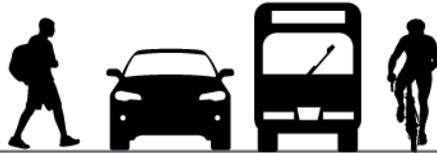


Mount Auburn Street



A Complete Streets **Project**

Town Council Committee on Public Works Meeting: Summary ***School Street to Cambridge City Line***

October 30, 2018 – Open House at 6:00 PM; Meeting at 7:00 PM

Town Hall, Administration Building, 149 Main Street, Watertown, MA

Present

[Town of Watertown Attendees](#)

Superintendent Gerald Mee, Matthew Shuman, and Dennis Sheehan, Department of Public Works (DPW)
Laura Wiener, Community Development & Planning
Sergeant David Sampson, Watertown Police Department

[Town Council Public Works Committee Members](#)

Councilor Vincent Piccirilli
Councilor Tony Palomba
Councilor Ken Woodland

[Additional Town Councilors](#)

Council President Mark Sideris
Councilor Anthony Donato
Councilor Susan Falkoff
Councilor Lisa Feltner
Councilor Angeline Kounelis

[Project Team Attendees](#)

Rich Benevento, Bill Mertz, and Kristopher Surette, WorldTech Engineering (WTE)
Sarah Paritsky, Regina Villa Associates (RVA)

[Public Attendees](#)

A list of public attendees can be found at the end of this document.

Materials (available on [project website](#))

- Presentation
- Corridor Segment and Kimball Road Alternatives Handouts
- Coolidge Square Rendering Boards
- Coolidge Square traffic simulation
- Conceptual Design Roll Plan

Presentation

Councilor Vincent Piccirilli, Chair of the Town Council Committee on Public Works, said the Committee on Public Works is tasked with a detailed review of the Mount Auburn Street project based on the conceptual design presented to the Town Council on July 10, 2018. This meeting was focused on Mount Auburn Street from School Street to the Cambridge City Line.

Kris Surette, WTE, reviewed the meeting agenda and recent project history and public outreach activities. He described the outcome of the Coolidge Square Road Safety Audit (RSA) conducted in December 2017 and the existing parking inventory in Coolidge Square (between Dexter Avenue and Arlington Street). He said the project proposes additional parking in the vicinity of the Bigelow Avenue intersection.

K. Surette described ridership and bus stop spacing in the corridor. He said the team frequently hears concerns from local businesses about loading/unloading for customers and deliveries.

Dexter Avenue to Irma Avenue

K. Surette presented the design for Mount Auburn Street from Dexter Avenue to Irma Avenue. This segment includes the installation of rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) at the Upland Road/Dexter Avenue crossing.

Irma Avenue to Arlington Street

Between Irma Avenue and Arlington Street, the design includes changes to access from Kimball Road to Mount Auburn Street, "do not block the box" signage at Arlington Street/Bigelow Avenue. K. Surette presented three alternatives for the intersection:

- Alternative 1, presented in July 2018, maximizes parking spaces, improves sight lanes, deters cut-through traffic, shortens pedestrian crossing distances with a bumpout, and creates a potential placemaking area. It requires making Kimball Road one-way to the first driveway, thereby removing it from the signalized intersection. The crosswalk is in front of the existing bus stop and there are some pedestrian and transit drawbacks.
- Alternative 2 is similar to Alternative 1 but relocates the bus stop to the far side of the intersection and removes the bumpout. He said there is an opportunity to integrate the bus stop and the placemaking area, but it requires the loss of three parking spaces compared to Alternative 1 (there is still a gain of three parking spaces compared to the existing condition).
- Alternative 3 is modeled after the existing geometry and maintains Kimball Road as two-way within the Mount Auburn Street signalized intersection.

K. Surette explained that based on the RSA, the team prefers Alternatives 1 and 2. While all three concepts are feasible, the team recommends Alternative 2. It increases the total amount of legal parking within the Coolidge Square Business District (43 proposed versus 40 existing) and offers transit benefits based on the bus stop location.

Discussion

Councilor Piccirilli invited public comments on the three alternatives.

- Carol Tierney asked about bike safety between Bigelow Avenue and Arlington Street and said sharrows are needed there now. K. Surette said the project proposes a 5-foot bike lane with a 2-foot painted roadside buffer to prevent “dooring.”
- Councilor Anthony Donato said he is excited about the signalized crosswalks and the placemaking area because of his concerns about traffic in the intersection. K. Surette clarified that Kimball Road would remain two-way, but there would be a do-not-enter sign at Mount Auburn Street. There would be signage at Maplewood Street that notifies drivers that Kimball Road is not a through-street. No Kimball Road residents were present.
- Councilor Susan Falkoff asked why Kimball Road wouldn’t be one-way. K. Surette explained it allows local drivers to drive both ways to access their homes.
- Sheila Fay said she likes biking on Kimball Road because it is flat. She suggested keeping Kimball Road two-way to allow drivers access from Maplewood Street.
- Jean Dunoyer said Kimball Road should be one-way all the way to Maplewood Street. He asked about loading zones. K. Surette said if trucks don’t have other options, they might use the bike lane. J. Dunoyer suggested that if people could make shorter errands on their bikes there would be less traffic and better air quality. He thinks more people will ride their bikes as a result of this project.
- Michael Wilkins said he is concerned that under Alternative 2, cars will park in the bus stop to run into Dunkin Donuts. He asked where the memorial in the square will go. K. Surette said it will be included in the placemaking area.
- David Ferris said he supports Alternative 1 or 2. He said he thinks Kimball Road should be a two-way out of consideration for the residents. He asked how landscaping and street lighting will be treated. K. Surette said once the travel lanes and curb lines are established, that would be part of 75% design.
- A business owner in Coolidge Square asked how deliveries will be made to local businesses and where 18-wheelers should park. He reiterated a concern that cars will be parked in the bus stop next to Dunkin Donuts. Councilor Piccirilli noted that trucks currently unload on Main Street which is two lanes. K. Surette said the team is considering dedicating hours for metered spaces as loading zones, or spaces on side streets (Kimball Road or Dexter Avenue). Matthew Shuman, Watertown Department of Public Works (DPW), explained the project is trying to improve bike and pedestrian facilities while accommodating trucks. While a truck might block the bike lane to unload, it is better to have a bike lane during the majority of the time when a truck isn’t present. The curb to curb width of the road is staying the same. The business owner suggested painting sharrows instead of bike lanes. K. Surette said that bicycle lanes are required for Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) funding.

- Pilar Conde said she lives in Watertown but does not have off-street parking. She asked if there are plans to build a parking lot for visitors. Laura Wiener, Watertown Community Development and Planning, said the Town is conducting a parking study and will have two public meetings on December 5 and 10. She cautioned that there is no place to build additional parking lots. Councilor Falkoff said she doesn't understand why there can't be shared parking with businesses, such as CVS and Tufts. Councilor Piccirilli agreed.
- Gael Williams described bus delays at Fresh Pond Parkway that have been addressed. She said the bus stop was moved in July and told the story of a tree that was cut down in August. She expressed concern for small businesses and referenced the decision made by the Committee at the October 16 meeting. She encouraged residents to support local businesses, contact the Tree Warden, the Barr Foundation, and Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack. She asked for a vote by the people. M. Shuman said the Tree Warden deemed the tree a hazard and removed it. He said the Town values trees and plans to plant some as part of this project. He offered to speak with G. Williams more after the meeting and said Wes Edwards, MBTA, and Tegin Teich, City of Cambridge, can talk more about the bus priority pilot. M. Shuman said an abutter asked to have the bus stop relocated at the Transit Public Meeting in February. The relocation of the bus stop worked well with the dedicated bus lane and was shared with the Traffic Commission.¹
- Dawn Slaven said she lives on Dexter Avenue and doesn't like the idea of pushing the delivery trucks onto residential streets. She asked about the expected bicycling rates and how the safety audit was conducted. K. Surette said the RSA was an effort between the Town, WorldTech, MassRIDES, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the Fire Department, and others who visit the site and identify issues in real-time. M. Shuman acknowledged that bicycle ridership is low, but there is pent up demand due to unsafe conditions. The goal is to balance the needs of all users and be consistent with the Town's Complete Streets policy, as well as MassDOT's Healthy Streets initiative. He said this is a compromise and some cyclists have requested off-road bike paths.
- Councilor Angeline Kounelis said the Town Council (without her vote) has already voted for one lane in each direction. She said there are two lanes headed east at Arlington Street, but only one lane heading west. She expressed concerns about traffic backups at various intersections and merging onto Mount Auburn Street from the side streets. She said the Police Department will hold motorists accountable to the lane markings. She said she received a response to her inquiry in July. She doesn't know where trucks would park on Dexter Avenue.
- Andy Compagna said he has watched the plan develop and is looking forward to implementation. He pointed out safety issues with using bike lanes as loading zones. He said there are laws that ban parking in bike lanes statewide. He said he has been a bike commuter to Boston for many years, but he won't ride on Mount Auburn Street because it is dangerous.
- Sinead Barry-O'Brien said she is excited to see the designs. She wants to support the businesses in Coolidge Square and believes there are benefits to the businesses with the design. She shared concerns with the grade, signage, bus lane and parking at Cottage Street.

¹ There was also a public meeting for the project in May 2017.

- Councilor Lisa Feltner said there is support for safety changes and pedestrian improvements, but the hard balance is parking for businesses and large delivery trucks. She said trucks are parked for an hour near her house and asked the team to consider handicapped pedestrians.
- Dennis Duff suggested making Wells Avenue two-way, closing Bigelow to Mount Auburn Street, and creating a plaza. He proposed an increase of handicapped parking spaces in Coolidge Square and fixing curb cuts at the parking lot. K. Surette said the parking analysis does not identify handicapped spaces, but that will be determined in the next stage of design.
- Christina Gordon said she is often in a hurry and would like to drive in the bike/bus lane and asked if it will be okay. Sgt. David Sampson said drivers can only be in a bus lane if they are turning into a driveway.
- Libby Shaw said she is troubled by Gael's story about the loss of a tree. She said existing shade trees are important and she thinks greenspace should be planned for from the very beginning. She said the Complete Streets concept is good for bicyclists but does not take into account landscaping until late in the process. K. Surette said one of the goals of this project is to maintain existing shade trees through the corridor, which is a benefit of keeping current curb lines.
- David Ferris said having public hearings and hiring consultants is to everyone's benefit. He asked if businesses can load behind the buildings and temporary loading zones before 9 am. He confirmed there is a left turn lane heading west onto Arlington Street.
- Robin Bernstein said she is glad Option 3 was removed. She advocated for Option 2 because it creates the possibility for a future bus shelter. This encourages more people to take the bus and is better for cars too. She said if there are parking issues at the bus stop, the Town should enforce the law with stiff fines and ask Dunkin Donuts to warn its customers. Sgt. Sampson noted this is a heavily enforced area.
- L. Shaw said she is worried that limited parking at Dunkin Donuts could affect their business. Councilor Piccirilli clarified there is still parking on that block and noted the bus stop is further west of existing parking. K. Surette said that block is gaining 6 parking spots.

Councilor Piccirilli said the Committee takes parking very seriously. He reviewed the three alternatives for Coolidge Square. He received an email from a resident of Kimball Road who supported Alternative 3 and would like to prevent cut-through traffic. He believes Alternatives 1 and 2 reduce cut-through traffic, one of the goals of this project, and are the two best options. He held an informal poll and said there was a slight preference for Alternative 2. K. Surette said by removing Kimball Road from the signalized intersection and preventing left turns, there will be less backup. M. Shuman said the engineers looked at making Kimball Road two-way with right-turn only, but it was too close to the intersection and didn't work.

Councilor Tony Palomba said he supports Alternative 2 because it allows for Transit Signal Priority. Councilor Ken Woodland said increase both parking and safety, and synchronize signals. He thinks Alternative 2 is best but has concerns about people parking in the bus stop and education is important. Councilor Woodland made a motion to endorse Alternative 2 and all Committee members voted affirmatively.

School Street to Dexter Avenue

This segment includes a proposed crosswalk at Langdon Avenue supported with RRFBs, a nearside bus stop, and formalized parking and bumpouts on Boylston Street. The team has received feedback about the crosswalk at Langdon Avenue and potentially moving it towards Winsor Avenue. In that case, there would be three crosswalks within 500 feet of each other, and this location it is at the straightest part of the corridor. Discussions about the location of this crosswalk are ongoing.

Discussion

- Councilor Palomba confirmed that when a truck can't find parking, it will use the bike lane, and cyclists will need to move into the traffic lane.
- S. Fay said she is grateful for the majority of the plan. She said biking on Mount Auburn Street is hazardous and her client was hit in a crosswalk. She would like the crosswalks to be raised slightly to reduce puddling in ramps and to reduce accidents.
- An attendee described illegal parking and safety issues at Dexter Avenue. She would like traffic to be slowed in this location.
- Councilor Palomba asked about improvements at Dexter Avenue. K. Surette said there will be bumpouts at three of the four corners.

Arlington Street to Cambridge City Line

This segment includes a relocated bus stop at the far side of Cottage Street, removes a curb extension to accommodate space for a funeral procession, reduces the bus landing at Cottage Street to gain parking spaces, and incorporates the Watertown-Cambridge Bus Priority Pilot.

K. Surette highlighted the Arlington Street/Grove Street intersection reconfiguration. This includes reclaimed public space that could be used for placemaking or landscaping. The revised intersection incorporates the Tufts building entrance.

Discussion

- Councilor Palomba said he is happy to see that the Arlington Street/Grove Street intersection is signalized.
- Mike Wilkins agreed with Councilor Palomba but believes there will be more growth in the area. He suggested extending the Coolidge Square Business District as far east as Prentiss Street. He asked if the state can override the decisions made tonight. K. Surette said the team will submit a set of plans to MassDOT and the engineers will comment on the design. He expects a few changes to the design. M. Wilkins suggested looking at loading zones during some hours but believes delivery drivers don't have a predictable schedule.

Summary/Conclusions and Next Steps

K. Surette said the Department of Community Development & Planning is conducting a parking study focused on parking regulations, with the first public meeting in December 2018. He added that the considerations during the alternatives analysis of the Kimball Road intersection layout include safe pedestrian crossings, transit benefits, increase parking in business districts, and emergency response; coordination is ongoing with the Watertown Police and Fire Departments. He mentioned the [traffic](#)

[simulation](#) which was on view during the Open House. Next, K. Surette said a report will be shared with the Town Council for review. Once the Town Council approves the design, the team will submit a 25% Design to MassDOT.

Councilor Piccirilli proposed submitting the design as it stands to MassDOT for 25% design. All Committee members voted affirmatively. Councilor Piccirilli said the 2006 MassDOT Highway Design Guide includes a chapter on local roads and "context sensitive" design (Chapter 16). He said MassDOT's commitment to Complete Streets stems from this. This is the first step in the official design process, and there will be many opportunities for future input. If MassDOT tells the team the options selected are not feasible, he will let everyone know. Councilor Piccirilli adjourned the meeting at 9:15 pm.

Public Attendees

Malcolm Atimein

Sinead Barry-O'Brien

Robin Bernstein

Charlie Breitrose - *Watertown News*

Samluen C

Chris Chiotasso

Michelle Cokonougher

Andy Compagna – Watertown Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee (WBPC)

Pilar Conde

Linda DeFruscio

Dennis J. Duff

Jean Dunoyer

Wes Edwards - MBTA

Sheila Fay - WBPC

David Ferris

Maureen F. Foley

Sophia Galimore - Watertown Transportation Management Association (TMA)

Susan Giragosian

Christina Gordon

Nancy Hammett

Bud Mcarthey

Peter O'Brian

Deanna Peabody

Libby Shaw - Trees for Watertown

Dawn Slaven

David Stokes

Abdul Taufiq

Elodia Thomas

Carol Tierney

Maya Townsend

Ron Trial

Geraldine Vatan – MassDOT

Michael Wilkins

Gael Williams