

To: Richard C. Rossi, City Manager
From: Brian P. Murphy, Assistant City Manager for Community Development
Date: December 2, 2014
Re: Council Order #10 dated October 20, 2014 regarding Hubway membership

With respect to the above-referenced council order, we would like to report the following.

Under-representation of Some Populations

The under-representation of some segments of the population in the bicycling community is well documented and considered to be largely unrelated to cost. As a result of targeted effort, this is changing (see, for example, http://bikeleague.org/sites/default/files/equity_report.pdf).

Consistent across all segments of the population is that concerns about safety and having adequate and safe facilities are determining factors in whether people choose to bicycle. These issues are being addressed through the City's Bicycle Network Plan, currently under way.

Perceptual issues about bicycling also remain; in one study, African Americans were more than twice as likely as whites (38% vs 14%) to agree that their perception of bicyclists would improve if people on bikes represented a "broader cross section of Americans, such as women, youth and people of color" in their community.

We are seeking to address the issue of underrepresentation with bicycling in our community, and are pursuing efforts on multiple fronts to identify the specific barriers to Hubway use in Cambridge. Over the past 12 months, CDD staff has worked closely with the Cambridge Public Health Department and the Community Engagement Team (a City program that hires community outreach workers to do deep outreach on various topics in their native communities) to host a series of focus groups and programming efforts with the goal of better-engaging immigrant and low-income communities in our bicycle programming. In the focus groups, a few major barriers to bicycling were articulated, including the opinions that "bikeshare is not for us," and that people did not feel comfortable riding on urban streets. As a result of these sessions, several strategies for overcoming barriers were proposed:

- Hosting of a series of Hubway ads that show immigrants and families using bikes for everyday transportation. These ads will be launched in spring 2015.
- Hosting a series of bicycle education workshops in 2015 so that community members can feel more comfortable bicycling in Cambridge.
- The Community Engagement Team hosted a cultural competency "Train the Trainer" workshop for the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition (MassBike) staff. This was extremely beneficial for both MassBike and City staff. The Community Engagement Team went door-to-door and invited community members to a classroom workshop focused on Urban Cycling and Hubway Basics, and an on-bike training to teach community members firsthand how to navigate the streets of Cambridge on a bike. The two workshops had over 50 participants.

Perceptual issues have been identified elsewhere in the Hubway system. Six of the nine lowest-ridership Hubway stations are in neighborhoods of Boston that are primarily low-income and minority. While this is partly due to the fact that the stations are on the edge of the system, this is

not the only factor, as these six stations in majority-minority neighborhoods are outperformed by nearly all of the other edge stations in the system. The average number of trips per day starting or ending at the six stations in majority-minority neighborhoods is only 37% of the average trips per day for the other edge stations

These patterns of lower use for stations in low-income and minority neighborhoods led the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) to investigate the importance of sociocultural factors in rates of bike share use. In those focus groups, participants expressed a lack of identification with bike share users, and even cyclists in general. There was a sense that bike share is targeted toward “hipsters” and professionals, while the focus group participants who are cyclists often feel like they don’t conform with either the typical idea of who rides a bike, or the cultural expectations of the groups that they do identify with (e.g. African-Americans; working-class; moms).

It should be noted that Cambridge has a more even distribution of Hubway stations throughout the city, and the areas with higher concentrations of low-income and minority residents do have bike share stations—usually several—within walking distance. The pattern of station use in Cambridge does not identify an issue on this neighborhood demographic basis.

Logistical Issues

Both the Cambridge and MAPC outreach initiatives identified two key logistical barriers to Hubway use, which are in the process of being addressed system-wide. Many community members are under the impression that the cost of Hubway membership is higher than it actually is.. Once people were educated about the real costs of membership, they did not consider it too expensive. We heard this comment most frequently from immigrant parents.

The logistical barriers being addressed are:

1. Removal of the \$100 hold on debit cards for casual users. This practice proved to be an impediment for some people, and lead to some unfortunate misunderstandings about the true cost of using the system. This is being changed and will no longer be an issue.
2. Offering a monthly installment option for annual membership. For some people, the ability to pay monthly makes things considerably easier, particularly when it is understood that the cost is only \$7/month.

Grant for Expanded Outreach

We have applied for a grant to undertake expanded outreach, entitled “Hubway For All: Access and Engagement Program,” through the Better Bike Share Partnership. This grant would enable us to use multiple strategies to outreach to and engage with communities who do not currently use Hubway. The project is centered on efforts to educate low-income residents and immigrant communities as well as residents who do not typically participate in bike share on how to use Hubway and sign up for membership, while gathering feedback from residents on how to improve Hubway and make it more relevant to their lives.

An ad campaign, now in development, will proactively invite low-income, minority, and immigrant community members to participate in the system, using images that people can readily identify with, and with phrases translated into a number of languages. This spring, full-size posters will be placed in Hubway stations featuring these images and messages. The pending grant would enable us to expand the scope of informational and outreach materials that will also be produced in a number of languages.

A major component of the grant request is the hiring of a part-time Bike share Ambassador to assist community members in registering for Hubway, manage the Bike share Road Show, attend tenant council meetings, host outreach events at housing developments, visit social clubs to talk to the community about bike share, and conduct deep outreach into the community to determine where to best site new stations in target neighborhoods. Cambridge would also host a series of bicycle education classes aimed towards immigrant communities. The first step will be to host another cultural competency “Train-the-Trainers” program with MassBike, whereby we will instill some knowledge of hosting a workshop for community members who may not speak English as a first language. At least 4 workshops will be hosted, each one catered to a different language group, and including interpretation, childcare, and food. Each participant will receive a free bicycle helmet.

A small portion of the grant will enable us to offer a modestly reduced rate (\$50) for those who participate in bicycle education classes and already qualify for other city subsidy programs, such as affordable housing. Through this, we can have a way to determine the relative importance of all the other efforts and the significance of a reduction in the initial membership cost.

Partners in this proposed collaboration include: the Cambridge Health Alliance’s Family Pathways Project and Volunteer Health Advisor Program; Cambridge Public Health Dept. Men’s Health League; and public housing tenants’ councils.

The grant also includes an evaluation component to help us determine whether this intervention is successful in providing what people need in order to choose the bike share system. We expect to hear about the grant this winter.