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Mount Auburn Street Neighborhood Meeting Patten Street to School Street December 8, 2016

Meeting Notes and Comments

- Street trees: There are a lot of mature street trees on the corridor. Please do not remove any trees.
 - Any tree that must be removed will require a tree hearing.
 - As design progresses, a landscaping plan will be developed.
- Why is there a new traffic signal at Boylston Street and Mount Auburn Street?
 - The signalized intersection will enhance safety for pedestrians crossing the street. The current signalized crosswalk between Stearns Road and Oakley Road is not in a good path of travel for pedestrians accessing the Hosmer School. Also, the current signal is difficult to see and there is poor compliance with it. The new location will be more visible. The intersection also meets the warrants for a traffic signal.
- Concerned about making left turns out of side streets onto Mount Auburn Street with road diet.
 - In general, making left turns out of side streets should be easier and safer, because instead of crossing two lanes of traffic, there will be only one lane. Traffic signal timing can create gaps to allow vehicles to make the left turns from other streets.
 - In some locations, “do not block the box” striping could be considered.
- Is there a study of when bicycle lanes are warranted?
 - There are no specific studies. All projects need to consider complete streets. MassDOT requires bicycle accommodations on all projects.
- Concerned about reducing the number of lanes on Mount Auburn Street.
 - The traffic studies indicate that Mount Auburn Street has the road capacity for a lane diet.
 - Most of the traffic congestion on Mount Auburn Street occurs at the intersection. It is important to maintain enough through and turn lanes at the intersections to maintain or improve the “level of service” for the intersection.
 - The project includes left turn lanes at most intersections so that turning vehicles do not block through traffic.

- It is also important to maintain room in each through lane so that vehicles can manipulate around vehicles in the through lane that are making a left turn into a driveway.
- Has the Town considered shared bus-bike or bus only lanes?
 - The Town is in discussions with the MBTA about how to improve bus service in the corridor. The 71 bus is a key bus route with high ridership.
 - The Town is participating in the DCR Fresh Pond/Mt. Auburn corridor study.
- Concerned that there will be traffic islands like on Trapelo Road in Belmont.
 - There are no traffic islands planned on Mount Auburn Street.
- How will the lane diet affect emergency response?
 - The project will need to maintain the manipulation room for them to get around obstructions.
 - Important that there are no physical barriers in the road.
- Concerns about bike facilities:
 - Biking on the street is very dangerous now.
 - The better and safer the bike facilities, the more people will use bikes.
 - Bike lanes are not perceived as safe; want to see separated bike lanes.
 - Can we switch bike lanes with parked cars?
 - Bike lanes are outdated.
 - Concerned about loss of parking or maneuver room if separated bike lanes are provided.
 - Important for cars and bikes to cooperate.
- Concerns about complete streets:
 - The road is complete as it is; people use it to drive, bike, bus, etc.
 - The project does not go far enough to accommodate all users; should design for more users.
 - Favors road diet.
 - Does not see vision of how this project fits into Town's transportation plan.
 - Not enough pedestrian accommodations.
 - Supports shortened crosswalk lengths.
- Are we accounting for development and the traffic that comes with it?
 - MassDOT funded projects usually project future conditions up to 20 years out. The future conditions include all of the known proposed projects (Athena, Arsenal Mall, etc.)
- Mount Auburn Street is not a local road. If we reduce the amount of traffic Mount Auburn Street can handle, where will they go?
 - The project recognizes that Mt. Auburn Street is a regional road with important connections to other communities.
 - The goal of the project is to make the road safer, better accommodate all users, and operate efficiently to handle traffic. The goal is not to reduce the traffic capacity of the road.
 - There are few alternatives for regional traffic. The Town is concerned about cut-through traffic on local streets if capacity on Mount Auburn Street is reduced.
- Can this project wait until all of the new development comes on-line?
 - Given the time it takes to plan and fund a project like this, it is not advisable to stop until new developments are complete.

- The traffic studies consider the impacts of new development.
- Don't take away any parking.
 - The Town needs to evaluate parking and accommodate as much as possible.
 - Some currently used spaces are not considered legal and may need to be removed.
- Concerned about lighting at crosswalks, especially at Russell Ave. and Winthrop Street.
 - The Town will be reviewing lighting as the project progresses.
- How do you know what the capacity of Mount Auburn Street is?
 - The capacity is controlled by the intersections.
 - We want to maintain or improve level of service at intersections.
 - Preliminary study shows we can do this.
 - As design proceeds, intersection capacity analysis will be refined based on any future changes to the project.
- Concerned about traffic stopping during parallel parking.
 - It is important to keep enough road so that vehicles can maneuver around stopped or turning vehicles.
- What is the project schedule and when will work take place?
 - We are currently developing 25% design plans. These will need to be reviewed by MassDOT. They will also hold a public hearing.
 - We anticipate additional meetings before and after the 25% design. The 25% design will not have all details worked out, like lighting, street furniture, etc.
 - Based on state funding cycles, we are probably at least 5 years away from a shovel in the ground.
 - The project is scored against all other projects seeking state funding through the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). We ranked #3 last year; there is a lot of support on the state level for the project. We hope we can use this to accelerate the project schedule.

Written comments received:

- Lighting is dark all along corridor for pedestrians, particularly at crosswalks.
- Concerned about impacts to small businesses during construction.
- Bike traffic is very much reduced for 5 months of the year due to weather, but vehicles travel year-round.
- It is difficult to back into a parking spot with only one lane.
- Slow down traffic.
- Reconsider protected bike lanes or separated bike lanes.
- Include bike boxes at intersections.
- Make bus/bike priority lanes at Walnut Street and School Street.
- On-street parking at School Street will be in the bike lane during church events.
- Supports transit signal priority for buses.
- Mast arms on Trapelo Road are too high and signs are too large.
- Concerned about impacts to tree canopy.
- Consider different types of signalized crosswalk enhancements.
- Wants bike racks near businesses.

- Consider flipping bike lane and parking lane.
- Wants shelters at all bus stops.
- Wants pedestrian scale lighting.
- Improve bus transit to Cambridge and Boston University.
- Traffic will get backed up with only one lane in each direction.
- Will be difficult to make left turns on or off of Mount Auburn Street.
- A lot of people are unable to bicycle; does not see the bike lanes causing increased bicycling.
- Level of service should consider pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Provide queue jumps at intersections for buses.
- Concerned about cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets, including Adams Street.
- Residents need access from Parker Street neighborhood.
- Add curbing to Parker Street and Chester Street.
- Move or restore crosswalk between Marshall Street and Parker Street. Consider bus route locations.
- Concerned about access to bus stops if green space is provided.
- Need to preserve parking.
- Consider additional public outreach and communication methods.
- Update goals and plans with community input before proceeding further.
- Bus service has not been addressed.
- Already enough bicycle accommodations on the road. Traffic will get worse with one lane. Concerned about road rage.
- Why are right turn lanes at School Street being retained?
- Concerned about vehicle speeds.