

## Minutes

### Boylston Street Corridor Study Committee

May 24, 2021 12:00PM

Held remotely via Zoom

*Committee members (in attendance noted by Y/N):*

John VanScoyoc, Chair	Y	Wendy Friedman	N	Tom Nally	Y
Rachna Balakrishna	Y	Joe Gaudino	N	Carlos Ridruejo	Y
Deborah Brown	N	Wendy Machmuller	Y*	Mark Zarrillo	Y

*\*Left early as noted below*

*Staff present:* Kara Brewton

*Meeting materials included:* agenda; initial presentation regarding Boylston Street by Toole Design (5/24/21)

*Guests included:* Toole Design team (Karen Fitzgerald, Peter Robie); Charles Osborne, Antonia Bellalta, Jennifer Gilbert, Tad Campion, Mark Lewis and a phone call participant.

John VanScoyoc opened the meeting, noting that it was being held remotely on the Zoom platform due to COVID, and after checking that all participants' audio/video were working well, and Kara announced that the meeting was being recorded.

### **Presentation by Toole Design**

Karen Fitzgerald summarized that they would be presenting their understanding of the existing conditions, initial observations, and proposed general concepts of cross-sections. Observations included:

- Quite a few places where accessibility on sidewalks are restricted due to above-ground utility placement
- Midblock crossing at Old Lincoln School is unsafe and there is no pedestrian refuge
- Parking lane is narrow, not officially permitted by the state, and parking signs are confusing
- Not a lot of parking supply in the corridor
- Mix of modern and older architecture, but not many storefronts are taking advantage of potential streetscape connections (e.g., transparent windows)
- Furnishings are limited and tend to be provided by private entities; a common design could be helpful
- Corridor is almost absent of street trees, and where it does exist, is often on private property
- Very few intersections, which limits pedestrian connectivity across Boylston Street
- Existing travel lanes are 12' and the parking/shoulder area is only 6', whereas a minimum parking lane standard is 7'.
- Cobra-head style lighting with no pedestrian scale lighting

Peter Robie then reviewed four concepts:

- 1) 4 travel lanes, 2 parking lanes, cycle tracks, and trees in bump-outs between parking spaces.
- 2) Parking lane on one side or the other, which allows for wider sidewalks and a street tree zone on the opposite side of the parking lane
- 3) Road Diet with only two travel lanes, a 6' planted median
- 4) Similar as concept 3, but with no planted median, which allows for parking on both sides and wider lanes allowing for more emergency vehicle access through the corridor

Committee conversation then included:

- Questions about the reality of only two travel lanes, given traffic volumes at peak hours and potential impacts to surrounding side streets, to what extent pre-COVID traffic volumes would return, and any initial feedback from MassDOT
- Direction from John VanScoyoc that the Committee should focus on what designs would work well, not whether various agencies would permit a departure in the current design
- Several members noted how exciting the concepts were, especially the transformational possibilities that could be possible with only one travel lane in each direction
- Noting that in addition to buses and emergency vehicles, construction vehicles and other larger vehicles use this corridor, so would likely need wider lanes – question whether one travel lane could be narrower and one wider
- The potential MBTA dedicated bus lane pilot for Gateway East could be accommodated with any of the concepts
- Observation that the corridor cross-section didn't need to be the same across the whole length of the area
- The character of the corridor shouldn't be considered "commercial" in nature across the whole length of the corridor
- Interest in further developing pedestrian-only crossings
- One Committee member would prefer larger sidewalks over bike lane accommodation, if there needed to be a choice between the two
- Agreement that blank retail windows was a huge opportunity, but that it likely wouldn't change unless a significant redesign of Boylston Street was included

[Wendy Machmuller had to leave the meeting].

### **Subcommittee Reports**

Mark Zarrillo noted that the Urban Design Subcommittee discussed a variety of street section concepts, similar to the discussion today. Additionally, Mark would be presenting at tomorrow's Subcommittee meeting about appropriate Floor Area Ratio (FAR) east of Old Lincoln School. He previewed that he did not think FAR should be increased north of Boylston, but that it would be advantageous to consider an as-of-right ability for developments that adhered to the sky plane concept started at Homewood Suites.

Rachna Balakrishna describe the Public Participation Subcommittee's work, headed towards the June 2<sup>nd</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> public forums. The exact format would be discussed again as we get closer to the forums and know how many attendees we would have. Wendy Friedman noted that we would like for Tom Nally to be one of the presenters, which he agreed to do.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:03 pm.