



# TRANSPORTATION & PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE

## COMMITTEE MEETING

~ MINUTES ~

Wednesday, July 29, 2020

2:00 PM

Sullivan Chamber  
795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge, MA 02139

### Call to Order

Attendee Name	Present	Absent	Late	Arrived
Alanna Mallon	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Timothy J. Toomey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2:05 PM
Quinton Zondervan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	2:05 PM
Patricia Nolan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

The Transportation & Public Utilities Committee will meet to discuss how transportation in Cambridge has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts and adaptations to streets and public transit

1. A communication was received from Joseph Barr, Director of Traffic, Parking, and Transportation, transmitting a presentation to the Transportation and Public Utilities Committee on July 29, 2020

**RESULT: PLACED ON FILE**

2. A communication was received from Wes Edwards, Assistant General Manager MassDOT Rail & Transit Division/MBTA, transmitting a presentation to the Transportation and Public Utilities Committee on July 29, 2020

**RESULT: PLACED ON FILE**

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Jul 29, 2020 2:00 PM (Committee Reports)



**CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL**  
**TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMITTEE**  
COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER, CHAIR

COMMITTEE MEETING  
TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

JULY 29, 2020  
2:00 PM, SULLIVAN CHAMBER

Minutes Acceptance: Minutes of Jul 29, 2020 2:00 PM (Committee Reports)

[The Transportation & Public Utilities Committee will meet to discuss how transportation in Cambridge has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, including impacts and adaptations to streets and public transit.]

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

[?], spoke on transportation situation in Cambridge: Commented the very last thing that can happen is a driver plowing their car into people enjoying a meal. Said that there's ample lane widths for motor vehicles in Inman Square, so why not reduce the width of the lane and give more space to pedestrians? He's encouraged that the city is moving in the right direction, but got dismayed as it's taken so long to implement anything in East Cambridge, the Port, Wellington-Harrington, where he lives. Also commented that the overall program has been slow and his numerous communications to the city manager have gone ignored.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Thank you. Um, has James Williamson joined the Zoom? No. Okay. With, uh, you would accept a motion to--

**SUSANNE RASMUSSEN:** Motion moved.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Um, sorry. The clerk has, uh, just reminded me of the, uh, public comment

sign up. So stay open, uh, until 2:30. Uh, so we will see if anyone else, uh, joins, uh, before we close public comment, apologies. Um, also want to recognize the Councillor Toomey, uh, has joined the meeting.

Um, I'm gonna make a couple, uh, brief comments, uh, and then we'll go to presentations from city staff and the MBTA. Um, so thank you again for everyone for joining. The pandemic, uh, caused by COVID-19 has affected all aspects of public life. Uh, this of course includes transportation. Um, we're gonna today talk about the impact, uh, that the pandemic has had on transportation both, uh, vehicles, public transportation, walking, cycling, uh, and other methods. And talk about the ways that, uh, the city and the MBTA have adapted these changes are not, uh, final.

I think we're still working through, uh, a number of them, and we also don't know what the course of the pandemic will be, and so all of this, uh, is in some ways a work in progress and we're gonna talk about how this adapted. We of course, uh, don't know how the pandemic, uh, will look like three months from now, six months from now, a year from now, um, but we can hopefully talk through some of that today.

Um, so with that, uh, Councillor Zondervan has also joined the meeting, so I know you recognize him. Thank you. Um, so with that, I'll, uh, go to city staff, uh, who are going to make a presentation, uh, and then we're going to go to, uh, West Edwards from the MBTA. Um, so if I'll turn it over, I'm, uh, not sure who's speaking first, um, but if, uh, we could just, uh, introduce yourself, uh, as well, that would be great. Thank you.

**SUSANNE RASMUSSEN:** Um, so--so I will be kicking us off. My name is Susanne Rasmussen. I'm director of Environmental and Transportation Planning Division in the Community Development Department. And with me is Andy Reker, uh, who'll hear from in a moment, uh, he's a transit planner also in the Community Development Department. And Joseph Barr, who is the director of the Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department.

Um, first slide please. So, um, we've worked together on a, uh, joint presentation that, uh, speaks to, um, two major parts of, uh, transportation in the COVID-19 era. Um, first we'll, um, show you some information about, uh, impacts to different modes of transportation.

So, we have, um, data that we've collected either

from our own countings--permanent counting stations, or that we've received externally that speaks to who is using what mode of transportation, um, currently or since the pandemic started and currently, um, uh, depending on whether you walk, bike, or drive or take transit, um, that information is augmented by some other data that we've received through MassINC Polling that has taken place, um, statewide, but also with a specific focus on Kendall Square to learn about how people are viewing their, um, ability to travel, especially to work and what modes they're currently using and would be hoping to be using in the future.

So, Andy Reker will be doing that part of the presentation, um, and then he'll turn it over to Joe, who will talk about what has actually happened on the ground in Cambridge, um, more recently in terms of introducing Shared Streets and, uh, helping businesses, uh, continue to function.

And that in very significantly--significantly involves making use of the transportation network to, uh, provide more room for businesses as well as conversations that we're engaged in right now with the MBTA about, um, additional bus lanes, um, that could be potentially

introduced on some of our major streets as well as expanding the amount of space that's available for queuing of passengers who are riding our buses to--to, um, be able to adhere to social distancing, um, principles.

So, um, uh, and I think that will sort of, uh, set the--the conversation up well to, for Wes to take over and then talking more specifically about what is doing on in terms of both, um, uh, helping passengers ride during this period and bus lanes that are under consideration in the city. So with that, I'm gonna turn it over to Andy.

**ANDY REKER:** So, good afternoon. Um, so for this, uh, presentation that I have, um, we wanted to convey a general sense of how things are changing within the city, um, and in particular, how, uh, different neighborhoods have responded to this COVID-19 pandemic.

Um, although we do not have a lot of data, um, we think that data show a clearer picture of how travel has changed within Cambridge, especially compared to kind of the anecdotes that people may have just on their own street. Um, I think for this data that I want to show you, um, we looked at traffic counters where we have them, including multimodal ones like the Eco-Totem on Broadway and Kendall.

Um, we also have data from Bluebikes, the MBTA, um, for bus route ridership and, uh, station entries. Um, for this data again, we looked at, uh, our data sets to find a day or a set of weekdays where perhaps a week that serves as a good baseline, uh, pre-COVID.

And then we're showing you a couple snapshots, um, one from, uh, early April, um, during a time when most, uh, the most number of restrictions were, um, in place for, uh, travel. And, uh, another one more recently to show you how things have been like more closer to our--our--our day to day. Um, these snapshots should give you a sense of how things have changed since mid-March and where things are trending as we've entered into summer.

Um, typically with data, there's a few caveats that I just want to convey. Um, generally all the data is not really comparable to the same month last year. Um, there's a lot of differences including, um, COVID-19 that are included in the data, um, but I'd like to note to you, in the cases where we do have some reliable data, um, I've, uh, included some data on where things were last year. Um, in particular, I just want to highlight that walking and biking, especially counts of how many, uh, people there are



at different locations, um, vary by season in particular, uh, better weather months, have more people making these kind of trips.

Um, in addition, in Cambridge, we also have the large educational institutions and, uh, you know, uh, on the other hand, um, you know, uh, in this pandemic, we definitely have a lot of different reactions from companies about how they're doing, um, in COVID-9 response. So, some employees are working generally from home, other places have, uh, employees that are staggered scheduled and things like that. So, there's a lot of noise here within this data. Um, and again, because we looked at different data, the baseline dates are slightly different but we just wanted to give you a sense of what's going on.

Um, so we looked at three locations, uh, Central Square, Kendall Square, and then North Cambridge. And, uh, in North Cambridge, I just want to be specific, we are looking around the area of the Alewife Brook Parkway and MassINC intersection. Um, so let's see, in the Central Square area, you kind of see the overall picture that we have here is that, uh, Bluebike trips have definitely increased significantly since April, um, but it's roughly

about half of what we saw at this time last year.

Um, driving is returned to about 70% of what was pre-COVID, um, but in this area in particular, uh, the bus, uh, and the red line, uh, passengers, uh, are definitely much reduced, um, remaining at about 30 to 20% of typical depending on the--the route and the mode. Um, in addition in particular, because Central Square is also such an important transit hub, we see that the number of typical or the number of, uh, people walking is at 30% of typical and we assume because of the relationship between, uh, transit and--and people walking on the street.

Um, showing this a little bit more graphically, um, what you see here, um, is how that has trended over the course of the past few months. Um, so just to walk folks through what you see here, um, you see essentially starting on the left, uh, baseline number, which is pre-COVID sometime around February, March. Um, what things were like in the middle of the--the worst restrictions in April, and then a point showing what's happening sometime in June. And so what you see here in particular in Central Square and this is also, uh, something you see in Kendall Square, is that cycling is a little bit more vigorous to return.

So, just to give you a sense of, you know, how things are changing, um, you kind of see that there's a differentiation going on between the different types of ways that people are getting around. Let's see. So, in the Kendall Square area, um, what you see here is again, that cycling has increased quite a bit since the most significant restrictions, uh, in April. But the Bluebikes numbers remain at about 60%, a little bit more than half of what we saw in 2019.

Um, driving has increased in this area, but remains at about 50% of, uh, what our baseline is pre-COVID. And in particular, the red line is down to about 10% of typical weekdays, um, at this time. Uh, also to note that there are no MBTA buses serving Kendall Square, the Easy Ride remains serving this area on a limited schedule, but we don't have access to their ridership data.

Looking at the chart, again, you see, um, in this case, because we have a couple sources of data, the Bluebikes and the Eco-Totem, um, cycling is returning more vigorously than the other modes. Um, but in general, a lot of things in comparison to Central Square, for example, uh, pretty much all the modes that we have data for show that

things have not returned to how things were in late February and early March.

Looking at North Cambridge, um, we focused on the intersection of Alewife Brook Parkway at Mass Ave. Um, pedestrian traffic in this area was unique and that wasn't as heavily impacted, uh, on weekdays. And then we did note that there was some increases on the weekends that we saw.

Uh, this area is not particularly a pedestrian friendly area, and we think that many folks who are making these, uh, trips by foot, uh, maybe, you know, having to do the essentials, maybe it's, uh, trips to the store or places, uh, as well too, uh, where people would be taking walks just to get around and get out. And so, you know, this--this corner of Cambridge is a little bit different in the--the kind of picture that you see.

Um, for Bluebikes taking a look at the station, um, near the, uh, near Cameron Street of Mass Ave with, uh, Linear Park, um, we see that, uh, trips have definitely increased since April, but again, are about half of what we saw last year. Driving on the other hand, because of the important, uh, regional routes here, Mass Ave and Alewife Brook Parkway are about 70% of our baseline before COVID

and, uh, bus ridership on the route 77 is about 30% of the baseline.

Um, a much less, uh, exciting looking chart here that you have but you can definitely see the, uh, difference in the baseline for--for people walking.

Um, moving on to the regional opinion polling on different travel preferences, um, it's useful to get a sense of what people are thinking when it comes to their travel here, um, but I do want to caveat that, you know, a lot of research has shown that what people say they're gonna do when it comes to transportation isn't necessarily what they end up doing, but it's a good check on what are people concerned about most when it comes to transportation. Um, so you can get a good sense of where people are at in the community, um, by taking a look at these data's.

So, looking across, uh, the board at Massachusetts residence, um, this is from a MassINC Poll that was conducted in May. And generally what you see are two key messages, which is that most people expect to make fewer trips, they're not planning to make more trips than they have been and that people are looking more toward

individual or personal modes of travel over public transportation, um, or other shared modes of travel.

And so, um, walking through that right graph, because I do know it's a little bit complicated, um, this just generally shows, uh, you know, to the right of zero that these people--there's people, uh, to that many percent of people who think they'll make more of these kind of trips. And to the less, uh, to the left is an--an orange is less. So, say people used to walk before as an example, there's, you know, maybe about 7 to 10% of people who say, "I'm gonna walk less."

While on the other hand, there's maybe 35 to 40% of people who say, "I'm gonna walk more." So, that's how to read that particular chart. Um, what you also see here, this is in April, and so this is a little bit, um, uh, I think perhaps less informed under of some of the measures that people could take personally to protect themselves with, um, COVID-19. But in the most restrictive moment of stay-at-home advisory and essential work only orders, people felt the least comfortable with these kind of activities. In particular, you can see that transit was something that people were the least comfortable for.

Of course, this includes places where there isn't a lot of transit service in the first place, so people may not have started from a place of being comfortable using transit for themselves personally. Um, but what you do see here is the progression of, uh, when people are allowed to do a particular activity like taking transit, imagining that an effective treatment has been found and is very common, and then finally, uh, when there is a vaccine for COVID-19 that people could have access to, even when you hold those kind of, um, uh, kind of situations in mind, people are generally less--the least comfortable with taking transit out of this suite of different things that they could be doing.

Then like Susanne mentioned, looking specifically at Kendall Square, uh, Kendall area workers, um, they were surveyed in, uh, early July. And MassINC presented these results to the Kendall Square Association Transportation Group. And what you find here is that these people, uh, these results tend to be representative of the--the entire area of the Kendall Square area but, um, essentially what, uh, Kendall Square area employees are saying is that they would like to continue working from home on a regular

basis, but the majority saying that they'd like to work from home on some kind of weekly basis.

At least a few times a week, if not every single day. Um, in particular, if you look at the right side chart, um, there's a difference of how people used to commute before, um, in February and March, and then how they plan to commute once they start to return to work.

And so what you see here in the grey bar or the lower bar of the particular mode is what people used to do, um, what they reported and it could be that these numbers add up to more than 100 because people chose multiple ways to get to work within a week. And then what they plan to do, uh, you know, when they're allowed to return to work or when they do go to return to work. Um, I want to highlight the difference between, uh, the drive alone and subway in this case.

Um, what you see here, when you compare the two numbers for the subway as a pretty significant drop, which you also see with commuter rail and with buses and you see a little bit of a less significant drop with walking and carpooling, but where you see the most increase is with bicycling and with driving alone and in particular the



drive alone is a little bit more significant. Um, I think with that, those are the types of data that we've seen, uh, in the different, uh, neighborhoods in Cambridge. And I'll pass it on to Joe for the next part.

**JOSEPH BARR:** Thanks, Andy. And to you, Mr. Chair. Um, I also just mentioned that we're, um, joined in the Zoom by a couple of my staff, uh, Brooke McKenna, who's our assistant Director for Street Management, and Patrick Baxter, who's our engineering manager, who, uh, can help answer questions if that's appropriate, uh, later on. Um, so I'm just gonna walk through, uh, briefly sort of what we've been doing in terms of street changes, uh, and some thoughts on what might come next.

Uh, some of this has already been presented in prior council meetings but it seemed like it was worth making sure that everyone was up to speed, uh, on, um, kind of the--the work we've been doing. And those, um, street changes really fall into three categories.

Uh, the most important, I would say is providing space for physical distancing, uh, so people have the room on the street in order-- On the sidewalk in order to be able to move around freely, uh, and stay out of each other's way

and keep the, you know, six foot distance that we're all being, uh, asked to provide to keep ourselves and--and our--our neighbors safe.

Uh, the second is, uh, also extremely important, uh, supporting local businesses, uh, and the third, uh, and the one that we've probably done the least on, but we definitely want to talk more about this afternoon, is, uh, improving transit operations, uh, and helping support the MBTA and its riders. And as Andy talked about, obviously one of the big concerns coming out of this is how does transit respond to this?

Um, and, uh, how do we ensure that we bring our transit system back in a meaningful way and don't resort--Lead, uh, to, uh, many more people driving alone, which is not something that either our transportation system or our environment, um, can support.

Um, so, uh, as I think most folks know and was alluded to in the public comment, we've have been working, uh, on our, uh, or have implemented our first pilot set of shared streets. Uh, and this just gives you an idea of what that looks like in practice. It's a little hard to tell 'cause of the shade of the trees, which is obviously a good

thing to have but often the distance, there's some people walking and I think running in the street, in the shot.

So, we are seeing use of these streets, uh, in the-- the manner that's intended, which is, uh, you know, cars driving slowly, not necessarily quite as slowly as we would like, as well as, um, people, you know, being able to use the street space more flexibly, uh, to get around and keep themselves safe, uh, in a variety of circumstances. Um, so the initial set of Shared Streets, uh, is, um, or sorry, our magazine street in Cambridge Port for pretty much its entire length, uh, Harvard Street from Quincy to, uh, Prospect Street and then the segment from Prospect to, uh, Portland, we're--we're doing some additional outreach related to that.

Uh, and then Garden Street, uh, connecting from Concord Ave out towards Danehy Park and Field Street, as well as sort of the little bit of con-- Little, what's often referred to as little Concord Ave that, that connects to the common, uh, and then onto a bunch of other destinations.

Um, so, since the implementation of the initial set of Pilot Shared Streets, we've been working towards expanding

the program, uh, and listening to the community in terms of where they would like to see additional streets or additional shared streets implemented.

So this, uh, postcard that you see, the front and back of, uh, went out, um, earlier this month to every address in Cambridge, um, to let them know about Shared Streets and about the, um, ability to provide additional comments through the website that's listed there, uh, both through a map as well as through a comment form, or they can call us or email us with their thoughts and comments.

Um, so our hope is that with this outreach, uh, most folks in Cambridge are at least aware that this is happening, uh, and also aware that there are opportunities to provide feedback, uh, on the existing shared streets as well as where we should expand them to in the future. Um, and importantly there's a--there's a-- We had a community webinar back at the end of June before we unveiled the Pilot Shared Streets, and we're having another community webinar next Tuesday, um, to kind of talk about what comes next with the Shared Streets Program.

Um, so I encourage anyone who's, um, watching, listening to this to participate in that, if they're

interested in learning more about, um, the--the Shared Streets program. Uh, in terms of supporting business, um, our, we started, uh, early in the, um, COVID-19, uh, pandemic. It's on me, uh, with, uh, at providing pickup zones for local businesses. Um, this is just an example. Um, I should have really gone and gotten the picture of an actual one since they've been out there for a while.

Um, but, uh, the idea is, you know, restaurants and also retail businesses where people are picking stuff up rather than shopping directly in the store, eating directly in the restaurant. We've--we've set these up in--in more than 20 locations, uh, around the city, and also helped to support the Picket Up Cambridge initiative to have people use, um, you know, pick up their food themselves rather than use, uh, some of the delivery services. So those again, have been in place, uh, now for--for several months, uh, and we're happy to expand these, uh, as--as folks, um, are interested.

Um, and then the other significant piece is really, uh, providing space for outdoor dining. And this is just an example of a very simple setup on North Mass Ave, um, and we are seeing, um, these in locations different levels of,

you know, fanciness and complexity in terms of how they're laid out, um, all--all over the city, there--there's at this point, uh, well over 50 of these locations, uh, that have--that have been set up, uh, working in partnership with the restaurants.

And I think one of the important pieces here is that we've really wanted to make sure that the restaurants are on board with what we're doing and--and be responsive to their needs, uh, rather than giving them something that they don't want. And so that's--that's been part of the--the back and forth to make sure that these are, um, successful.

Uh, and then in a few locations that I think folks are familiar with, perhaps, but just in case we've done sort of some more significant interventions, um, the most significant is really Inman Square, where we converted, um, a couple of blocks of Cambridge Street to one way, uh, with bike lanes in each direction to allow for, you know, about half the street--a little more than half the street to be dedicated to outdoor dining for a series of restaurants, uh, that have limited space on the sidewalk, uh, and this allows the sidewalk to continue to function as a sidewalk

while allowing these businesses to have, uh, you know, pretty, uh, meaningful amount of space for outdoor dining.

And they would say that, you know, the feedback we've gotten on this has been extremely, uh, positive, uh, in general, uh, and the restaurants seem quite happy with their ability to--to use the space, um, more flexibly. Uh, and then similarly in Central Square in the block between, um, Norfolk Street and Brookline Street, uh, we also kind of did some less significant, but still very, very, uh, meaningful changes to the street to again, open up not quite as much space, but in almost 19 foot wide area that, uh, the several restaurants in that block, uh, which all kind of abut each other can use for outdoor dining.

And again, this is much more elaborately set up now than it is in this picture, um, which is really the--the first day that even the--the tables were just starting to get put out.

Uh, and so I think, again, this is seems to have been a very successful, uh, example, and--and I think really has illustrated to the businesses and the restaurants what's possible and kind of inspired them to do more with the space, uh, as much as possible. Um, I think one of the

important things also about these in general is that we've tried to, um, you know, leave it to the restaurants to figure out how much they want to invest.

Uh, so some restaurants want to keep it very simple because perhaps, you know, financially that's all they can manage, and we just want to help support them in something very simple. And if they want to get very elaborate, we've seen, you know, some pretty significant, you know, construction out of wood and other things, um, to really, um, you know, build out a--a much more significant space that's--that's obviously fine as well.

Um, the other important Central Square thing to mention is certainly Starlight Square, which is under construction, which will create a performance venue, uh, as well as additional outdoor dining space and space for the Margaret Fuller House, uh, and other cultural activities to occur in our parking lot five, uh, between now and November.

Um, and so we're very excited to see that get underway, and I think that'll be a extremely creative example of the--the kinds of space for reuse that can happen that goes beyond just outdoor dining but really



helped support, you know, cultural institutions and the liveliness and vitality of Central Square, uh, which is obviously important to all of us.

Uh, and then finally, we've--we've also had some similar, um, more elaborate spaces in--in Harvard Square, particularly on Bow Street, um, behind the, um, uh, Boathouse and Daedalus Restaurant. This is just a picture showing that area.

Um, and I just wanted to pause here for a second and note that there was, um, a policy order that the council had passed, um, last year actually, uh, asking us to look at, uh, identifying additional open spaces in, um, uh, Harvard Square for sort of summer activities.

Uh, I believe it was, um, 19-- Waiting report, 19-123 and, um, we were really-- Actually this--this January and February had been talking with the Harvard Square Business Association, and we're very excited to provide a response about the interesting ideas that they had of how to, you know, close off some space on weekends and really create some activation or additional activation in the square beyond what the, you know, significant activities that HSBI already does unfortunately, obviously, those are the kinds

of--those kinds of group communal activities are the kinds of things that we're not really encouraging in this moment.

So, um, I just wanted to mention that we had not lost track of that desire and that need or that--that push in Harvard Square and it's something we hope to return to in the future once we're able to, you know, have more significant, um, types of, you know, group activities and special events, um, hopefully in the, you know, sometime in--in the not to--to distant future.

But we'll see. But again, I just want to make clear we had not forgotten about that--that policy order, and--and we certainly were hoping we could have done something this summer and unfortunately, obviously we're not able to. Uh, and then finally, um, oops-- The, um, the last thing--the last element of our sort of response is the transit support, uh, and helping the T, uh, and obviously there's also, uh, folks from the T, uh, coming--coming in a--in a few minutes to speak, uh, as well.

But I think we're-- As Susanne alluded to, we're-- we're looking at really, uh, two things. One, um, looking at more, uh, bus lanes, um, and, uh, you know, those are very important in this moment because we need to make sure

that if we're gonna have transit be successful, transit needs to run as reliably and as--as quickly as possible, um, both to make it as attractive as possible but, you know, even more importantly, from a public health and COVID response perspective, we don't want to have, you know, unexpected crowding on buses because of bunching and other service unreliability.

So, uh, even though traffic volumes are not, you know, back up to where, uh, they were in the past and traffic ingestion has not returned, although we're starting to see, you know, bits and pieces of that, um, you know, I think it's important that we think now about how we can better serve the bus system, um, and again, make sure that those services operate, uh, reliably for a couple different reasons and again, the--the council had--had asked us to look at additional bus facilities along with bike lanes in a--in account, in a policy order from earlier this year.

Um, and so we are, you know, specifically on Mass Ave and so we are looking, um, at a few different locations on Mass Ave and--and in partnership and in some cases with the T and in other cases, we're sort of looking at them based on prior planning work that the city had done, um, and

trying to figure out there's something that's--that makes sense in the current moment to respond to COVID.

Uh, and then also additional high ridership corridors, um, you know, beyond Mass Avenue, I think one--one that we're kind of looking particularly actively at and--and want to potentially engage with the community a little bit on in the future is--is Western Avenue, but there may be other locations, uh, that make sense for additional, you know, bus lanes that would be, you know, kind of temporary for COVID response but, you know, might potentially lead to something else in the future if they turn out to make sense for the longer term.

Um, and then again, as--as Andy and Susanne referred to looking at expanding bus stop areas, um, the MBTA has been working--has been tracking ridership, uh, as I'm sure they'll talk about and understanding where there's the most, uh, the busiest bus stops pretty in this moment.

We--we know where they are under normal conditions, but the pa--the patterns have changed somewhat, uh, as a result--a result of COVID travel changes. Um, and so looking at those durable locations, uh, and figuring out are there things we can do to help--help with physical

distancing? So again, we don't wind it with people crowding together the bus stop because there's just nowhere else for them to go, or for that matter, pedestrians passing by feeling like they don't have a safe way to get through because there's so many people waiting at a bus stop. So, we haven't yet seen that as a--as a really significant problem.

But again, I think as--as ridership, uh, hopefully continues to grow and--and some additional activities return to normal, uh, we want to be make sure we're kind of on, uh, keeping an eye on that and are ready to respond as--as necessary. Um, so that is our presentation, Mr. Chair. Thank you very much for the opportunity to share it with you.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Absolutely. Thank you all. Um, so we'll now go to Wes Edwards from the MBTA, uh, who's joining us remotely. Um, I believe he's able to share his screen, um, once we have that up. Um, once that's working, I'll just ask Wes, uh, if he could introduce himself and then start with the--the presentation.

**WES EDWARDS:** Thank you, everyone. Let me just get my screen up. Um, gonna get the PDF here.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** And Wes, if you could hold off, uh, just one moment. Um, and we have to close public comment. I don't believe we had anyone else, uh, sign up? No. Okay, great. So with that, uh, I'll accept a motion to close public comment from one of the other committee members. Great. Um, so on that motion, uh, Mr. Clerk .

**City Clerk Anthony Wilson called the roll:**

Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon - Yes

Councillor Patricia M. Nolan - Yes

Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr. - Yes

Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan - Yes

Councillor Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler - Yes

**Yes-5, No-0, Absent-0, Motion passed.**

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Great. So, public comment is now closed. Um, so now we'll turn it, uh, over to Wes. If you could introduce yourself then and start with the presentation.

**WES EDWARDS:** Great. Thank you, everyone. Um, thank you, Chair. Thank you, Council members and--and, uh, Cambridge staff today for having me. Um, I appreciate having the opportunity to present to the Transportation

Public Utilities Commission today. I am really quickly make sure I can share this. Can I get a confirmation that you guys can see the presentation on the screen?

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** We can, yes. Thank you.

**WES EDWARDS:** Perfect. So, um, thank you again. So, mine is Wes Edwards. I am the MBTA assistant General Manager of Service Development. I work in the operations, planning, scheduling, and strategy department. Really, what I focus on sort of for the MBTA is sort of how our bus service planning, both on the service side that we plan, and then sort of the infrastructure support, our bus service sort of work together. And a lot of this really relies on engaging, um, cities and towns because you guys are on the streets, the curbs, the signals where our buses operate. Um, I just want to take a quick moment realistically to call out, I think Cambridge staff for, I think probably having one of the hardest jobs I think I've seen in transportation.

Uh, this, the challenges we're kind of facing in COVID-19 has sort of really amplified a lot of the challenges we've seen on the streets and then you think

through like, how do we accomplish sort of social distancing and trying to manage a system where there's so many modes and so many challenges.

This is a--this is a significant challenge. I don't think any money across the country has ever really fought through and faced. And so--and I think Cambridge right now is, especially as sort of the nexus with so many different modes in such a dense area.

It's a--it's a significant challenge. And so I want to applaud the staff for the challenges that they've been facing and the hard work that they've been doing with this. Trans is really one piece of that, but it's a big part of it as well. So, today I just want to talk to you a little bit a few things. Here we go. I want to talk to you about our COVID--COVID-19 ridership trends, um, sort of the data that we've been monitoring as we've, uh, over the last few months.

I also want to talk to you about sort of what we've done to respond to COVID-19 and sort of what we're seeing and sort of how do we best accommodate our customers and our riders. And also just to pause for questions at the end.



So first, thinking through the COVID-19 ridership trends, um, much as sort of Andy had alluded to, we've been sort of monitoring the trends since the beginning of-- Since really actually our baseline has really before COVID-19, back in February. And we've been monitoring sort of on all the risk subway lines, the bus line, and also the ride paratransit service.

At the impact we've seen on public transit is we've seen a decreased ridership. Some of the challenges we've seen internally, are we've seen lower workforce availability internally. So, this is our bus operators, our maintenance staff, the supervisors in the field, they're either calling out sick because they have, you know, a 14 day quarantine or someone they work closely to, they're staying at home trying quarantine.

And honestly, just concerns about what the pandemic means is everyone is trying to get their arms around what is really the impact to them. We've also seen just a lot of increased uncertainty in transportation. Uh, it's typically as a transportation planner, we know that there's changes that happen in the system, but they're slowing gradual. We prepare for those.

This was a dramatic quick shift in how our transportation system operates. And we've done as a big organization with, you know, um, millions of riders a year, you know, thinking through how we adapt services, very difficult to change on a dime.

So, it's been an uncertain environment we've tried to-- Been--been trying to work in but we've really kind of reaffirmed and modified what our service principles are for providing service. So, we've been providing services for essential trips that we've been identifying since February. Uh, we've also tried to increase the flexibility of our service, but also knowing that our customers still need to have a scheduled service that's reliable.

So, How do we sort of balance that flexibility with sort of reliability and predictability. Also now, kind of in an era, we're thinking about physical distancing. How do we support physical distancing--distancing for our employees to make sure that we can continue operating, but also for our customers to make sure that they stay safe.

And sort of the challenge we have is we also want to encourage, you know, essential travel on transit only knowing that there's challenges with crowding that will

happen on the transit system. The key takeaways we have are we have really a non-uniform ridership change across the system.

Some route where we know that there's a lot more essential service workers that are served by buses, we see continued, durable ridership areas where we know that are honestly higher income communities where we know that there's likely a better chance for working from home.

We're seeing that, that ridership is not coming back as significantly. So realistically, it's a line by line, community by community changes. So, it's not been uniform across the system. We've also realized that there's a-- Our customers and also our operations are placing a real value on real-time information because it's not just like you can look at a paper schedule as--as you can't rely on a paper schedule like you--you used to, but now you can rely on your phone to tell you when the bus is coming.

In addition to that, we've been slowly adding crowding information into that real-time data. So, if you know the bus is coming and if it's crowded, you might be able to wait for the next one if you know it's not crowded. The other piece is, our definition of what we consider

crowding has changed in light of COVID-19.

Used to be upwards about 55 riders is what we would consider crowded bus somewhere near there has really changed about 20 riders on a 40 foot bus and 30 on a 60 foot bus. So, kind of taking a little bit of a deep dive into to the ridership. So we can see here, starting back in essentially our baseline of February through about two weeks ago, right before we began, um, having front door boarding on our buses, you can see the colors.

The yellow is the bus service. Our bus service was more than double our subway service, kind of in the worst of the, um, worst of the crisis in Massachusetts. You can see that big drop off.

The yellow line is bus and then you can see the green, blue, orange and red line all represent the different subway lines along with the silver line. And then the ride is the dashed line as well. So, what we've seen is a slow but steady increase in all of our transit services. Um, note the blue line was actually when we close the blue line for construction, that's why you see that big drop off.

Um, what we've done is a straight line analysis and we expect to be at about 50% of our ridership by end of

August, early September if sort of patterns continue to hold. Although given sort of a lot of the--a lot of sort of what's been happening across the country, there could be sort of another wave or a peak and that could impact ridership as well.

So, um, one thing I will note is that specifically in Cambridge with the red line and sort of overlapping with some of the--the route one, we haven't-- This--this data doesn't account for sort of shifts from say route one to the red line since the changes in our, um, front door boarding for our buses.

So, just kinda give you a quick glimpse of sort of some of the roots in Cambridge. So, we've been monitoring the, what we call the top 20 ridership route across the 180 bus routes that we operate. The ones that are highlighted in red, those are the routes in the top 20 that serve Cambridge. Route One was our highest ridership route across the system pre-COVID-19. As of two weeks ago, it was still the highest ridership route.

It decreased--decreased ridership by about 52%. We went from about 14,000 rider a day to about 7,000 riders a day as of two weeks ago. Additionally, the route 66, um, is

a significant-- Is on the top-- Continues to be one of the highest ridership route.

I will note when you look at like route 70, route 77, 73 and 86. 70 is about 58% of where it was. But 77 and 73 and 86, you'll see those are areas that we have, you know, the demographics are very different. We expect that those, um, communities have a higher ability to work from home than some of the other communities as well.

So we're seeing a slower return of those transit services. So, kinda looking at what we've done to respond to service since COVID-19 has kind of taken over since it's impacted transit ridership. So, we immediately did reduce service back in March to sort of try and adapt to the reduced ridership we were seeing across the system, but also for protecting our own operations and our operators to make sure that we were best able to manage sort of the peak of the pandemic.

So, what we have done is we-- Since-- Once we actually collected data on sort of how ridership was starting to return, we did change our summer service on June 21st and we sort of adjusted it based on sort of the new ridership patterns that we were seeing. Um, one of the--one of some

of the things we were able to do is actually begin to operate our subway at 100% of its normal weekday service, um, bus and silver line, we are operating 100% of our weekday service hours, but we've restructured in a kind of a different way than we had pre pandemic.

A lot of those service hours are concentrated on 80% of the routes. And this is really focusing on areas we had seen high ridership during the pandemic and sort of taking service away from areas we've seen in really low ridership. For example, specifically in Cambridge, we added 63 trips on the route one from sort of the peak of the pandemic, 44 trips on the route 66 and 36 trips on the route 70 to really help manage some of the ridership and crowding conditions that we were seeing.

Additionally, with the summer schedule, we have about 70% of our services actually scheduled where customer can look at say, essentially a paper schedule or look online and look for when that trip would come. But we are reserving 30% of the service in our system to be flexible. We call run on--run as directed. So, this allows us to have some flexibility as more people begin returning to work, to put service where we see it as needed.

And this is something that we've really been able to do because we've gotten more real-time information about where--where, um, ridership is occurring across the system. So, it gives us some flexibility to provide additional service beyond the--what is actually scheduled. On commuter rail, with for about 85% of normal service, but I will note that we did add eight trips to the Fairmont Line that we had agreed to work on, uh, to add with the city of Boston.

Ferry is about 75% regular service and the ride continues to operate at full service. This September, we will be going, um, we'll be going through another, uh, schedule change. So, we're kind of doing the--we're doing the planning for that right now. Um, we're gonna continue to rebalance service levels, especially as we see more people returning to work, trying to identify what the patterns and the demand look like. But we--we've noted that, we continue to note that we've seen continued ridership rebound on sort of work on our durable ridership route. Areas where we know people are relying on bus transit for, so their essential trips and a slower rebound on commuter oriented routes or areas with more telework opportunities.



Just kinda give an idea of like how service has evolved since we beginning the pandemic, looking at the route one. So back in spring kind of pre pandemic, we had about 269 trips a day scheduled for the route one. When we initially reduced schedules on March 17th, we dropped that down to about 212 trips, knowing that one, there's, it's a, uh, low income, um, a minority group, um, a route that see as might low income minority groups.

Also, it's a key connection to Boston Medical Center. So, we saw this as essential route that needed to preserve a high level of service.

Um, between March and mid-June, what we started doing is reserving certain trips to add back to the route one, although they weren't scheduled, we could operate them essentially in real time and started adding trips back. So, we were seeing more service than we did initially, but it wasn't on the schedule.

So now with the summer schedules that went to effect on June 22nd, we were actually able to increase service up to 275 trips a day. However, this has come on the back of reducing service elsewhere in the system, but we know that route one is a critical route that we're seeing crowding on

that we needed to add additional service.

So one part of what we have actually done. Two to promote, um, social distancing is our ride safer program. So we're putting messaging in our stations, buses, terminals, vehicles, um, try and--try and inform people to make decisions about social distancing. This is an effort where we're providing guidance to our customers, but we're not putting essentially markings on seats or on platforms to tell people where to stand.

But we're trying to provide the information about how to use our system. Um, our initial deployment for the Ride Safer program was focused on high volume locations first, where we know that have the biggest impact. For our employees, we're doing--we've taken a lot of steps for employee protection. We do now have a recent policy for all face cover--face coverings are required for all employees.

Um, we actually have face coverings available to employees, do not have their own, um, making sure that those all employees and all operators have them. Providing additional hand sanitizer and cleaning products for our employees throughout the system.

Anywhere that they're a touch location that we know

other employees have to touch. Um, we're also as part of, um, as part of shifting back to front door boarding for our buses, we've put enclosures for the bus drivers to separate them from the passengers to make sure that our operators stay safe and can--can continue to operate our system.

We're also doing temperature screening for all of our employees when they show up to work. Um, and the MBTA along with Mascot is, um, offering free COVID testing to all of our employees that drive up facilities to make sure that we are staying ahead of any sort of concerns and make sure that there's no barrier to getting tested and getting tested quickly to make sure we can operate--continue to operate service.

Um, focusing kinda on the cleaning and decontamination, um, processes we're undertaking. So, stations and facilities, they all go through a daily cleaning to disinfect. Um, we're doing twice a day in any of the high traffic areas.

We are cleaning them twice a day and then every four hours that our stations of facilities we're disinfecting sort of the high touchpoints on any surfaces such as handrails, fair gates, fending machines, anything in the

core subway stations. We've actually also hired additional vendors for disinfecting. We're using chemical fogging, electric set spring and other sort of disinfecting approaches.

On our vehicle side, on the buses and rails, we're doing daily decontaminating of all of what we call revenue vehicles. These are our subways, our buses that our customers run. Um, additionally, we are doing midday contamination at layover locations, um, wiping down the operator curbs in a high-touch locations our customers might come in contact with, um, including like the curb fairbox entrances, um, anything like that as well.

Uh, every two weeks we're performing electrostatic fogging for--and for additional contamination on all of our bus vehicles. And additionally, I'll note that anytime that there's a reported, whether it's an operator or a customer who is reported being COVID, uh, likely potential positive COVID-19 case, we pull that bus and isolate it and do electrostatic decontamination of that vehicle to make sure it's thoroughly cleaned as well.

So, kind of focusing, we've talked a little bit about the service, but I want to talk about sort of the

infrastructure side of what we're doing for bus service.

So we are--we've developed what we've been calling sort of the rapid response bus priority program. This is looking at, are there places that we can do quick build construction of bus lanes or other--other sort of infrastructure on cities or town streets to put bus lanes in, reduce crowding, speed up our buses, trying to sort of help alleviate some of the crowding that we've been seeing in the system.

It's really an accelerated process to try and implement what we can either by this fall or early next year. Really intended to improve service frequency, maintain better social distancing, um, but also really focusing on how do we maintain access for essential workers and sort of population as the region reopens.

Lot of the areas that we've been focusing our attention on are really focused on areas with durable ridership during the pandemic and also sort of where we've seen crowding during the pandemic and all still and there's some locations we're seeing chronic delay, um, as well, on pre pandemic and during the pandemic.

So, this is kind of the areas that we're having--

we're focusing in on. We've been talking with cities and towns throughout the region to try and figure out what we can do as quickly as possible for bus priority. And this is my last slide, but I think I just kinda want to like paint sort of the picture of why it's really--why bus priority is really important, um, for public--from a public health perspective.

What we try to do here is actually think about the different modes that you might look at. And this is sort of taking the route one, for example, looking at if you were to travel between Harvard and Nubian Square, you look at how you travel by car, how you travel by bike, how you walk, and then riding the route one bus. We looked at the data, figuring out what crowding looks like on the route one and ability to essentially social distance yourself by each mode.

On a car, take 16 to 22 minutes to travel between Harvard and Nubian Square. You can be in a car for 16 to 20 minutes and you'll be the only passenger and your safely distanced. On a bike, you can safely distance. There's no sort of, uh, there's not like a limitation for distancing yourself on the roadway.

You have a lot of opportunities. You're not in a constrained environment. You can travel by yourself, maintain social distance. Walking, it's a long trip, takes over an hour, but you're still able to effectively social distance.

On a bus, it can take anywhere from 28 to 47 minutes. That's because of the congestion that we see on City Streets. 28 minutes is really your early morning and late night trips. 47 is the middle of the day. What you can see here is we consider passenger, uh, passengers on a bus of 20 or more to be a crowded condition, or you can no longer, it makes it very difficult to socially distance yourself.

We look at the crowding data from 6:00 AM to 5:00 PM and then a P--and then another like spurt at 7:00 PM. It is very difficult on route one to social distance yourself, and this is the times it's typically taking around 47 minutes to take this trip. So really, if you're spending a lot more time in a condition where you can't social distance on a bus, because typically it's stuck in congestion and more and more people get on.

So, this is part of the challenge that we face as a bus system and working with our cities and towns to figure

out how can we make the buses move more quickly, move more reliably, reduce the crowding and passengers that are on a bus and honestly reduce that amount of time that you're in a crowded condition if that crowded condition needs to occur.

So, sort of the takeaway message here is like we look for city and town support wherever we can get it to try and minimize the crowding that's occurring on our bus service. And route one is in air, is a bus route that we're experiencing chronic crowding throughout the day.

So--so with that, um, I'm happy to either take any questions or pass it back to the Chair if there's over the next step of the presentations.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Great, thank you Wes. That was a really helpful presentation. Um, so what I was, uh, thinking we'd do next is, uh, go to questions from committee members. Um, I had a few to start.

Um, if committee members, uh, want to raise their hand, uh, on the Zoom, we can, uh, make sure you're in the queue. Uh, Mr. Wilson is telling me we have a few hands raised already. Um, and then, uh, we'll go to non committee members, uh, and if there's time after that, we can do



another round of, uh, questions as well.

Um, so I'll start, um, I had a, uh, first question for, uh, for Wes actually. Um, you had talked a bit about, uh, some of the service changes, uh, that have been implemented. Um, I know, uh, one that was for a while and that folks may be noticing now, uh, that's all just started to change was the, uh, front door boarding versus, uh, rear door boarding, uh, folks entering through the back.

Um, I'm just wondering, uh, if you could--could talk through, uh, that change and sort of the impacts there. I know that, uh, fares weren't being collected for a while, which I'm sure was, uh, had a big impact on the--the MBTA as well.

But, uh, just wondering if you could talk through, uh, a little bit about, uh, that.

**WES EDWARDS:** Yeah, happy to. Um, so the-- We had been working with our unions and our operators trying to figure out the right approach, sort of return to front door boarding. Um, the reason that we actually moved away from front door boarding was really to focus on how to protect the operator--operators, make sure that they stay safe. And it's really for continuity of our operations to make sure

we can continue serving the public.

Um, originally we had cordoned off the section behind them, but looking for an alternative where we could collect fares again was sort of our ultimate goal, knowing that there was a significant, uh, financial impact from our fair collect--our produced fare collection on the bus service.

So, working with our unions and our operators, we developed a pro or we installed the technology we've seen on some of our buses, which is actually like a plexiglass door that opens and closes and provide that sort of barrier between operators along with the cleaning protocols and mask requirements for operators.

We think we can effectively make sure that operators stay safe through this process. And we began fare collection again, uh, two weeks ago now. So, um, we're continuing to monitor that. We're expecting to see, you know, a gradual increase in fares, um, as we see gradual ridership increase, but it was something we know we necessarily, we did need to get back to and make sure we can preserve the MBTA's budget and continue to operate.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Absolutely. Yeah. Um, thanks for--for that update. Wanted to just make sure

folks understood, uh, the change there. Um, uh, will, or is it just also going to note that there, uh, like the policy order that council had put forward on, uh, bus lanes, the council had also put forward one, uh, on, uh, a pilot for fare free transit.

Uh, and if this is a way that, you know, if the MBTA considers this or if there, you know, is another wave and things have to come up again, uh, that this, you know, hasn't been a council priority and something we'd be, continue to be interested in as well to see, you know, what Cambridge could do.

Um, I had a couple other questions that I'm gonna go to, uh, other committee members now. Um, I know, uh, Councillor Toomey, uh, had his hand up.

**COUNCILLOR TIMOTHY J. TOOMEY, JR.:** Thank you, uh, Mr. Chair. Thank you everyone for the, uh, presentation. Um, first, um, I refer my questions to, uh, Mr. Wes from the MBTA, um, at some point could you-- We appreciate the, um, the 20 routes, but it's by numbers and I was just wondering at some point you could forward to our City Clerk like us, number one with where each of those routes originate and end so we can have a better idea.

And also if you could submit the ridership, uh, for the 69 bus on [inaudible] that was not included. So I assume that's low, uh, ridership. Um, so at some point if you could just forward that to our City Clerk for that additional information would be great.

And also, I don't know if you had any hard figures on the ridership for the Kendall Square, the red line of people, um, getting on or people disembarking. Um, and I'm just curious if you had any--I--I can show you it's very long, but I don't know if--if there was a way to measure that.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Uh, Wes do you want respond to that?

**WES EDWARDS:** Yeah, so, um, I can't give you--I don't have the data on hand, but we definitely have that data. We can show sort of the, um, fare collection essentially the data on sort of how many people have entered the gates for the red line, um, and get a pretty good idea of what it is. I'd be happy to pass that along.

**COUNCILLOR TIMOTHY J. TOOMEY, JR.:** Thank you. And um, uh, to the other presenters and I apologize, I did not get the name of the gentleman who made a presentation, so I

just want had some questions for, I forget, I apologies.

**SUSANNE RASUSSEN:** Andy Reker.

**COUNCILLOR TIMOTHY J. TOOMEY, JR.:** For the--the first who did the presentation. The gentleman, I didn't get his name. I just wanted to add some questions for him.

**ANDY REKER:** My name's Andy Reker. I work in Community Development.

**COUNCILLOR TIMOTHY J. TOOMEY, JR.:** Thank you. Um, going back now, first of all I want to thank, um, the city manager's office and especially Matt Nelson, um, and the various departments, the traffic department, DPW, the license commission inspection services for the coordination and making the outdoor dining really, uh, so far I think is going very, very well.

And there was a lot of time and effort put into in a very sharp period of time to get that, uh, this operation up and running. And--and, you know, I've been to the Emma Square one doing very well. I haven't been to Central Square yet or up to, uh, North, but I just want to make sure everybody knows that a lot of staff put a lot of in community development department, put a lot of time effort into doing that to really help the small businesses.

It's--it's just so, so important. So, we really appreciate that. Um, on the Kendall Square area, uh, page that you mentioned, um, you didn't, um, have any figures on, uh, people, uh, walking or the Bluebikes and I'm just curious if--if any of that data was available. Um, and I'll just go back again to what I've been saying for--for months prior to, um, the pandemic, there was literally hundreds of people disembarking from the red line of Kendall Square every five or 10 minutes.

And that is just about dwindled significantly. And I-- Like I said, I walked there several times during the day and unfortunately, there was not many people that are--are walking there. And it shows, I think exactly how much this has affected and Kendall Square has--has been the economic lifeblood of the city. And I don't think that's gonna return for a while.

And again, just gonna refer back to the financial impact that that's gonna have on--on--on--on our city. Um, and the only people right now that--most people that you-- In Kendall Square that are working are the construction people and they're building buildings, which I'm not sure we're gonna be filling the future, but that's the irony of

a lot of the stuff that's going on.

So again, it's to the, you know, want to remind the city administration about those figures, the financial impact from, especially from Kendall Square because that's gonna impact this budget for many years to come. And I think we can really have to get a grasp on that.

But-- And I know Mr. Barr, we've talked a little bit about, um, on, uh, Main Street of closing that from like 11:00 to 6:00 in front of like where the Marriott is and-- and--and all of that. And hopefully, you know, that could, you know, bring back some Farmer's Markets, bring back some arts activities or something to--to bring people into that area. Uh, it--it's desperately needed.

So, there's some kind of, you know, arts programs and, uh, farmer's markets and just some creative thinking to-- 'Cause there's nobody there. And the only restaurants that I see right now, there are, I mean, Shy Birds open, Chipotle, Carver, I think Dumpling Door has just reopened, but like legal and um, a lot of, uh, I don't know if, um, Cloves been reopened, but so I don't, you know, to have more outdoor, you know, if those--if the Main Street is closed, people can walk, bike and--and everything and hope-

-hopefully have some outdoor seating for these activities. So, I think really it's important that we really, really take a look at closing part of that, you know, from Third Street, that Main Street to, um, to Ames Street and 'cause there's--there's no one driving there either or walking.

So, we just need much, much more activity in--in the--in the Kendall Square area. And so there's are just some suggestions that I'm offering to hopefully bring, uh, more, uh, walkers and bikers and pedestrians to that--to that area. And, you know, those restaurants can--can certainly use them.

Um, I think the Blue, I don't know if it's Bluebird or something, the coffee shop, I think they're just reopened. Uh, also, um, but I haven't seen much activity at, uh, Mead Hall. I'm surprised that they've got in--in legal, got room for outdoor scenic. So, I'm not sure why that hasn't taken place but maybe if someone from community development department can follow up with the, um, uh, from the Economic Development department with those restaurants to see why that's not happened yet.

So, uh, those just is my comments, suggestions, and uh, hopefully we can work together, like I said, to bring a



lot more activity to that area. And also like very concerned about the financial impact because that's a huge, huge, uh, financial impact on how we are gonna, you know, set the budgets in the years to come. So, um, it's a lot of impacts there. So, I appreciate the time, uh, Mr. Chair, uh, thank you.

**SUSANNE RASMUSSEN:** If--if I may make a short comment. Um, Joe and I have had the opportunity to--Joe and I have had the opportunity to be, uh, on--on, uh, some webinars with employers in the Kendall Square area. And it's clear that a very high percentage are letting, uh, and--and in many cases demanding that their employees stay home and continue to work from home.

And we just saw Google is now, um, requiring their employees to work from home until summer of 2021, so a whole year. Facebook, um, to the end of 2020 at least. And there were many employers on the calls that indicated that their employees are not expected to return. And that clearly shows in Kendall, um, which is very, very quiet as compared to say Central Square, which is--which is by comparison is much more active. So, these big corporations that, um, are present in Kendall Square, I'm--I'm making

these kinds of decisions.

So it--it does have a very big impact also on--on the ability of the restaurants to open. And I think, um, legal seafoods is an example of what they have opened elsewhere, but they have not reopened in Kendall. Um, and just another, uh, note, we are seeing these big increases in--in, um, the cars returning to the--the roads 50%, 70%.

Um, I--I think that it's clear and as it was said that those are the reason is not because the eco--economic activity has picked up the same amount. It is because more trips are being made by car, uh, and--and that clearly it can't sustain, uh, that level of percentage of driving couldn't sustain if--if, uh, employees were returning in--in full numbers.

**JOSEPH BARR:** Yes. And just--just to add very quickly through Mr. Chair, uh, two things. One, um, we are in active discussions with the, uh, Community Development authority and the Kendall Square Association about if there's anything we can be doing on Main Street.

So I think, as Suzanne said, it's a little bit of a chicken and egg issue of activity returning and having something to activate the space with but it's definitely

something that's very much on our minds and is certainly next on our list of locations where we'd like to see a more significant intervention like we've done in Main Square or in Central Square.

So, I totally take your point, uh, Councillor Toomey and it's definitely, like I said, high on our list. Um, I also just wanted to mention, um, the, uh, Kathy Watton, city engineer is also available on the, um, Zoom, uh, if there's any questions relating to DPW.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Great. Anything else--anything else, uh, Councillor Toomey? Great, thank you. I know just, uh, piggyback on, uh, Councillor's earlier--Toomey's earlier point about the--the MBTA routes on pieces, uh, the--the--the 83 bus also is one to I think to consider, uh, especially as things begin to open up when we think about schools, it's a route, uh, from, uh, Northwest Cambridge through Central, uh, that has CROS students and folks from, uh, public housing rely on so, an important one to think about as well and think about data for. Um, next we have, uh, Councillor Mallon. Vice Mayor Mallon, apologies.

**VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON:** That's fine. Thank you,

Mr. Chair, through you. Um, to everybody, this was an excellent presentation and very timely, so thank you for being here today and, um, presenting all of this data. I particularly appreciated the presentation from the MBTA.

And I do have a question, uh, for Wes, I would say that I take the number one bus, uh, semi-regularly. I have been taking it more in the past month or so. Um, I will say that it is a harrowing experience. There is, um, quite a lot of people on the bus. I mean, when you look at that number 20 plus, um, I think when you think about a bus and 20 people on it, you know, pre-- Before times, um, it looked very different.

Now, uh, you know, there's a huge part of the bus that no one's allowed in to protect the driver, which I totally understand, but everybody is forced to the back of the bus. Um, and it is, you know, you're--you're on the bus for an extended period of time and this is a, you know, the number one bus is particularly running back and forth between Cambridge and Boston, a lot of essential workers.

Um, it's a critical piece of infrastructure. One of the things that Wes mentioned was that, um, the MBTA is looking to cities and towns to support to reduce crowding

on these, um, bus routes.

And I'm wondering if he could expand on that, what that city and town support would look like, whether that's funding, whether that's, um, bus only lanes, whether, I don't even know what that would look like. So I--I think I would be very inclined to help support the MBTA in that effort to reduce crowding on these particular buses, the ones that are, um, really carrying our essential workers back and forth. Um, so, uh, Wes, if you're still on the line, if it would be great if you--you could expand on that a bit.

**WES EDWARDS:** Yes, thank you, council member. I'm happy to. Um, so there's--there's a couple, there's two things. I think one is, there's two ways to reduce crowding, um, kind of key ways. One is to increase the level of service so that there is, you know, another bus coming sooner so that people don't have to wait as long reducing the crowning.

The other piece is, you know, really how do you deal with the congestion where the buses get stuck. This is really the fundamental difference between our rail system and our bus system. The rail system typically pretty

reliable. We can control what we call the headways. The time between the--between each train comes. With bus we're a lot more at the will of sort of traffic congestion. We've invested in about 16% more service over the last 12 or our last 10 years, but we've actually seen service still reduced by 12%.

This is really all about regional congestion. So what we can do, what we really look to cities and towns to do is figure out what are the ways that we can change how curbs are used, how signals are used, and how street spaces used to better accommodate sort of buses to make the buses more reliable. Um, people think about faster buses.

Uh, I would say it's not really even about faster buses, it's just about making that service more reliable for our customers. If you know that it's gonna take you 23 minutes every single day, you can plan for a 23 minute trip. But if you know that some days it will take you 47 minutes on the route one to go from one end to the other and that's your trip, even though it still might take 30, you have to plan for that 47 minute trip, and so does the MBTA.

We plan for 47 minute trip, so if we can rely on the

buses being having a more reliable service, we can actually start adding trips without--without any additional operators or any additional buses if we know the roadway works more reliably for our bus service. So, I think that is the key way that cities and towns can help is really figuring out how to--how to sort of help the buses be more reliable and move--move more easily on city streets.

But I will say cities have the challenges, sort of how do you accommodate all the different modes and uses needed. You have your bikes, you have your pedestrians, which especially along Mass are critical connections to maintain their movement and their safety. And then how do you sort of balance that with like the parking and the vehicles that are there--the cars that are there as well.

It's not an easy challenge, but it's something we--we can bring actually dollars to the table to look at sort of planning and some level of capital improvements to help our buses move more quickly. But we do have to have agreement and alignment with the different cities and towns, um, on that type of infrastructure.

**VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON:** Well, thank you. Um, I just want to go back to your first point, which was an

increased level of service. Um, you know, I think we have a lot less traffic in the city right now.

Buses are moving more quickly, it's just that there's less room on the bus, there's the same amount of people riding the bus because particularly on our-- Like our more congested bike or bus lanes that those people are still taking the bus. There has been no significant drop off for--for, you know, the folks that, um, are taking that our bus routes.

So, in the past when we have asked for an increased level of service, you know, whether that's more buses, um, we have been told that absolutely not even if--even if you threw a whole bunch of money at this pro--that problem, um, we don't have the drivers, we don't have the buses and we certainly don't have the room at our shed to keep more buses, even if you wanted to buy more buses.

So, I'm curious what the increased level of service would look like at this point. Um, if we did have some funding to provide that along our more traveled bus routes, um, to decrease the--or increase the--the social--the social distancing and keeping people healthy. This is where a lot of people are--are feeling very nervous about getting



back on the bus. Um, but we do have a particular group of folks that--that--that's how they get around the city.

So, I think I would love to know how we can increase the level of service, understanding that we are using our curb space, uh, efficiently. We are trying to ensure that buses can move more quickly and there's a lot less traffic. And--and Cambridge doesn't seem to be the issue. The issue seems to be the overcrowding on the buses given the less space and the--the same amount of ridership.

**WES EDWARDS:** Yeah, absolutely. That's a good question. So, one of the things that we've, you know, national studies have shown is that for every dollar you invest in bus service, you get obviously \$1 more in service.

For every dollar you invest in what we call bus party infrastructure. This is bus lanes, queue jumps, signal improvements to help your buses move faster, you get \$2 worth of operational costs. So, you get twice as much of the return if you invest in that street infrastructure to make your buses move more quickly than you do in the buses in itself. We've continued to invest in bus service and that is literally just to keep up with the growth and

congestion and we can even actually keep up with that.

So, as we've been investing in more and more service, our service is still being getting slower. It's, we're-- we're at a place where the, um, the economic growth of the region is happening quickly and the challenge the buses have is for being mixed with traffic and getting stuck in that same congestion.

So yes, it is a challenge now that we have at our bases. It is a fixed amount of space. It's hard to buy additional buses, although we are buying 60 additional buses, um, later this year that we'll receive delivery later this year. And so the best place that we-we're-- We basically take a two-prong approach. One is what can we do if we add service? And especially now that we're talking about 60 buses, then maybe there's an opportunity for that. But we can't do that without also talking about what can we do on the city streets. And I think that is the--the fundamental place where I think cities have the most leverage to figure out if there's something we can do on city streets to improve bus service.

**VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON:** Okay, thank you. Um, I-- My next question is around, um, it's more for our city

departments. Um, when I'm looking at the presentation that was presented by, uh, the traffic and parking and CDD around the survey that was, um, conducted, which I, you know, I think there--there wasn't a whole lot of people that were surveyed, but I do think it's, uh, significant to point out that, um, the percentage of respondents are saying that they're gonna be driving alone more, um, is something that we need to really address and figure out.

Um, there's-- When people are returning to work in the Kendall Square area, they're planning to drive more than they used to do. Um, and there's a drop in ridership on the commuter rail and on the buses and on the MBTA. So I-- My question for Joe and for Suzanne is really, if what we're seeing in Boston is some rapid deployment of bike lanes to address this issue and make sure that we on our city streets have ways for people to get around safely, um, not using their cars, I think that is, uh, a big fear of mine and the rest of the council and I think city staff and leadership, that the end result of this is, uh, people are gonna be moving away from transit.

Um, they don't feel safe enough to bike. Uh, so they're gonna be getting in their cars if they own one or

using Ubers and Lyfts a lot more. And we-- It's just not something that is sustainable. So, I'm wondering if we have plans to do any, um, deployment of any sort of safer, um, bike lanes and key areas to promote and make sure that through the Kendall Square area in particular, uh, people can get to where they need to go safely.

**JOSEPH BARR:** Excuse me, uh, through you, Mr. Chair, and--and certainly if Suzanne wants to add anything, um, that's--that would be good as well. Um, I guess in terms of sort of--sort of pop up or--or super quick build, um, bicycle infrastructure. I mean, I--I guess there's two things I would say.

One is, um, you know, we are trying to move, it's been a little challenging 'cause of outreach issues, but we are trying to make sure that we complete, um, the in around Auburn Street, uh, separated bicycle lane project that we've been working on for a little while, um, this summer. Uh, and we should be announcing a, um, uh, public engagement for that coming up, um, in the not too distant future that would then allow us to, uh, complete that project.

And we're also, uh, working to, um, extend that, uh,

from where it currently would end at, um, Putnam Avenue down towards city hall and have separated bicycle lane sort of from roughly where City Hall is all the way up, um, through to Harvard Square, um, or almost all the way to Harvard Square or from Harvard Square. Um, so I think that we are, you know, trying to advance projects. I--I think, um, you know, it's a little challenging. Obviously the deployment of separated bicycle lanes using barrels and, um, you know, sort of even more temporary materials is--is faster in and of itself.

Um, and that's something I think, you know, that's been anticipated in the amendments that have been proposed to the Cycling Safety Ordinance. Um, but it, you know, nonetheless, I think there's still a need for, um, the sort of balancing of, um, use of the street that--that Wes was really referring to and--and the community engagement and outreach to businesses that's necessary to make that happen.

So, I wouldn't--I wouldn't want to necessarily commit to anything 'cause I don't want to get too far ahead of ourselves and--and wind in a situation where in our--our desire to move really quickly, we've, you know, then harmed

another critical, uh, piece of the sort of Cambridge ecosystem.

So, I know that, like, for example, the popup bicycle lanes in Boston that were deployed around the, uh, public garden, a those have been under discussion for many years now. Uh, and also, you know, there's--there's no businesses that are directly impacted, you know, around the--around the garden.

So, I think it's-- We--we are certainly looking for those opportunities, but they're a little more challenging in part because we've also been implementing these types of facilities for a little longer. And so I think we have more of the sort of low hanging fruit already done, but we'll certainly continue to look for that, uh, those opportunities and--and certainly open to suggestions that folks might have about locations that are most critical.

I guess the other piece is we really do view the, um, Shared Streets Initiative as part of that as well. And obviously they're not separated bicycle lanes, but the hope is that by creating streets with lower speeds and also discouraging some of the volume on those streets that we're able to kind of provide additional safe route, um,

throughout the city and part of the reason why we've focused, which is--which is somewhat different from the way some other communities have handled their Shared Streets Initiatives.

We've focused on these sort of longer corridors and our--and our next round of deployments would hope to connect them up a little bit better, is really that they become part of a network for travel, um, both for, you know, biking and walking locally in your neighborhood, but also for people, uh, particularly biking who are going longer distances in providing safer, more comfortable facilities, uh, for those users as well.

**VICE MAYOR ALANNA M. MALLON:** Uh, thank you Mr. Chair, through you and I look forward to, um, what the expansion looks like. I guess we'll find out, um, tomorrow night at the webinar. I think these--the Shared Streets that we've put in, um, certainly do provide us a network across the city.

And I think it's going to be critical as we think about people coming back to work, um, and making sure that we have a safe way for people to traverse the city, uh, on a bike, uh, uh, or even walking. So, my last, um,

comment/question is around someone who called in a public comment. And this is something that I've brought up previously, um, at city council meetings around the outdoor dining that is in the street and the lack of jersey barriers that have been provided by the city for these, um, outdoor dining facilities.

You had a photograph in your presentation that gives me, uh, it absolutely, uh, gives me the chills every time I see it, which is the one that's on, uh, Mass Ave in between Harvard Square and Porter Square. It just looks like it-- it's so dangerous to me to think that these folks are sitting literally on the street without any kind of protection.

Um, I know in through Central Square, the Central Square bid, uh, purchase those jersey barriers that are separating the bike lane, uh, from actually from traffic and then that--that--those jersey barriers in the bike lane are separating the diners from a possible interaction with a car. Um, I--I--I want to implore us as a city to think about not transferring that type of cost and requirement to these outdoor or to these restaurants that are having outdoor dining, um, but to, for us to step up and say, "We



are gonna pro--be providing this kind of safety, uh, barrier for outdoor dining." I know we--we've had this conversation before, um, you know, when--when the patio seating is on the sidewalk, there's are usually a parked car on the street, there's usually, um, a curb.

Right now, if you look at cello one, or, uh, I think that I'm pronouncing that correctly, there's literally nothing separating people who are sitting and eating, um, with--with oncoming traffic, uh, on Mass Ave. So, I--I-- That's just more of a comment. I really want to bring it up 'cause somebody brought it up at public comment and I think they're absolutely spot on.

We should be providing jersey barriers for any restaurant, uh, that has outdoor dining in the street that's literally right next to traffic. So, I know they're expensive. I know we might not have access to some of them at this moment.

Um, I would--I would challenge us to really figure out how to have access and how to provide them free of charge, uh, to restaurants who are looking to expand into the streets so to keep, uh, patrons safe. Um, I think it's critical. So, thank you for the presentation I yield

before.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Uh, any response to that before we go to Councillor Zondervan? No. Okay, great. We're gonna go to Councillor Zondervan, uh, and then Councillor Nolan is up after that. Uh, so Councillor Zondervan?

**COUNCILLOR QUINTON Y. ZONDERVAN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair and through you, uh, thanks to all the presenters, um, have been very interesting. I definitely want to support my colleagues and their questions and requests. Uh, Councillor Toomey's point about Main Street in Kendall Square is very well taken and you know what? I don't-- Honestly, I don't understand what the hesitation is.

I mean, there's literally no traffic that needs to drive through, uh, Kendall Square on Main Street. It's-- it's just--it's completely superfluous, uh, road space. We can turn it into a Shared Street tomorrow and, you know, local access only and--and make that space available to--to people for walking and biking and--and outdoor dining and support our--our local businesses. Um, we--we have seen still to this day, zero shared streets in the eastern part of Cambridge.

And--and I don't understand what the holdup is. Um, I also want to support my colleague, uh, Vice Mayor on--on her comments around bus service. And, you know, I--I know this--this sounds a little crazy, but when an ambulance needs to get through traffic, we give them sirens and--and they get to take priority over--over the cars.

Um, but--but when buses are stuck in traffic, we throw up our hands and say, "Gee, we don't know what to do. You know, traffic is just there and--and we'll just have to deal with it." And--and again, I--I don't--I don't understand that. That's--that's not a--that's not a physics problem. That's--that's a human problem that--that we could solve tomorrow if--if we decided that bus transit truly has priority over cars on our city streets. So, I'm--I'm encouraged by the activities, you know, the shared streets, by the MBTA efforts, uh, to prioritize bus transit.

Um, I think it's great. You know, it's--it's terrible that it takes, uh, a deadly pandemic like this to--to get us to do that stuff but--but it's great that we're doing it and we need to do way more of it, and we need to do it way faster than--than we are. Um, and then, you know, similarly, I will support Vice Mayor on--on her point about

barriers.

You know, I--I had a few years ago a car actually crashed into my house because there happened to be no cars parked in front of my house at the time, and the driver lost control of the car in an accident and ended up in my living room wall. So, luckily nobody got hurt. And--and I, you know, I don't think there's an actual physical barrier that we could provide that would prevent, uh, such a horrible scenario and--and luckily it's--it's quite unlikely.

But--but what those barriers do, do is that they give very strong visual cues to drivers as to where the boundary, where the edge of the road is.

And that makes it less likely that they will veer accidentally, uh, out of the lane and--and cause an accident. So--so I think it is important, even--even if we can't provide, you know, concrete barriers in--in every outdoor seating, but if we look at what we did on Mass Ave with the--the plastic orange barriers, that's--that's fantastic.

You know, why--why are--why aren't we putting that all up and down Mass Ave and--and creating that type of

protective bike lane, which again, we can do that overnight and it would simultaneously protect, uh, our diners as well. And again, to be clear, you know, those are just plastic barriers, you know, maybe you filled them with some water, but--but if--if a car were to tragically actually lose control, it's not necessarily gonna stop that.

But that's very unlikely, right? What's much more likely is that the driver's distracted not paying attention and veers out of the lane. And even with barriers like that, uh, in place, which are fairly lightweight, at the end of the day, that still provides a significant level of protection.

And it also cues the drivers to remain visually alert that, you know, there's stuff going on, the--the lane's quite narrow and--and they pay more attention to--to getting through that particular section of the road. So, you know, again, I'm really, really encouraged and--and excited about these experiments that we're doing and--and I just want to see more of it and more of it done faster.

I mean, you know, I--I understand, um, Mr. Barr's concern that if we put in, you know, temporary bike lanes too quickly and, you know, does that hurt the businesses? I

get it, but the beauty of them being temporary is that if indeed we detect that there's a problem, we can easily make a change and--and remove them and--and come up with a different approach.

So, this is--this is our opportunity while, you know, our economy is--is slowed down significantly and our--and our traffic numbers are way down. This is our opportunity to try somebody to experiments at--at a fairly low cost in terms of, you know, what can go wrong because we can detect if it's not working and--and make adjustments, uh, rapidly.

So, I just want to encourage you to continue, um, with--with these experiments and to expand them rapidly, you know, again, um, having to wait until August 4th to find out what is next in terms of Shared Streets. I don't understand why we can't know that now. Um, I don't understand why Harvard Street East of Port, um, uh, you know, it's--it's still not Shared Street.

There is nothing in East Cambridge, Wilton Harrington, um, in terms of shared street activity right now, there's no connection between Inman Square and Central, um, and, you know, all of that would--would actually help support our local businesses if we provide, um, better access to

bicycles and pedestrian. And--and we see that in the data that people are choosing those modes, uh, especially right now during the warmer weather.

So, you know, just really want to encourage you to continue these efforts and to expand them rapidly and--and just to be less afraid of, you know, if people are--are not gonna like it or, you know, some people won't. And--and most people I think support the effort and we can learn and--and adapt very quickly as we saw even with the Shared Streets work that we've already done.

So, I don't necessarily need a response to that, but I, I just wanted to make sure that, uh, I expressed my support for--for those concerns and for--for the efforts that--that you're already doing 'cause, uh, it is really important and great to see. And then I--I do have a question around Memorial Drive.

Um, we haven't really heard anything more about that. Uh, you know, we've had several council orders asking to close or partially close Memorial Drive, uh, to pedestrian for pedestrian access.

And, you know, the regular weekend closures have resumed and--and Saturdays have been added, which is great,

um, but--but there's nothing about expanding that. And so I--I would love to--to hear more about that. Thank you.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Okay. Uh, response on Memorial Drive?

**JOSEPH BARR:** Um, uh, through you, Mr. Chair. Um, in terms of Memorial Drive we--we have definitely passed along. I mean, obviously it's a road that's owned by the Department of Conservation Recreation, which I think folks know. Um, and we've passed along the various requests and suggestions and ideas about, you know, partial full, you know, partial closures that are, you know, ongoing or additional full closures.

And obviously as--as Councillor Andrea mentioned, they've added, um, Saturdays and at this point they've--they've not been particularly open to those suggestions. So, I mean, we've continued to pass along the--the--the thoughts that we've gotten, but so far there has not been any particular, um, receptiveness to making additional changes.

Um, the other thing I just wanted to make sure to clarify, um, just the--the webinar, just 'cause Vice Mayor Mallon said yeah, tomorrow, but the webinar about--the next



webinar on Shared Streets is actually next Tuesday just to-  
-just to clarify. Thanks.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Great. Thank you.  
Uh, next up we have Councillor Nolan, uh, and then we'll go  
to members not, uh, on the committee. And then I had a  
couple more questions. Uh, so Councillor Nolan.

**COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN:** Thank you, Chair, and  
thank you to everyone who's presented and also my  
colleagues who have asked, uh, many of the questions that I  
had, had on my list. I want to start with a couple  
questions for, uh, Mr. Edwards, if he could respond. Uh,  
the MBTA presentation was quite sobering in many ways.

Uh, those drops in ridership are expected in a way.  
They're not surprising, but they're astonishing. And the  
long-term financial implications for the entire region have  
to be monumental and creating a lot of concern. Obviously  
first is safety, but part of safety is having those routes  
available. And when you experience a 90% drop, if it's  
temporary, you can go through it.

But if it's just slowly creeping up to 50%, 60%, and  
we saw the data that Kendall Square, I would assume the  
employees are not very different from other areas. Also

where car use, which is exactly what we don't want from a public health and environmental sustainability perspective, will go up a tiny bit. Walking has gone down a tiny bit and there's real concern about, uh, long-term use of the T.

So I'm curious as--as to whether there's anything we should look for as a city in particular, Cambridge, because of our, um, strong values and our financial resources and our commitment to sustainability have had a number of areas that we have worked with, uh, the MBTA on, and that includes some pilots about, uh, having the traffic lights prioritize the buses going through. We've talked about in the bike plan to try to, um, consider having bike only lanes on the major street of--of--of Mass Ave.

There's, uh, we've contributed, uh, millions of dollars to the extension of the green line in order to, uh, to extend that to more neighborhoods, partly to alleviate traffic within our--our city. There's--there's many ways in which the city has come through and I'm curious as to whether there's anything we should look for as a city in terms of those projects, whether they will continue to move forward, we'll continue to be--do these partnerships or will is the MBTA talking about any, um, major changes along

that, that may imperil some of those initiatives that we were very much looking forward to, to alleviate both the traffic congestion and simultaneously, since this is something that also affects public health, the more we can get people out of cars, the better, uh, for--for public health as well. And in particular, the folks who rely it on the most, we know our--our most marginal communities and frontline workers.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Mr. Edwards?

**WES EDWARDS:** Yes, thank you, Council Member. Thank you, Chair. Um, so yes, I--I first want to say, I think the-- As you may know, there was a safety report that the FHWA had--had the FHWA, the Federal Highway Administration had done in--in collaboration with the Federal Trans Administration looking at the MBTA, identifying a number of safety deficiencies the MBTA has had. The MBTA has gone through a strategic planning process and really shifted the tone, not only externally, but also internally as well, that safety is the number one priority of the agency.

So, I want to quickly just say that first and foremost, safety is the MBTA's priority. It's been--it's been clearly articulated both internally, externally,

probably not the right way to get to that sort of prioritization, but essentially that's where we are now.

And so I think as we think through it, our pandemic responses, we want to make sure that safety of our customers and our communities is at the forefront of the way we think about changing and planning for New York service. I think the--the other piece is sort of like, how can, you know, Cambridge and this other cities and towns help the MBTA kind of figure out--how do we best preserve public health?

Um, you know, I think we--we operate the service and I think this is really getting back to we don't manage the streets that the city that there are buses run on. Um, so I think that is one of the key areas that cities and towns are really able to help the MBTA is rethinking sort of how that street space is allocated for bus service and all the other modes that we want to look at and we know are those alternative modes to get people out of their single occupancy vehicle.

We think the T is a big part of that. Um, part of what we are trying to figure out is how do we best respond to the pandemic, right? And getting and managing the sort of

decreased ridership, uh, concerns about, you know, social distancing and physical distancing. But honestly, we're gonna switch quickly move from a crisis of a pandemic to a crisis of an economic crisis where we know that people have lost their jobs. People are trying to figure out their employment situations, they're gonna be more reliant on the MBTA than they maybe have been in the past.

So how do we also at the same time as responding to a public health crisis, prepare for the future knowing that we need to have a better transportation system that moves more people, but does it through transit, through bikes, through walking and gets people out of their cars.

I think that is sort of the challenge that we have as a public agency and working with our cities and towns, thinking through how do we improve transit for the long term, knowing that we need to improve service now. And there's a lot of public health challenges to--to get there right now.

So, I would ask actually that I think there's anything, I think this the, you know, the council and the city can do is really like, help us and I think help the staff really engage your own community to figure out what

are the sort of opportunities and support that we can get for helping support better bus service and movements and bus service.

Um, not only like politically, but also just thinking through it's--it's, uh, I think everyone would support moving buses more quickly and potentially, like bus lanes is a great idea, but often when someone--you talk to someone about a bus lane, essentially in their backyard in front of their house or their building or a bus stop in front of their house.

That--those can be challenging conversations and I think that's the support that we as the MBTA and I think also as Cambridge staff would really support from the council as well as engaging those stakeholders, helping them understand the value of improving bus service and bus priority. And I think that would go a long ways.

We have, uh, the MBTA, we have some funding to actually help support cities and towns with what designs for streets could look like and some level to help support implementation of that. But we know that we need to not only get the cities on board, but the communities of the people who live in those communities to support this as

well.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Hey, Councillor Nolan, uh, anything else? And just as a time check, we have about 20 minutes.

**COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN:** Oh, okay. I'll do quickly. I think these--these two really quick questions, but Mr. Edwards can perhaps answer these a little later and then I'll ask one of, uh, Mr. Barr and his department that if there's anything that the city needs to do to ensure more mask compliance, because that is the way that people will feel safe if we know that everybody on every form of public transit is actually complying with what we know works, which is everybody wearing masks, not just a few people.

And if eventually there is any talk in long-term planning to ensure more connections, the one that has been talked most about is the Alewife, um, Commuter Rail Station to have that connected so closely to one of the key lines in the red line. I'm--I'm just throwing those out there and we'll maybe move to just one question for Mr. Barr.

Um, it-- What I'm wondering overall that we--we can talk at--at length about the various questions that we

wrote in--in, uh, communication that we all sent to you about Shared streets. And I--and I wanted to step back a little bit and--and--and ask the overarching questions about how much we've thought about whether the immediate needs of the pandemic and what we're working on now line up at the longer term plan.

We--we know that the bike safety network was the medium term goal even prior to the pandemic, but now we actually need sustainable transit infrastructure. And as Mr. Edwards noted, it's throughout the whole district, but even the MBTA wants more people walking and biking. So, how is that going to be affecting our plans?

And it's critical that we have a vision for the entire city and the bike plan is the one that I know most about and--and yet that was really mentioned as a bike plan, not as a transit plan for the entire city. The kinds of--of streets that we've talked about that I've certainly talked about and maybe we've even put on the council agenda is, uh, the idea of networks not just through the Shared Streets, but using Broadway one way, the whole way Cambridge Street one way, the other way to really have the connected protected bike lanes throughout the entire city.



Not just in pieces, uh, around it, but that we also think about cars as we do that. Um, are we adjusting our plans based on what we're seeing now through this unfortunate testing period of the pandemic?

**JOSEPH BARR:** Um, through you, Mr. Chair, uh, I'll try to brief, which is always challenging for me. Um, the, uh, I guess what I would say is, um, through you, Mr. Chair, the--the learning--we've learned a lot from the Shared Streets, even in the month that we've had them in place.

And I think, although I want to make sure we stay focused on how those Shared Streets do serve us and help make people safer during the pandemic, I think it's also important to--to say that we are learning a lot about what it takes to sort of think about more fundamental shifts in how our transportation system works. Um, because I think up to now we've tended to be doing things that were not necessarily as impactful on the actual volumes of traffic.

They've tended to be more about speed and those kinds of safety improvements but I think that this is showing us, you know, both the opportunities and the challenges associated with trying to either more fundamentally reduce speeds or more fundamentally change volumes and change

traffic patterns. So I--I think it's a little too early to know exactly how this will change our-- Specifically, how this will change our thinking about our network.

But it certainly, I think will, 'cause I think that like I said, even in a month, I've certainly learned a lot about kind of what it means to make these types of changes to streets even on a temporary basis. And I would anticipate that those would lead both potentially to changes to these streets in the longer term, but also to changes in how we think about and how we approach changing our street network more--more generally.

Um, I think the other thing I just wanted to make--to point out is that the city does have a transit strategic plan, um, that was put together so a few years ago, but, you know, I think we do need to continue to focus more and more on--on how we support our transit network both in terms of the buses and the movement of buses as--as Wes has talked about, but also in terms of how people get to and from those buses safely, uh, both during a pandemic and--and in general.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Great. Thank you.

Um-

**COUNCILLOR PATRICIA M. NOLAN:** Thank you. I have other questions, but I'll--I'll send them forward and just say, we need to make sure we're being very inclusive about including the whole community and we would all, I'm sure like to see the feedback from the Shared Streets plan and 'cause we've heard varying, um, uh, interpretations of the success of it. So, but we--we can talk about that another time. I--I want to make sure other people have a chance to talk. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Absolutely. Uh, next we have Councillor Carlone. Um, and then if we had time, I had, uh, one or two other questions. Uh, Councillor Carlone. Councillor Carlone, can you hear us? I'm not sure if--you may be muted.

**COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE:** Sorry, I was muted. I apologize. That's unusual for me to be muted. Um, Andy, the term Eco-Totem, I've never heard before, in one of your charts. Is that the shuttle to North Station, what is Eco-Totem?

**ANDY REKER:** Uh, through you, Chair. Uh, so that is actually the bicycle counter that's on Broadway in front of the hotel.

**COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE:** Okay.

**ANDY REKER:** So, that device is called an Eco-Totem.

**COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE:** Oh, okay. Well, I learned something. Thank you. Um, Mr. Edwards, you've had, I believe, good experience with the town of Everett and a bus lane and I noticed, I think the picture you showed was Everett, but I could be wrong, but I believe what you've done there is in the morning peak hour, parking spaces are taken out. They're not used, uh, for parking, it's only bus. And then after the peak, I--I'm assuming 10 o'clock or so, it goes back to parking. Is that correct?

**WES EDWARDS:** Yes. In the city of Everett, along with, um, on Mass Avenue, Arlington and on Washington Street, Roslindale and Boston, we have what we call temporal bus lanes, which they essentially, certain times a day, they are required to be clear, they're used by the buses as a bus lane. It's usually a shared parking and bicycle facility.

We call it a bus/bike facility and then they return back to parking. Um, those are pilot--essentially kind of piloted throughout the Boston region. There's a number of them. We probably, we have more miles of bus/bike lane than

anywhere else in the country.

Uh, we've done a lot of surveys to sort of understand, uh, the cyclist perspective of those after they started using them. And what we've found is after those surveys, the cyclists generally strongly favor the bus/bike lanes 'cause they suddenly get 11 feet of space to use.

I will note, however, that they aren't appropriate for every location. There's very specific guidelines from what we call NACTO, the National Association of City Transportation Officials. That really gives you some guidance around the frequency of buses and the volume of cyclists. And there's locations where there's just--there's too much bus service and or too much cyclists. You don't want to mix those two. You really want to have dedicated facilities.

And I would say, and our preference is always to have dedicated safe facilities. There are situations where you have limited space between your curbs that it might make sense to do shared bus/bike lanes. So, we have successful examples of those here, um, but we also have very successful examples of separated facilities for both as well.

**COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE:** So, you're suggesting that Northern Mass Ave in Cambridge might not work, but it's worth looking at?

**WES EDWARDS:** I think we would have to look at the data to try and figure out if it does make sense. I will point out, I think the city had made the right decision on South Mass Ave to completely separate bike and bus. It was a critical area we used, important to have both facilities. There's challenges on South Mass Ave that we have, but I think we're working through those with the city. North Mass Ave, it's a different volume and I think that's something we would have to look at to figure out if shared bus/bike does make sense there or not.

**COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE:** And I know the city-- Last question, I know the city's looking in perhaps with you directly looking into, uh, connecting the traffic signal system with the buses at some intersections that is part of the solution, I assume, if the buses in the front of the line, somehow the green light gets extended?

**WES EDWARDS:** Yeah, I will, um, I might defer to Joe Barr, but we've had conversations about what we call transit signal priority and how to move those forward. I

will say there's-- When it comes to sort of what we call bus priority, there's a multipronged approach.

You look at your signals, you look at sort of the lane that the bus is in, and you also look at sort of the curb space and can the bus easily get to the curb, does you need to pull to the curb. So, there's kind of multiple ways to look at it. And usually you look at--look at those things in conjunction with each other.

But as for the signals, I mean, I think I'm gonna defer to Joe as far as sort of status on where sort of signal priorities.

**COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE:** Thank you.

**JOSEPH BARR:** Uh, so briefly through you, Mr. Chair. We are working and have been working for some time on a transit signal priority implementation with the T, um, using actually participatory budgeting funds among others. Um, there's been some technical, um, back and forth and, um, challenges around com--around not like people talking communication, but machines talking communication.

Uh, and I think, you know, we're getting closer and closer. Um, it's not quite there yet. Uh, and the part of the problem is the technology keeps changing and then we

want to switch to the latest and greatest, but I think we're--we're getting close and, um, you know, do want to spend down those funds and--and make those improvements.

**COUNCILLOR DENNIS J. CARLONE:** I just wanted to add thank you for the agencies working together. I think that is absolutely key and we appreciate it. I yield. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Absolutely. Thank you. Um, yeah, I had just one or two last questions. Um, the one was on, uh, outdoor dining and support for local businesses. Um, it's been really interesting to see this, uh, come up and the different parts of the city.

Um, I was curious what, uh, the departments had been hearing, um, from businesses about it's something that, um, could continue in the future. I think, uh, Mr. Barr talked about it a little bit that the Harvard Square Business Association, others had, uh, had already been talking about this.

Um, I think the weather will of course, uh, likely shut things down at--at some point, um, and of course everything depends on what's happening with the pandemic, but if--if, uh, you know, based on feedback and if things--



if this is something we should be thinking about pandemic or not for, you know, from April to--to October next year.

Um, and then the other piece of that was, um, from what we've been, uh, hearing from non-restaurant businesses and if there are other, uh, businesses that could make use of the space beyond just the--the pickup zones.

Um, I'm thinking of one constituent in particular who'd--who'd reached out, who had a hair salon and said they'd had a couple customers ask, uh, if they could, uh, have some outdoor service there. Um, and if this is sort of beyond the traffic department scope, sort of other city departments, feel free to to pass on it, but just wanted to ask about those--those two pieces around, uh, outdoor business use.

**JOSEPH BARR:** Sure. Um, so the--in terms of the outdoor dining, um, the, I would say the, in addition to the weather, but we do have some hardy folks who will eat outside. And regardless, uh, the--the--the biggest constraint is that there are, uh, there was a relaxation of some state rules, uh, around alcoholic beverages and the ability to serve those out in the street as opposed to just on the sidewalk. Uh, and that relaxation extends I believe

through November 1st, uh, or thereabouts.

Um, so our assumption is--is that, that's when these outdoor dining areas, at least the ones where alcohol is being served that are in the street, would need to shut down. Obviously that's subject to a whole range of things, um, and potentially the--the governor could extend those dates, uh, or who knows what could happen.

So, I think we're open to going beyond that date. It's just really a question of whether it makes sense. Uh, certainly rest businesses that don't serve alcohol, um, or--or are okay without serving alcohol in that part of their outdoor dining, those could continue potentially a little bit further, but we'd have to look into how that would work in practice.

Um, and then I do, actually--I can't actually answer the second question because it--it's something that came up recently and--and the law department, uh, investigated with the state because they're the--the folks who license, um, hair salons and barbershops. And it turns out that they're actually, I guess not allowed to provide, um, you know, haircutting services or whatever the official word is, um, outdoors.

And so although we were, you know, trying to look into what the possibilities would be, it turned out that this is just not something that they're allowed to do per state regulations. Um, so we were not able to pursue that any further. I mean, I--I'm happy to forward, the law department has a sort of opinion that they provide. I'm happy to forward that, um, to you, Mr. Chair, if you want to have that and you can send it around to everyone else if--if that makes sense.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Thanks. Uh, that's really helpful. Um, I had a couple other questions about the shared streets, but we can, um, I think there's-- because of the webinar, because there's sort of a longer topic, we can, uh, wait for that webinar.

The one other question I did want to ask was on a--a topic we haven't touched on, uh, that much in this committee meeting was, uh, about parking and permits. Uh, and that it's, uh, a question we've gotten from some constituents, um, based on, you know, everyone's lives are different, uh, with the pandemic, there are people here, uh, with cars who are, you know, uh, adult children who are staying with parents and don't usually have a--have a car

here who now, you know, would like to park.

There are people here for short-terms and are, uh, are wondering, uh, about the parking permit situation of that, you know, they need it longer for a visitor permit, but they're not gonna be here long enough to switch their registration to get a permanent permit and they're sort of in this limbo.

Uh, and wanted to ask, uh, if the traffic department had--had looked into this and sort of solutions for these people who--who aren't gonna be here permanently but are gonna be here longer for a visitor permit, uh, and that if there's some solution there.

**JOSEPH BARR:** Sure. So--so we have received a number of requests along those lines of questions like that. And we spent a fair amount of time trying to figure out what--what options we can offer for folks while also staying within the parameters of state law, which defines some of the allowances for the resident permit program.

Uh, and also making sure that we don't, um, sort of inadvertently create a situation where, um, it becomes easier for people to, um, commute and park on--on residential streets. Uh, and sort of, you know, the

temporary permit that you said was for your family who are visiting is actually or for your friend who's visiting is actually for friend who works at Kendall Square and, um, you know, they wind up being able to commute much more cheaply.

And again, as I alluded to, that's not something we want to support and it wouldn't work, you know, out on the street either. So we--we have done, um, and I'm--I'm not gonna go through everything in detail 'cause I don't have all the data in front--all the different programs.

We have looked at various ways to, um, provide extended visitor permit parking for people who do have family coming to visit perhaps for longer than normal and--and--and more frequently than normal, um, with some limitations.

Uh, and we've also looked at, um, extended, um, temporary permits, um, because, uh, people when they move here, getting your license and registration changed that the registry is taking longer than normal because of, you know, the sort of appointments and all the delays that are occurring due to COVID.

And also the recently announced, you know, mandatory

quarantine order that goes into effect, uh, on August 1st means that, you know, the--the R&V won't even talk to those people really are or allowed them taking an appointment until they've either quarantined or I guess now can show evidence of a negative test. So, we are sensitive to the fact that it's--it's more challenging right now to change your registration and so we are trying to accommodate those needs.

Um, it's a little more difficult to accommodate folks who are--who are borrowing a car from a family member because again, that could easily sort of slide down into a lot of people having cars in the city that we don't really have space for and don't really want because they wind up using them for commuting.

Um, and so we're trying to sort of keep, uh, somewhat of control on that while also being accommodating to folks who have specific use cases. So, we are trying to change our policies as much as we can in real time to accommodate those needs and--and, um, again, I don't want to--If I start digging down into any more details, I'll probably get them wrong, so I don't want to start saying too much more. We can certainly share more information, uh, with you about

that.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Absolutely. Thank you. Um, so that's--we're just out of time, uh, just closing remarks to say there's a lot of, uh, questions and opportunities that the pandemic poses with, uh, transportation, both public transit, walking, cycling, uh, driving, uh, and a lot of complications that we--we got into here that we can hopefully figure out and work through. Um, with that, uh, we are out of time, so, uh, accept a motion from committee member to, uh, adjourn.

**COUNCILLOR TIMOTHY J. TOOMEY, JR.:** So moved.

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** Okay. Uh, on the motion by Councillor Toomey.

**City Clerk Anthony Wilson called the roll:**

Vice Mayor Alanna M. Mallon - Yes

Councillor Patricia M. Nolan - Yes

Councillor Timothy J. Toomey, Jr. - Yes

Councillor Quinton Y. Zondervan - Yes

Councillor Jivan Sobrinho-Wheeler - Yes

**Yes-5, No-0, Absent-0. Motion passed.**

**COUNCILLOR JIVAN SOBRINHO-WHEELER:** We're adjourned.  
Thank you, everyone.

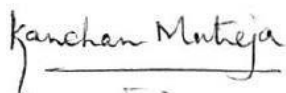
The Cambridge City Council Transportation and Public  
Utilities Committee adjourned at approximately 03:52 p.m.



**C E R T I F I C A T E**

I, **Kanchan Mutreja**, a transcriber for Datagain, do hereby certify: That said proceedings were listened to and transcribed by me and were prepared using standard electronic transcription equipment under my direction and supervision; and I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript of the proceedings is a full, true, and accurate transcript to the best of my ability.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name this 20th day of January 2023.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kanchan Mutreja". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Signature of Transcriber