved health for the existing historic London Plane Tree Allee



Status: The process included three public meetings and smaller meetings with stakeholders. The presentation from the last public meeting in June of 2022 is [here](#).

Next Steps: A final public information meeting is anticipated as mentioned on the DCR website. It also states that DCR anticipates to bid the project in early 2025 and begin construction in the spring of 2025.

PROJECT INFORMATION PLAN

The city relies on state agency information and web pages since those have the latest and most reliable information on projects. Since not all projects have web pages available, City staff participates in regular meetings with agencies to gather up to date information on projects.

In order to consolidate information to keep residents, businesses and public safety officials informed about interjurisdictional projects, the city could provide a web page listing all state projects with a link on the City’s website to the state’s project website, give basic information about the project intent, location, meetings and any schedule information made available.

If desired, we could also provide periodic updates on current projects, like the chart below, to the Transportation and Public Utilities Committee.

<u>PROJECT NAME</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SUMMARY</u>	<u>CURRENT STAGE/NEXT STEPS</u>
MBTA			
MBTA Track Improvements	Red Line and Green Line in Cambridge	Replace and repair tracks to eliminate slow zones	75% complete & 100% completion by end of 2024
Bus Network Redesign	MBTA Bus service area	Bus system changes for efficiency and expansion	Phase I implementation starting in 2025
Bus Shelters	66 locations	Shelter installation, maintenance & digital advertising	Program agreement discussions on going. Next steps will finalize program elements and digital advertising
Alewife Maint. Tunnel	Off driveway to IQHQ	New entrance to Red Line tunnel for maintenance vehicles to improve repair times	In 75% design w/ DEP filings on haz. material containment. Construction anticipated in 2026/27
Draw One Bridge / Upstream Bridge	Charles River - N. Point to Boston	Add capacity for commuter rail tracks on new bridge. No clear agency leading planning for a pedestrian/bicycle bridge	75% design. Construction timeframe anticipated 2027-2028
Alewife Parking Garage Redevelopment	Reconstruct & develop around Alewife station.	Replace garage & finance thru private development around it. Review commuter rail station demand	Project launch & areawide planning contracts, commuter rail demand study are on-going. Developer selection in 2025, report on commuter rail demand study findings

MassDOT			
Reid Overpass/BU Rotary	Mem. Dr./Brookline St /BU Bridge	Analysis of reconstruction options	Existing conditions analysis of overpass and rotary are on-going. Determine if overpass will be re-built and how rotary intersection could be re-designed
Allston I-90	Allston rail yards & SFR to BU Bridge	Highway interchange, street grid and parkland	Final design & permitting
Alewife Brook Prkwy Bridge	Between Alewife Station & headhouse	Bridge replacement	75% final design is on-going with detour details still in progress. Anticipated 2025-26 construction.
DCR			
BU Rotary Redesign	Cambridge end of BU Bridge on Memorial Drive	Immediate changes to widen pathways along river, fencing and paint. Longer term rethinking for safety of all modes, bus operations and congestion	Advocates have design ideas for more immediate changes. No formal design process has begun
Memorial Drive Reconstruction III	JFK St. to Gerry's Landing Rd.	Lane reduction & path/park expansion	Funding/bidding phase anticipated in 2025