

BELMONT COMMUNITY PATH – PHASE 2 PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

March 10, 2023

PURPOSE

This public engagement plan (PEP) builds upon the proactive public engagement process that the Town of Belmont conducted for the Belmont Community Path Feasibility Study. By utilizing a variety of outreach strategies and leveraging the internal knowledge and insight of the public and stakeholders, this process seeks to engage Belmont’s unique population on the development of the Belmont Community Path Phase II Project. This PEP identifies engagement goals throughout three phases or tasks of the project (Task A: Recommendation of Final Alignment, Task E: Preliminary Design and Design Development, and Task F: Final Design and Bid Documents). Included for each outreach strategy is the purpose, target audience, format/method, roles and responsibilities of the project team, and approximate timeline. This PEP may be updated or revised following consultation with Town staff and stakeholder groups. A preliminary schedule of engagement activities is included.

ENGAGEMENT GOALS

There are many levels at which a municipality might engage the public (see Table 1 below). With the prior Belmont Community Path Feasibility Study, the Town collaborated with the public and stakeholders to create and assess alignment alternatives and design criteria. Given the high level of prior engagement on the Belmont Community Path and at this stage where a final alignment will be selected and constructed, the Town of Belmont Select Board and the Community Path Project Committee (CPPC) is looking to **consult** with the public, while still **collaborating** with key stakeholders and Town department and committees. For clarity, engagement with MassDOT and the MBTA is not included in this PEP. Seen as **partners**, meetings and coordination with these entities will be consistent and ongoing throughout the project.

Table 1. Level of Engagement

	Inform	Consult	Collaborate	Partner
Engagement Goal	To provide stakeholders with factual, balanced, and timely information to help them understand the project.	To obtain stakeholder feedback on project analysis, alternatives, or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that perspectives are consistently understood, considered, and reflected in project decisions.	To partner with stakeholders in each aspect of decision-making in order to develop and implement collaborative project solutions.

The Town of Belmont is committed to creating a community path that meets the needs of all users. Community engagement will be integral throughout the project and is designed to increase community awareness and support of the project. The engagement goals are to:

- provide easy access to project information and opportunities for participation;
- offer a range of communication and engagement tools to accommodate residents' interests and preferences;
- gather feedback from a broad range of community members, including those who do not typically participate in Town planning processes;
- ensure the final design reflects community and maintains their support;
- keep informed and gain approval by the Select Board

TARGET AUDIENCES

The Town invites participation and input from all interested community members and wishes to ensure diverse and balanced perspectives are heard. To this end, the following audience groups and intended participants have been identified:

Public

- Town residents, including: Youth and students, Families, Seniors and older adults
- Trail and facility users
- Commuters

Stakeholders

- Abutting residences, businesses, and organizations
- Residents of Belmont Village
- Abutting business owners and developers
- Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)*
- MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR)
- Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC)
- McLean Hospital
- Friends of the Belmont Community Path
- Snake Hill Road Association
- Belmont Citizens Forum
- Urban Land Institute
- Supporters of the Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT)
- Other community-based organizations (CBOs)
- Advocacy organizations and interest groups
- Representatives from traditional and online media

Partners

- Select Board
- MassDOT
- MBTA (Keolis/Greystone)

Town Leadership, Departments and Commissions

- Public Safety – Fire, Police and Emergency Services
- Department of Public Works (DPW)
- Belmont Housing Authority (Cambridge Housing Authority)
- Historic District Commission
- Disability Access Commission
- Recreation Commission
- Council on Aging
- School Committee
- Land Management Committee for Lone Tree Hill

OUTREACH STRATEGIES AND METHODS

OVERALL

Reaching English Language Learners

There are over 70 different languages spoken in Belmont. To ensure diverse participation as well as participation by those who historically have not been able to participate, the materials prepared for the project (both print and online) will be developed using simple text and supporting graphics.

Project Website

Purpose

The project website will serve as the main information hub for the project. The website will serve as a central repository for project background, project documents, and engagement opportunities. It will be a place where Belmont residents may learn about the project's history, find the community survey, learn about upcoming public meetings, contact the Town regarding the project, as well as sign up for project updates.

Target Audience

General public

Format/Method

- Use existing Belmont Community Path landing page (belmontcommunitypath.com).
- Update website with navigation links and webpages to reflect current study. The website will include project background, scope, timeline.
- Use an attractive project logo and images/graphics to portray the various project components.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Nitsch, Pare, or the Town will update the website.
- Town and CPPC will provide the content for the website restructure, project background, and information on public and stakeholder engagement (including public meeting notices).
- Pare and Toole Design will provide design-related content, as well as the link to the community survey.
- Town will provide translation of the website in the languages desired. The Town may explore alternative options to manual translations with automated website translation services.

Timeline

Launch in early- to mid-February 2023

Maintain throughout life of project (2023 to 2027)

TASK A - RECOMMENDATION OF FINAL ALIGNMENT

Initial Outreach

Purpose

The Initial Outreach will inform Belmont residents and visitors of the Study and direct people to the community survey (see below). The outreach will inspire people to engage with the project through use of inspirational community images/maps from the prior Feasibility Study.

Target Audience

General public

Format/Method

- The outreach will promote the Study in the following types of locations:
 - Schools
 - Library
 - Senior center
 - Businesses, including grocery stores and restaurants
 - Bus Stops
 - Commuter rail stations
 - Places of worship
 - Playgrounds (Town Field, Joey's Park, Grove Street Playground, PQ Park)
 - Fitchburg Cut-off Path
 - Other community spaces
- The outreach will be promoted through various print and electronic formats. This may include 8.5" x 11" fliers for handing out or posting on restaurant tables or posting in windows, larger coroplast posters with grommets for outdoor street postings and for hanging outdoors. See Appendix A for print quotes.

- The postings will include a graphic with the following content:
 - Map with alternative alignments from previous Feasibility Study
 - Short project description
 - Project contact information
 - Community survey website link and QR code, and
 - Deadline to respond to survey by
- The Initial Outreach will align in timing with the community survey period (see below).

Roles and Responsibilities

- Toole Design will develop the advertising graphics
- Town will provide translation of the posting in the languages desired.
- Town and CPPC will pay for and coordinate printing of the fliers and posters.
- Town and CPPC will coordinate permissions to post around Belmont.
- Town and CPPC will distribute and hang/set-up the fliers/posters around Belmont.

Timeline

- February 20, 2023 through March 13, 2023 (3 weeks)

Intercept Event

Purpose

One intercept event will be used to gather feedback from people who may not typically participate in the planning processes. By meeting people where they are – a location where they either frequent and feel comfortable in or an event they planned to attend already – we can capture people that the website and Initial Input effort may not reach alone. The event will allow for one-on-one engagement with passersby coming by on their own time.

Target Audience

- Historically underrepresented community members of Belmont
- General Public

Format/Method

- One four-hour time slot on one day
- Determine location to reach the target audience (i.e. Star Market in Waverly Square)
- Inform about the project, conduct in-person community surveys (see below), and distribute fliers to passersby at the location
- Use poster and fliers created as part of the Initial Outreach

Roles and Responsibilities

- Town, CPPC and consultant team will determine the location to conduct the intercept event.
- A representative from Pare and Toole Design (and possibly the Town/CPPC?) will conduct the intercept event
- Town will provide language interpreters as appropriate.

Timeline

- February 20, 2023 through March 20, 2023 (4 weeks)

Community Survey

Purpose

The community survey will gather feedback from Belmont residents and visitors on how they imagine using the community path, as well as what their hopes and concerns are for the project.

Target Audience

General public

Method

- All questions will be multiple-choice to allow for simple analysis (additional open comments may be emailed directly to the Town).
- Optional demographic questions (such as income, race/ethnicity, disability status, gender, and age) will be included to ensure diverse participation.
- Use of Alchemer, an online survey software that allows a variety of question formats and can produce summary reports and charts. A largely online format will allow for broad participation on people's own schedules and allow for a larger reach of people than would conducting in-person surveys.
- Advertise online survey through:
 - Project website
 - Initial Outreach (see above)
 - Belmont social media
 - Town listservs
 - Stakeholder email lists
- The online survey will align in timing with the Initial Outreach period (see above).
- A print version of the survey will be provided at the intercept event (see above) to capture populations that do not traditionally have the chance to participate in planning processes.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Pare and Toole Design will draft, finalize and provide content for the community survey in Alchemer and in print, within input and review by the Town/CPPC, and to post on the website
- Town will provide language translation in the languages desired. For the online survey, Toole Design will upload the translations to Alchemer. For the print survey, the Town will create the translated surveys.
- Town will pay for the print surveys and coordinate with the printer.
- Town and CPPC will post the online survey through the avenues listed above
- Town will input print survey entries into Alchemer.
- Toole Design will provide a summary report of the survey results

Timeline

Open and distributed from February 20, 2023 through March 13, 2023 (3 weeks)

Focus Group Meetings #1

Purpose

Focus group meetings with stakeholders will be used to gain internal insight on the feasibility of the community path alignment options, Town requirements and regulations, and implementation strategies for the community path. The focus group meetings also serve as a listening session, to obtain a deeper understanding of any challenges about the project from stakeholders.

Target Audience

Stakeholders and representatives from Town departments and commissions

Format/Method

- Participants will be grouped by organization (such as Town department or commission, or community groups), interests, and/or participant availability.
- Six in-person (or hybrid) focused small-group meetings at Town Hall. (Due to the limited timeline to confirm the recommended alignment, individual dates and times for each group are not feasible.)
- The focus group meetings will be held in tandem over the span of one full day (spread between the afternoon and evening) to provide flexibility for participants.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Pare and Toole Design will draft and finalize the focus group questions and/or prompts.
- Pare and Toole, with input from the Town/CPPC, will determine the final list of stakeholders and the six groupings for the meetings.
- The Town/CPPC and consultant team will select a mutually convenient day for the meetings
- The Town will book the meeting location at Town Hall, and set up the meetings with stakeholders.
- Pare and Toole Design will facilitate the focus group meetings and take notes.

Timeline

Mid- to Late-February 2023

Public Meeting #1

Purpose

Public Meeting #1 will provide an overview of the evolved design criteria built from community values and MassDOT funding criteria. The main aim is to explain the tangible differences between the community criteria and the evolved criteria, and to provide a listening session for community members.

Target Audience

General public

Format/Method

- In-person or hybrid meeting at Town Hall or Beech Street Center.
- PowerPoint presentation
 - Introduce project background, scope, and schedule
 - Overview of community survey results.
 - Summary of new information since the Feasibility Study (FS)
 - Present update design criteria matrix (the criteria previously selected and vetted by the community, reformatted to ensure fundability).
 - Draft evaluation of alignments.
- Open comment period.

Roles and Responsibilities

- The Town/CPPC & consultant team will select a mutually convenient day for the meeting
- The Town will book the meeting location (if hybrid format)
- Town will advertise the meeting through the project website, project update email list, Belmont social media, Town listservs
- Pare and Toole Design will prepare the meeting agenda and presentation
- Pare and Toole Design will present the material and facilitate the discussion

Timeline

Mid-March 2023

Select Board Meeting

Purpose

The Select Board Meeting will be for the purposes of presenting the final recommended alignment to the Select Board and seeking their approval

Target Audience

Select Board (while the primary audience is the Select Board, the meeting would be open to the public.)

Format/Method

- In-person meeting at Town Hall.
- PowerPoint presentation
 - Brief summary of project
 - Summary of Public Meeting and feedback provided
 - Evaluation development
 - Present recommended alignment based on new design criteria
- Open comment and approval period.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Town will coordinate the Select Board Meeting at which will be the presentation
- Pare and Toole Design will prepare the meeting agenda and presentation
- Pare and Toole Design will present the material

Timeline

Late March – Early April 2023

TASK E: PRELIMINARY DESIGN AND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

Focus Group Meetings #2

Purpose

Focus group meetings with Town departments and commissions will be used to present the 25% Design and solicit feedback on constructability and access, operations/maintenance, fire/safety issues, and universal access.

Target Audience

Representatives from select Town departments and commissions

Format/Method

- Participants will be grouped by organization, interests, and/or participant availability.
- Three in-person (or hybrid) focused small-group meetings at Town Hall. The focus group meetings will be held in tandem over the span of one afternoon to provide flexibility for participants.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Pare and Toole Design will develop a brief presentation and prompts for discussion.
- Town will determine the final list of attendees and the three groupings for the meetings.
- The Town/CPPC and consultant team will select a mutually convenient day for the meeting
- The Town will book the meeting location at Town Hall, and set up the meetings with the departments/commissions
- Pare and Toole Design will facilitate the focus group meetings
- Pare and Toole Design will incorporate feedback into the Final Design.

Timeline

September 2023

TASK F: FINAL DESIGN AND BID DOCUMENTS

25% Design Public Hearing

Purpose

The 25% Design Public Hearing is required per the MassDOT process. The purpose is to present the 25% Design and provide a listening session for the public

Target Audience

General public

Format/Method

- In-person or hybrid meeting at Town Hall (unless directed otherwise by MassDOT).

- PowerPoint presentation
 - Brief summary of project.
 - Present 25% Design.
- Open comment period.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Pare will coordinate with MassDOT to select the date
- Town will book the meeting location at Town Hall.
- Town will advertise the meeting through the project website, project update email list, Belmont social media, Town listservs, and stakeholder email lists.
- The Pare Team will prepare the presentation.
- Town and consulting team will perform a dry run(s) with MassDOT.
- MassDOT will present the material.
- The Pare Team will incorporate feedback into the 75% Design.

Timeline

June 2024

75% Design Public Hearing (If necessary)

Purpose

The aim of the 75% Design Public Hearing is to present the 75% Design and provide a listening session for the public

Target Audience

General public

Format/Method

- In-person or hybrid meeting at Town Hall.
- PowerPoint presentation
 - Brief summary of project.
 - Present 75% Design.
- Open comment period.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Pare will coordinate with MassDOT to select the date
- Town will book the meeting location at Town Hall.
- Town will advertise the meeting through the project website, project update email list, Belmont social media, Town listservs, and stakeholder email lists.
- The Pare Team will prepare the presentation
- Town and consulting team will perform a dry run(s) with MassDOT.
- MassDOT will present the material.

Timeline

Fall 2024

Select Board / Public Meeting

Purpose

The purpose of the meeting is to fully inform the Belmont community of the improvements to be constructed and what to expect during construction.

Target Audience

Select Board

Abutters

General Public

Format/Method

- In-person or hybrid meeting at Town Hall.
- PowerPoint presentation
 - Brief summary of work included in the bid documents.
 - Provide an overview of the phasing, staging, timeline and other expectations.
- Questions and Answers.

Roles and Responsibilities

- Town will coordinate the Select Board Meeting at which will be the presentation
- Town will advertise the meeting through the project website, project update sign-ups, Belmont social media, Town listservs, and stakeholder email lists. Town will provide meeting notices to abutters.
- The Pare Team will prepare the meeting agenda and presentation
- The Pare Team will present the material

Timeline

Winter/Spring 2025

TIMELINE

TIME PERIOD	OUTREACH STRATEGY
February – April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Determine language translation and interpretation needs▪ Update website▪ Initial Outreach▪ Intercept event▪ Community survey▪ Focus group meetings #1
March - April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Public Meeting #1
March – April 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Select Board Meeting
October 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Focus group meetings #2
June 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 25% Design Public Hearing
Fall 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ 75% Design Public Hearing
Winter/Spring 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Select Board / Public Meeting