



# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & UNIVERSITY RELATIONS COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEETINGS

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

3:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber

**The Economic Development and University Relations Committee will hold a public hearing on the recent CSO Economic Impact Report.**

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Marc C. McGovern	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	3:03 PM
Sumbul Siddiqui	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input type="checkbox"/> Remote	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Paul F. Toner	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ayesha M. Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A public meeting of the Cambridge City Council's Economic Development and University Relations Committee was held on Wednesday, March 6, 2024. The meeting was Called to Order at 3:00 p.m. by the Chair, Councillor Toner. Pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023 adopted by Massachusetts General Court and approved by the Governor, the City is authorized to use remote participation. This public meeting was hybrid, allowing participation in person, in the Sullivan Chamber, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA and by remote participation via Zoom.

**At the request of the Chair, Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent\*

Councillor Siddiqui – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler- Present/Remote

Councillor Toner – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

Councillor Wilson – Present/In Sullivan Chamber

**Present – 4, Absent – 1. Quorum established.**

\*Vice Mayor McGovern was marked present and in the Sullivan Chamber at 3:03p.m.

The Chair, Councillor Toner offered opening remarks and noted that the Call of the meeting was to review and discuss the recent Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) Economic Impact Report. Present from the Community Development Department (CDD) was Iram Farooq, Assistant City Manager and Pardis Safari, Director of Economic Opportunity and Development. Present from the Traffic, Parking, and Transportation Department was Commissioner Brooke McKenna and Jeffrey Parenti, Assistant Commissioner for Street Management/Director of Traffic and Parking. Councillor Toner noted that Councillor Pickett was also present at the meeting.

**The Chair, Councillor Toner opened Public Comment.**

Christopher Cass, 103 Gore Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments of support and suggestions for the CSO report and shared concerns about the amount of business owners that participated in the surveys.

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Clyve Lawrence, 26 Plympton Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments of support for the CSO report and shared how bike lanes create safety.

Cynthia Hughes shared that bike lanes are not the issue that are affecting businesses, but the taking away of parking is.

Itamar Turner-Trauring, 139 Oxford Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments regarding the survey part of the CSO report and encouraged the City to look at why businesses are experiencing a decrease in revenue.

Young Kim, 17 Norris Street, Cambridge, MA, offered comments of concern regarding the Cycling Safety Ordinance.

Sharon Cerny, 1798A Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, shared that their tenants/business owners may have to close due to the loss of parking on Massachusetts Avenue.

Linda Moussouris, 2440 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, offered comments of concerns regarding the CSO report.

Deb Colburn, 1771 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA, highlighted the importance of how parking helps small businesses and their customers.

John Hanratty, 15 Mount Vernon Street, Cambridge, MA, noted that the decrease in parking is what the issue is not the increase of bike lanes and asked that the City offer support to the small businesses.

Jason Alves offered comments on the CSO report and offered suggestions on how to look at the business surveys moving forward.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Pardis Saffari who introduced the team from Volpe, Sean Pierce and Claire Roycroft, that were joined via Zoom. Sean Pierce and Pardis Saffari gave a presentation titled “Cycling Safety Ordinance Economic Impact Study Economic Development and University Relations Hearing”. The presentation was provided in advance of the meeting and included in the Agenda Packet. The presentation offered an overview on the recap of the study background, study engagement, study scope and limitations, findings by data sources (census employment, consumer retail/POI, and business and customer surveys), recommendations for future studies, and next steps.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who offered comments regarding the loss of parking and how businesses are impacted differently. The Vice Mayor highlighted that the main reason for adding bike lanes on the streets is for safety. Vice Mayor McGovern asked staff if they could provide more information on the wide difference in numbers between customers saying there needs to be more parking versus the business owners saying there needs to be more parking that was provided in the survey. Pardis Saffari responded and shared what needs the business owners could have relative to available parking, such as loading and unloading vehicles. Vice Mayor McGovern noted that housing and neighborhoods play a role in supporting small businesses. The Vice Mayor shared that he looks forward to taking this information and moving forward with the next steps.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Siddiqui who asked for an update on the PTDM (Parking and Transportation Demand Management) policies. Iram Farooq responded and was able to provide updates on where the City is with updating the policies and shared how they could be more flexible moving forward, noting that there are a lot of pieces that need to be worked out before finalizing any changes soon. Councillor Toner shared that he would like to see some of these policies adjusted before the next big implementation of bike lanes. Councillor Siddiqui shared that a timeline on updating policies would be helpful. Councillor Siddiqui also asked for more information on the meters being increased in Kendall Square and if there will be adjustments across the City. Brooke McKenna responded and shared that there will be an increase across the City, mostly in commercial areas. Commissioner McKenna shared that the increase is similar with most commercial districts in neighboring cities. Councillor Siddiqui asked for more information on the recent round of funding for small businesses, which Pardis Saffari was able to provide.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler who noted the importance of having bike lanes for safety purposes and how the increase in bikes in the City can affect certain businesses in a positive way. Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler asked what was causing changes in parking areas that did not see a protected bike lane addition. Pardis Saffari shared that outdoor dining as well as dedicated bus lanes could be factors that are affecting other streets. Sean Pierce responded as well and echoed comments made by Pardis Saffari, noting that other changes to the area could be what is affecting parking and that the survey was done during peak construction time, which could also play a role in parking.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Pickett who pointed out that businesses are sharing that they are being impacted in both revenue and expenses. Councillor Pickett shared that property owners are also expressing concerns about being able to rent out their spaces due to the lack of parking, and noted the importance of tracking the retail long-term vacancy rates to have a better understanding of what is happening.

**The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Vice Mayor McGovern who made a motion to extend the meeting by fifteen minutes.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Vice Mayor McGovern – Yes

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

**Yes – 5. Motion passed.**

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Pickett to continue her comments. Councillor Pickett noted the importance of adjusting zoning and the PTDM before moving forward to implement the separated bike lanes based on feedback from business owners and residents. Councillor Pickett asked for more information on the Metered Spaces Database, which Brooke McKenna was able to provide, noting that it is available to the public online.

The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who shared that she appreciated the conversation. Councillor Wilson expressed concerns for how businesses in East Cambridge will be affected with the implementation of bike lanes on Cambridge Street in the near future and asked how the City can help with any challenges that may occur. Councillor Wilson raised the question of what is the City doing to attract businesses to the vacant storefronts in Cambridge

and what incentives are there for current business owners to continue to do business in Cambridge while they are losing revenue. Pardis Saffari responded and offered examples of ways that the City is assisting businesses, noting that the challenges of owning a business has affected other cities and towns as well. Councillor Wilson asked how the City is surveying customers for this report. Pardis Saffari shared that the City is surveying people during different times throughout the day, as well as the weekends.

The Chair, Councillor Toner asked if using Volpe was useful. Pardis Saffari shared that it was useful to have an outside consultant and noted some of the positive results that were achieved by using Volpe's services. Iram Farooq provided additional comments, noting that it was very valuable in a way of setting methodology for the City to use with the longitudinal work that Councillors had brought up. Brooke McKenna responded as well, sharing that having this report and conversations around it will only help the City move forward. Councillor Toner shared that he would like to have more conversations about the possibility of implementing a parking app that would help assist people in locating available parking in the City. Councillor Toner offered suggestions on ways to possibly help with more commercial and residential parking and stressed the importance of the City having more conversations with residents and business owners regarding future changes.

**The Chair, Councillor Toner recognized Councillor Wilson who made a motion to adjourn the meeting.**

**Clerk of Committees Erwin called the roll.**

Vice Mayor McGovern – Absent

Councillor Siddiqui – Yes

Councillor Sobrinho-Wheeler – Yes

Councillor Toner – Yes

Councillor Wilson – Yes

**Yes – 4, No – 0, Absent – 1. The meeting was adjourned at approximately 5:18p.m.**

**Attachment A** – The City Clerk's Office received three written communications.

**Clerk's Note:** The City of Cambridge/22 City View records every City Council meeting and every City Council Committee meeting. This is a permanent record. The video for this meeting can be viewed at:

[https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/675?view\\_id=1&redirect=true](https://cambridgema.granicus.com/player/clip/675?view_id=1&redirect=true)

**A communication was received from Pardis Saffari, Director of Economic Opportunity and Development, transmitting presentation relative to the CSO Economic Impact Study.**

**A communication transmitted from Yi-An Huang, City Manager, relative to the Cycling Safety Ordinance (CSO) Economic Impact Report.**

**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** Miah Ebels Duggan <mebelsduggan@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 6, 2024 12:37 PM  
**To:** Azeem, Burhan; Siddiqui, Sumbul; Sobrinho-Wheeler, Jivan; Toner, Paul; Wilson, Ayesha  
**Cc:** City Clerk  
**Subject:** Written Comment for 3/6/2024 Economic Development and University Relations Committee  
**Attachments:** 3\_6 COMMENT\_ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND UNIVERSITY RELATIONS CMTE.pdf

Please see attached.

Thank you,  
Miah Ebels-Duggan

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To whom it may concern,

I'm writing today to express my support for a safe and effective bicycle network in the City of Cambridge. I am also disturbed by interpretations of the Economic Impact Study which overlook some well-founded data in favor of data with clear flaws to draw only conclusions consistent with a preferred outcome.

The most reliable source of data we have directly from this study is *randomly-sampled* customer intercept surveys, which indicate—by objective measures—that only around ten percent of customers are concerned about a lack of adequate parking (compared to 50-80% of business owners). Comparatively, the more specific East Cambridge survey found that 50% *more* customers wanted better bike infrastructure than wanted better parking (12% vs 8%). Compared to 8% of respondents who wanted more space to park, 28% wanted better access to non-car transit options. This is also consistent with the finding that under 20% of total customers drive to businesses. The implication is clear: the vast majority of Cantabrigians do not prioritize vehicular access to businesses. Indeed, better bike infrastructure is more likely to positively impact customer access than more parking.

Objections have been raised to this which claim that these surveys are not immediately applicable to business impacts; however, as bike infrastructure's effect on customer behavior is being studied in this case, it makes far more sense to examine customer-level preferences. What business owners *feel* is necessary does not reflect actual customer behavior.

Opponents of safe bicycle infrastructure also make inconsistent claims about the quality of the data; surely those concerned about data collection strategies in CoStar and SafeGraph analyses should question the results of a voluntary survey given to business owners. Here is a classic case of non-response bias; a vast majority of businesses in every zip code did not respond, and (as the study authors explain) “[b]ecause the survey is voluntary and the recent or planned bicycle facility projects are public in nature, there are several sources of potential bias including nonresponse bias.” We can even draw conclusions *from* this non-response: if it's true that bike lanes have had wide-spread negative impacts on businesses, why didn't 83% of these businesses bother to respond to a survey directly addressing these impacts?

We are faced here with competing claims of data reliability, and (while I would disagree with this finding) the Committee may well conclude that there is no basis for impact analysis one way or the other. In any case, I encourage the Committee to keep in sight the major, non-economic impact of safe bike infrastructure: safety itself. Well-founded studies have shown again and again that separated, protected bike lanes decrease death and injury for bicyclists. If your conclusions from the EIS imply that Cambridge should prioritize unfounded claims of negative economic impact over clear evidence to the contrary *and* the lives of those in our community, I urge you to reconsider.

Miah Ebels-Duggan  
Ward 7 Resident  
Straus Hall  
Cambridge, MA 02138

## Erwin, Nicole

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**From:** Vickey Bestor <vickeybestor@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 6, 2024 12:46 PM  
**To:** Toner, Paul; City Council; City Clerk; City Manager; McKenna, Brooke  
**Subject:** Economic Impact Survey

**Importance:** High

Dear All;

I beg the City to follow Volpe's most important recommendations: to going forward always build advance research and comprehensive impact studies into city initiatives especially those as complex and deeply impactful as the Cycling Safety Ordinance. Had that work been done fully before the CSO was implemented we could still have the bike lanes, properly planned and safely constructed, and:

- There would not have been a need for Save Mass Ave's petition signed by over 1,000 business owners, residents and patrons of businesses along Mass Ave.
- Residents and merchants would not have brought lawsuits against the City to halt work on the CSO to make way for such planning and research.
- There would not be so many vacant stores in Porter and Harvard Squares, where businesses have left because their patrons can no longer come.
- So many firms would not be deserting Kendall because of parking loss and their employees find traffic in and out of Cambridge too time consuming.
- There would not be the continued snarl of congested traffic backed up along our major corridors.
- That number of slow idling cars would not be contributing so much to our city's pollution.
- Side streets would not have had their residential parking turned into meters in a vain attempt to provide business patrons an inconvenient spot in which to park.
- Pedestrians would not feel so endangered by the number of cyclists ignoring the rules of the road and not yielding to walkers.
- Seniors and the mobility impaired would regain a margin of their access, as is legally their protected right.

Today, the Economic Development and University Relations Committee will review the results of the Survey of the Economic Impact Survey of bike lanes on Cambridge Businesses. As has already been said in the City Council meeting, the survey provided far fewer answers than we needed. Cyclists have stated that it proves bike lanes have no negative impact on business despite the fact that 63% of surveyed businesses said that parking and delivery spots removed for the bike lines have negatively impacted their businesses. Many of those shops have seen losses that can no longer be sustained. Those businesses have closed or relocated outside of Cambridge because of the bike lanes. Those businesses were not included in the survey. Many that remain have cut their hours, the size of their staff, and their bottom line continues to be greatly impacted.

A few of the remaining businesses will speak up today. Many more might have spoken if the timing of the meeting were not in the middle of the afternoon when the number of patrons at barber shops and

clothing stores are at their peak and when restaurants are deep into their prep for the night's menu. And those businesses that are gone: Courthouse Fish, Daniel Spierer Jewelers, Christopher's, and so many others, are no longer in Cambridge to be heard.

In addition, many patrons who used to come from outside Cambridge to shop, use our services, and eat in our restaurants no longer come because Cambridge has become a city impossible to drive in, impossible to park in, and impossible to enjoy a visit to. That purely and simply is a shame.

Please listen to these concerns, time is running out for many of our small firms the equal of which will never be able to come back.

Most sincerely,

Vickey Bestor  
149 Upland Road



**Erwin, Nicole**

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**From:** Griffon Von Hecht <uncannyvalleygirl@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 6, 2024 12:52 PM  
**To:** City Council  
**Cc:** City Clerk

In 2012, I submitted this blog post to Bostonbiker.org.

Another cyclist was killed today. A tractor trailer turned in front of him on Comm. Ave. and he didn't have time to stop. He died at the scene.

From the reports I'm reading and the general feeling of the community, it looks like it's going to be another no-fault or cyclist-fault death. I really can't remember the last time a motorist was publicly charged with any kind of crime in regards to a cyclist's death around here.

I'm so, so angry, but more than that I'm scared shitless. After what happened to me the other day, I realize that I could be dead right now and nobody would have been charged with my death. Had I not jumped the curb away from my attacker's black SUV, I might have been lying dead in the gutter until discovered by the joggers that passed by about five minutes later. The police hadn't made a report, so no-one would connect my death with the altercation that happened only minutes before. And my killer would go free, just like the killers of all these other cyclists in the news of late.

I'm gravely considering giving up my bike, and buying a T pass. My commute would go from 30 minutes to 60-120 minutes one way. I would spend about \$600 a year on T passes. But I would be alive. I wouldn't have to wonder every day if I'd be alive at the end of the day. My boyfriend wouldn't have to say, 'PLEASE, please be careful.' and email me to make sure I made it.

With what's been happening lately, it just might not be worth it to ride any more.

In the twelve years hence, cycling infrastructure in Cambridge has improved immensely, and my faith in the city's dedication to making the city safe for cyclists has been renewed.

However, as you know, cyclists are still dying at an alarming rate due to the lack of all encompassing safety infrastructure, and the movement itself is being threatened by bad actors who value monetary gain over human life.

Every evening in my neighborhood, I watch parents ferry their children on the back of bicycles. These kids will grow up with a passion for cycling and a belief that they are safe to do so.

Please, help ensure that they DO grow up. Please, make a commitment to make that belief reality.

Godspeed,

G. M. Collins

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