



GMNC Monthly Meeting
December 7, 2020 6:30-8:00 pm
Online Meeting via zoom

Meeting Minutes

I. Council Members Present

Fatima Ali-Salaam, Chair
Janae Tooley, Vice Chair
David Halbert
Ruby James Saucer
Matthew Skelly, Secretary
June Joseph
Nikkia Jean-Charles
Cynthia Brewington
Lenore Perreira
Vickey Siggers, Treasurer
David Lopes
Michel Gray
Nichelle Nicole Purvis-Donnell

Council Members Absent

Mirlande Joseph, Assistant Treasurer
Joy Gary
William King

II – Meeting Minutes

- Motion to approve the minutes by Cynthia Beckford Brewington
- Seconded by Ruby James Saucer
- Approved unanimously

III. Presenter: Matt Moran, Boston Transportation Department, Project Manager of the Blue Hill Ave Transportation Action Plan

- Jeff Alexis from PWD and Rosa Herrero from BPDA also in attendance.
- Coordinating with several other projects currently in process along the BHA corridor.
- The three main themes of the project are Safety Concerns, Travel Time Inequities, and Community Desire.
 - BHA is a major high crash location for the City.
 - Mattapan residents have a much higher commute time than the rest of Boston residents on average.
 - Through the GoBoston2030 process, BTD heard that many people are interested in better bus access along Blue Hill Avenue.
- More than 20,000 weekly daily bus riders on BHA. 52% of peak period roadway users are on buses. Peak period bus riders are experiencing delays of up to 25 minutes in either direction.

- BTD has done a lot of public engagement over the course of this project so far. The project kicked off in mid-2019, the hope is that a consensus design would be achieved by the end of 2021, with construction beginning in spring 2022.
- Survey received 586 responses, the majority of which were from zip codes that abut the corridor. 56% of respondents reported the feeling that cars travel too fast along BHA. Double parking is a major problem. 43% reported knowing someone or being in a crash themselves. Morton Street intersection is unsafe, and more street trees would be really great.
- From over 1500 community voices. Traffic goes too fast, but congestion is also a problem. Double parking is a major issues, buses are often delayed. Pedestrians do not have enough time to cross the street, people on bikes do not feel comfortable, and that side streets have similar issues.
- BTD has also heard that their community process is insufficient, rushes, and overly favors bike lanes.
- In response, BTD is holding additional community outreach, including bi-weekly office hours, pop-ups, and community visits.
- The most important design consideration is safety. In order to promote safety, they're trying to make more and shorter pedestrian crossings, better bike connections. Performing a very comprehensive traffic analysis of BHA. Signal timing, parking, vehicle volumes and double parking. They're also hoping to cut down on congestion and improve bus reliability. Also planning to install public art, expanding green space, and improving the pedestrian experience.
- BTD is designing for future generations, and creating a long term maintenance plan.
- Next steps – Community workshops in January to do area based outreach with three meetings. Also happy to come to community group hosted discussions.
- What should BTD focus on for

QUESTIONS – funding? Coordination with MBTA? Would you say safety is the most important design consideration? Does the community agree with that? If you can just change the lights and make conditions better, why haven't you already done that?

Q: Romaine Mills-Teque – Resident and property owner. Is this configuration going to be similar to the Cummins Highway/American Legion Highway? This is a nightmare for commuters! The traffic is going to be even more horrendous after Covid and when schools are back up and running.

A: This is going to look really different from those other projects. BHA has way more buses on it. We're going to be using a full Traffic Analysis conducted by WSP. The double parking cuts way down on the existing capacity. The lights are also not really timed as well as they could be. Predictability of traffic and transit is our #1 priority.

Q: follow up – How accurate is the traffic analysis going to be? Volumes and patterns are all off, how could you do the analysis correctly? Also, back when Menino was in office, we had beautiful planters all up and down the Avenue. Trees are nice, but they don't really beautify the community the same way.

A: We collected traffic volumes in 2019 over a 12 hour period. Then they look at the peak hours during the morning and the evening, and then try to make recommendations during those most congested periods. Our data is pre-pandemic, so we're going to use that. We're also going to do more than plant trees, there are a lot of other ways we're going to try and beautify the corridor. We're going to try to maintain parking around where people live.

Q: Dennis Road – what's your opinion on the angle parking? It seems to slow parking – any opinion on that to share?

A: Charlotte Fleetwood – that's going to require a lot of discussion. In terms of efficiency of the roadway, protected bike lanes, etc, that space could potentially be used more efficiently. That's going to be included in a lot of the community discussions moving forward.

Q: Violet Grimes – Regarding the commuting – delays are horrible. I'm hung up on BHA for 25 minutes when I get out of work and it shouldn't be that way. When you say you're going to have a lane for bikes and buses, does that include school buses? Will the children be trying to get on the bus out in the street?

A: We're going to make sure our traffic analysis is comprehensive by using Synchro, and we're going to make everything much better than it is today by retiming the lights, so it will be better even with fewer lanes. School buses can use the bus lanes, but they don't have to. They'll make sure they're making their pick ups and drop offs safely. Also emergency vehicles can use the bus lanes.

Q: David Lopes – On American Legion Highway since they've added that huge bike lane, during rush hour there's a solid single line of cars, and nobody is in the bike lanes. Where do you live? Where do the people making these decisions live? We also get no enforcement in our community. How could you make these recommendations?

A: I live just east of Blue Hill Avenue in Dorchester. Residents who live along American Legion pointed out that speeding is a major major issue in their neighborhood and there was a strong desire for those neighbors for better safety measures. We know there are a lot of buses, we know there is a lot of traffic, so we're going to do a really good analysis. We need to make it safer for our most vulnerable roadway users. We also are working with BPD to develop an effective enforcement method.

Q: Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam – we often don't see enough parking and loading areas for the businesses. How is this plan going to address that?

A: We're going to spend a lot of time working with businesses owners to figure out what they need. We've had other projects in the past where double parking was an issue and loading was needed, so we set up a loading zone during the day and pick-up/drop-off at night. 311 calls essentially went to zero. We're going to make sure we're working with PLAN Mattapan to understand exactly what the community needs.

A: Rose Herrero, BPDA – BPDA and BTD have been working closely together on the best answers to these questions. It's also important to note that many people from Mattapan feel like they have to drive to get to where they need to go.

Q: follow-up – a complete, door to door survey of everyone on Blue Hill Avenue must be completed, because this is going to be a complete overhaul of the system. It's going to be unrecognizable to anyone here. The whole process needs to be slowed way down, because this is going to change people's way of life.

Q: Nicole Purvis – am I hearing that Blue Hill Avenue is going to be taken down to one lane – is that correct?

A: We intentionally are not showing any plans tonight because we want to hear from the community on what the best design should be, however it's important to note that in some places capacity is down to one lane already because of double parking.

Q: follow up – Everything is already a big problem now. The light sequencing is off, we need to fix the old system so it will be better, but if we're talking about bringing it down to one lane, we're going to have even worse problems. Young children are buying cars, they're not walking or taking the MBTA. Congestion is going to get worse, not better.

A: We know congestion is a safety factor in the neighborhood, but the traffic modeling is really reliable to make sure that any changes that are made will show everything works in the model. The number of people who are registering cars in the city is actually going down. We also know that the better the alternative

transportation infrastructure is, the more people use it. Including buses and bikes. When there's a better bus system, more people will use it because it's more predictable and efficient.

Q: Cheryl McDaniels – lives in Dorchester and works in Mattapan – I'm really upset that there weren't plans shown tonight. I think you're just trying to hear from us what our problems are so then you can just go make your pictures look like what we want to see! That's very disrespectful coming unprepared. How much outreach do you do? I've never received any information about this from my church, and if you had reached out to the churches you would've had a lot more people in the meeting. This is going to be a big headache, and all of us on the side streets will have people parking in front of our houses.

A: We're in close coordination with the Franklin Park Zoo and the Harvard Street community health center. We're going to do everything we need to do to be prepared for special events, which usually take place on the weekends when traffic is lighter. We haven't reached out to churches yet, but we would really love to come out and talk to you there. We'll try to connect on that. You can go onto the website and see what was previously proposed, but we know that there were flaws in the previous design, so that when we move forward to the next phase of the project we're fully prepared and have done our homework.

A: Charlotte Fleetwood – MBTA is bringing in an urban design team, which will hopefully provide what is needed.

Q: L. Elisa, President, Garrison Trotter Neighborhood Association – I've been involved with this project for a long time, and I'm sad to report that there's been no comprehensive economic analysis of the impacts of this project. I've been in city planning for 50 years and I've never seen a project so messed up. You've got to do the analysis and figure out what the impacts are going to be. You've said nothing about the health impacts of slowing traffic. Can't use the designs for Hyde Park Avenue because it's not as dense over there.

A: Thoroughly disagree on a number of issues. We're doing a comprehensive traffic analysis, and you know we are. We've been working with the community for the long time, especially via Kenya Beamon.

A: Kenya Beamon – I've personally been involved with this project for a long time. We've had numerous emails and numerous meetings. We're having very real conversations all the time, and I'm going out with them, and I'm telling them about real stuff.

Fatima Ali-Salaam – Thank you being here, but Blue Hill Avenue is not going to be designed in a year, it's maybe not even going to be designed in two years. There need to be many many many more discussions.

II. Presenter: Allentza Michel

- Powerful Pathways, Open Streets Open Studios, Mattapan Mapping Project
- We're taking the step of collecting stories from community members to share their experiences living in the community.
- Also working on the T-Talks series with Shavel'le Olivier with the next presentation coming up on Wednesday December 9.
- Sasha Hulkower – working on the Mattapan Mapping Project. Many opportunities for involvement:
 - Mapping my Mattapan, which is a process to map your neighborhood experience, roughly a 30 minute exercise.
 - Voices and Visions, which is two different options for oral history interviews
 - Neighborhood Walks (beginning in 2021)
 - Harvard CDP Workshop (January 8)

- Sign up here:
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScfeG5pEAREiusASFK_P4BXTKOMyAgF2p-f-g5PXPancWb4Lg/viewform?usp=sf_link

VI. Committee Reports

1. Zoning Committee – Report from Committee Chair David Lopes – we reviewed two projects last month:
 - a. 49 Idaho Steet – came in with 8 Article 60 zoning violations, very large building larger than the rest of the street. After hearing everyone’s input, the Zoning Committee unanimously voted to not support this application for appeal, and to send it back to the River Street Civic Association, since the developer skipped their meeting.
 Council Votes 13-0 in favor of the recommendation
 - b. 739 Cummins Highway – proposal came in violation of 7 sections of the Article 60 zoning code for Mattapan to convert the existing two family to a three family. The new building would be larger than the other buildings on Richmere Street. New building height would be greater than allowed. Not an owner occupied building. Committee voted 4-3 to support the applicant. Council Votes: 5-4 against the committee recommendation, and the applicant will be asked to come back with additional information at a later Zoning Committee meeting.
 Four in favor: Gray, Skelly, Beckford, Halbert
 Five opposed: Tooley, Lopes, Siggers, James, Ali-Salaam
 Three abstentions: J. Joseph, Pereira, Jean-Charles
2. Public Services – Report from Committee Co-Chair Matthew Skelly – Meeting tomorrow will be to discuss the Blue Hill Avenue presentation we heard tonight, and submit a letter to the City to use as guidance in their design process.
3. Housing Committee – Report from Committee Co-Chair June Joseph– The Committee has been working on getting classes going for people in the community to learn more about housing issues
4. Environmental Committee – Report from Council Chair Fatima Ali-Salaam – There are a number of parcels being decided on by the City.

V – Wrap Up Announcements

- GMNC election will be held on February 27, 2021