

Community Advisory Team Focus Groups



Overview

In January, February, and March of 2025, members of the Columbia Road Community Advisory Team (CAT) and project team members led focus group discussions through their organizations.

These meetings presented opportunities for the project team to hear from residents about their vision for Columbia Road. Through these 8 focus group meetings, the project team was able to speak to over a hundred community members. This document is a high-level summary of these eight conversations.

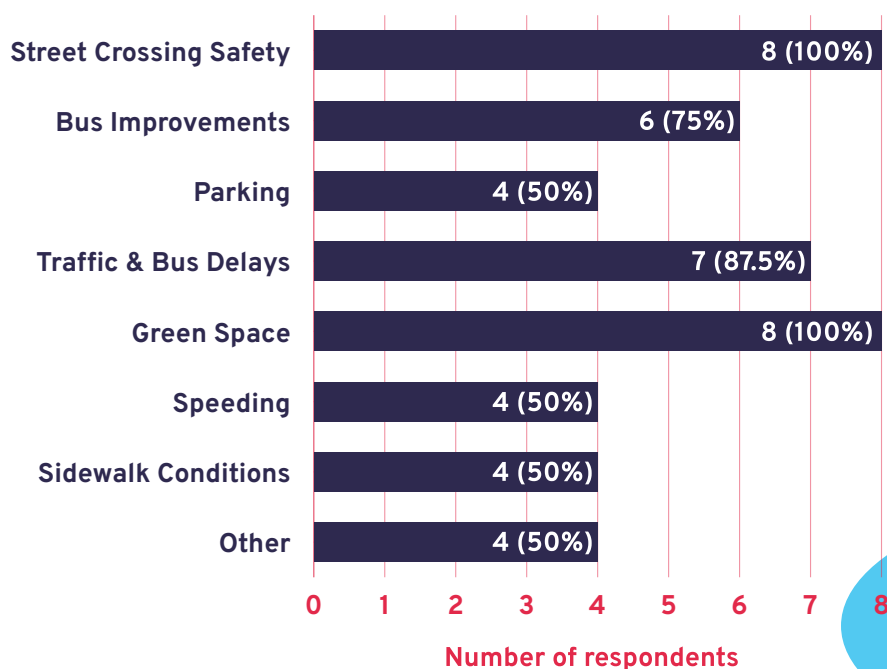
Goal of the meeting

The project team explored ideas for the future of Columbia Road and gathered input to help shape the vision with a diverse range of community groups, including youth groups, cultural institutions, active transportation advocates, social service organizations, and elderly residents along the corridor.

What themes came up in the discussion?

Street crossing safety and adding more green space were the top two concerns across all the groups we engaged with, closely followed by traffic, bus delays, and the need for bus improvements.

**Other responses: Bike Safety, Gentrification & Displacement and Extreme Heat & Flooding on the corridor*



Focus Group Individual Summaries

New England Community Project

DATE OF MEETING	March 1, 2025
NO. OF PARTICIPANTS	15 Residents
KEY THEMES	Street Crossing Safety, Bus Improvements, Parking, Traffic & Bus Delays, Green Space, Sidewalk Conditions, Other (bike and bus lanes)

Key Takeaways

TRAFFIC

Participants expressed concerns about heavy traffic and noted frustration regarding the American Legion Highway and Blue Hill Avenue plans which did not feel like an inclusive decision-making process.

TRANSIT

Participants emphasized the importance of reliable transportation, particularly for those living on uphill streets or relying on transit for mobility. Unreliable transit was seen as a major barrier, especially for work commutes. There was support for dedicated bus lanes.

BICYCLING

They were concerned about the safety of bicyclists and the impact of bike lanes on congestion but also understood that Black and brown youth in the neighborhood rely on bicycle transportation. Participants expressed that bike lanes can seem poorly designed, lacking continuous connections.

PUBLIC SPACE AND GREENING

Participants were interested in more seating/benches along the corridor but also worried about these spaces being occupied by unhoused individuals or loiterers. They were interested in the types of greenery that could be added to Columbia Road and how it would be maintained.

PARKING

Participants discussed concerns about losing parking through the infrastructure change



Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

DATE OF MEETING	February 6, 2025
NO. OF PARTICIPANTS	8 Residents
KEY THEMES	Street Crossing Safety, Bus Improvements, Traffic

Key Takeaways

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Crosswalk safety was a significant concern for participants. They emphasized the need for better pedestrian signals and improved visibility—particularly for the elderly and parents with strollers. Cars turning on red and running red lights were frequently mentioned as contributing to unsafe conditions for pedestrians.

TRANSIT

Transit unreliability and indirect bus routing were identified as barriers to using transit more for work trips. Opinions were mixed on bus priority measures; some supported bus lanes while others were opposed to those measures.

DRIVING AND PARKING

The participants of this meeting identified speeding as a huge problem on Columbia Road but were hesitant about narrowing lane widths. Other issues the participants identified were concerns with pavement markings that are difficult to see especially in low visibility weather, double parking along some popular restaurants in the area, jaywalking near Bird Street and Hancock Street, drivers running red lights and the congestion created by School buses during rush hours.



Center For Teen Empowerment

DATE OF MEETING

January 30, 2025

NO. OF PARTICIPANTS

14 Youth Residents

KEY THEMES

Street Crossing Safety, Bus Improvements, Parking, Traffic and Bus Delay, Green Space. Speeding, Sidewalk Conditions.

Key Takeaways

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Participants highlighted several pedestrian safety issues, including accidents involving cars turning onto smaller streets from Columbia Road and the risks of crossing safely after getting off school buses. They called for more crossing guards, improved pedestrian signals, separate signal phases for turning cars and pedestrians, and adjusted crossing signal timing, especially on wider sections of the corridor.

TRANSIT FREQUENCY, RELIABILITY, AND COMFORT

Frustration with unreliable bus service was voiced, including bus bunching, long wait times, and school buses blocking traffic. Calls for improved bus shelters included heating, more durable materials, additional seating, and better protection from the weather

BICYCLING SAFETY

There were mixed opinions on how road design could be improved. Some young people do not feel comfortable biking because of the lack of safety provisions in the existing bike lane. Some participants expressed concerns about cyclists not following traffic rules. A participant related a story of getting hit on a bike and then giving up on biking.

GREEN SPACE

Participants expressed strong interest in increasing green space and improving sidewalks, though concerns were raised about trees damaging pavement. There were conversations about balancing green space and concerns about loitering.



Dorchester Bike Kitchen and Dorchester Art Project

DATE OF MEETING	January 18, 2025
NO. OF PARTICIPANTS	18 Residents
KEY THEMES	Street Crossing Safety, Green Space.

Key Takeaways

Note: This meeting was not attended by a member of the project team. This summary is based on the information shared by the CAT member who led the meeting.

BUS AND BIKE PRIORITY

There was strong consensus on removing vehicle travel lanes, installing exclusive bus lanes, and protecting bicycle infrastructure.

ACCESSIBILITY

This group identified accessibility as a missing piece in the language of the project materials and goals.

GREENS SPACE & ART

The youth group expressed interest in having more green spaces with provision for public art. During their session, they reimagined sidewalks with art.



Dorchester Bay EDC Stepping Strong Group

DATE OF MEETING	January 28, 2025
NO. OF PARTICIPANTS	12 Residents
KEY THEMES	Street Crossing Safety, Parking, Traffic & Bus Delays, Green Space, Speeding, Displacement

Key Takeaways

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Pedestrian safety was unanimously identified as the top priority. Participants called for better signage and signals, noting that drivers often overlook them. A participant shared that their family member died in an accident at the Quincy/Columbia Rd intersection. Participants suggested camera enforcement to address this issue [note: automated enforcement is currently not authorized in Boston].

TRANSIT & BIKING

The group was concerned about traffic and significant public transit delays during rush hour. There were also concerns about bicyclists not yielding to cars and frustration with bike lanes that take up space.

GREEN SPACE

Green space, benches, and places to rest were important to the group. There was strong support for more greenery, benches, and resting areas. Some participants noted that existing trees cause pollen allergies or damage sidewalks by uprooting pavement. While some residents worried that green spaces could increase loitering, overall residents agreed that more greenery is needed.

GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT

Concerns were raised about gentrification and the potential displacement of Black communities. However, participants emphasized that Columbia Road is an important community space and expressed the desire to advocate for substantial changes to improve the corridor.



Fairmount Indigo Transit Coalition

DATE OF MEETING

January 27, 2025

NO. OF PARTICIPANTS

2 Members

KEY THEMES

Street Crossing Safety, Bus Improvements, Traffic & Bus Delays, Green Space, Other (potential commuter rail station at Ceylon Street, extreme heat/flooding/need for green infrastructure)

Key Takeaways

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

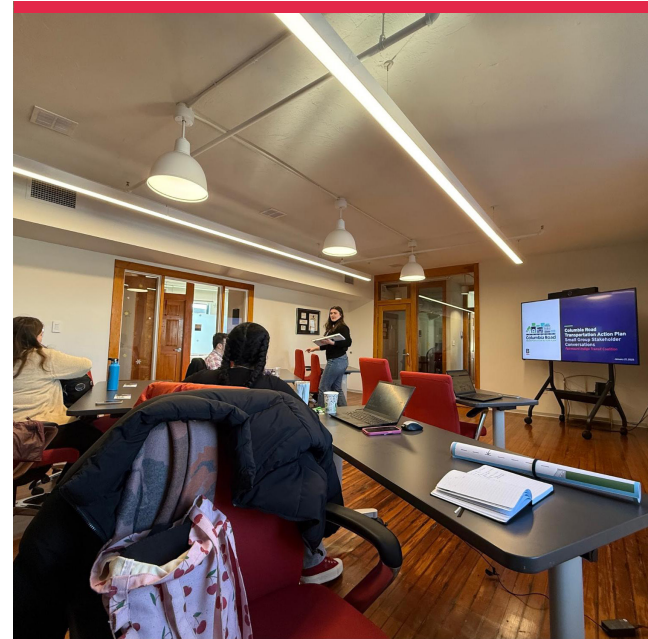
Pedestrian safety was the top concern. Participants suggested curb extensions with green infrastructure, pocket parks for green space and flood management; pedestrian refuge islands for crossing the street; flashing pedestrian-first signs (like those in Central Square); and signal timing to prevent cars from turning left while pedestrians are crossing. Participants discussed ways to reclaim car space for pedestrians.

CAR-CENTRIC DESIGN

Participants noted that Columbia Road's infrastructure favors cars, reinforcing car dependency and making it harder for pedestrians to reclaim space. They discussed balancing priorities to make the corridor more pedestrian-friendly

GREEN SPACE

Participants highlighted the Dot Ave to K Circle area as "very hot in the summer" and suggested adding more trees to cool the space and improve pedestrian safety. Green spaces were also seen as a way to calm traffic.



DATE OF MEETING

January 22, 2025

NO. OF PARTICIPANTS

3 Residents

KEY THEMES

Street Crossing Safety, Bus Improvements,
Traffic & Bus Delays, Green Space,
Speeding, Sidewalk Conditions

Key Takeaways

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Participants emphasized that pedestrians should be prioritized in street design. Crossing Columbia Road feels unsafe, and the lack of curb ramps on some streets makes them inaccessible. Pedestrians also need more resting spots along the corridor.

BIKES

The participants expressed concerns about biking safety, noting that shared bus and bike lanes feel intimidating. They strongly supported protected bike lanes, feeling that motor vehicles are consistently prioritized over cyclists.

TRANSIT

Participants frequently mentioned frustration with bus delays, both while waiting for the bus and during the ride. They also cited poor driving culture like car drivers feeling entitled to more space on the roads &, and double parking as something responsible for some of these delays.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES

Youth emphasized the importance of pedestrian and biking safety, followed by public transit improvements. They advocated for reducing the number of travel lanes and adjusting sidewalk width, bike lane placement, and bus capacity to create a safer and more balanced street design.



| La Alianza Hispana

DATE OF MEETING	January 16, 2025
NO. OF PARTICIPANTS	35-40 Residents (conducted in Spanish)
KEY THEMES	Street Crossing Safety, Bus Improvements, Parking, Traffic & Bus Delays, Green Space, Speeding, Sidewalk Conditions, Safety Walking in The Streets, Biking Safety

Key Takeaways

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Pedestrian safety remains a major concern. One participant shared that they were hit by a turning driver, highlighting the need for better driver awareness. Drivers often fail to yield to pedestrians. Participants suggested adding exclusive pedestrian signal phases and extending crossing times. Uneven sidewalks were also noted as a tripping hazard.

BIKES AND SCOOTERS

Participants raised concerns about bikes riding on sidewalks and not yielding to pedestrians. Two-way bike lanes were described as feeling unsafe for both cyclists and pedestrians. Bike lanes located between parking and traffic were also seen as unsafe and poorly designed.

TRANSIT

Participants called for covered bus stops to provide shelter from the elements. Some expressed concern that adding bus lanes could worsen traffic congestion.

PARKING

Uphams Corner was identified as needing more parking, particularly options that are not restricted to residents. Double parking was mentioned as a source of frustration by some participants

GREENSPACE

There was strong support for adding more trees along the corridor. While some participants were enthusiastic about adding benches, others worried that they might become gathering spots for smoking or drug use.

