Reconstruction of Commonwealth Avenue Phases 3 & 4
Packard’s Corner to Kelton Street

Community Meeting
October 27, 2015
Guiding Principles

- Livable
- Walkable
- Multimodal
- Green
- Sustainable
Commonwealth Avenue History

- The overall design for Commonwealth Avenue was provided by Frederick Law Olmsted. Originally called Massachusetts Avenue, the name was changed in 1887 when the widening of old Brighton Avenue (portion between Packard’s Corner and Kenmore Sq.) linked the roadway to Commonwealth Ave. in the Back Bay.
Development along the corridor didn’t begin until after 1892 when the city installed amenities such as sewers, utilities and easier access to adjacent real estate.

However, the depression of 1893 destroyed the real estate market and kept development to a minimum.
The electric trolley was introduced to Commonwealth Ave. in 1909 and development finally intensified as a result.
New Urban Lifestyles

- Parking Apps
- Smart Meters
- Hubway
- Zipcars
- Uber
- Parklets
Key Discussion Points

- Basic Cross Section
  - Transportation
    - MBTA
    - Bicycle
    - Pedestrian
    - Vehicular
  - Urban/Design Landscape

- Key Intersections
  - Packard’s Corner
  - Harvard Avenue
Commonwealth Avenue Existing Section
(looking east – dimensions in feet)
Design Considerations

- Multi-Modal Transportation
- Placemaking
- 21st Century Urban Lifestyles
- Accessibility
- Historic Preservation & Restoration
- Sustainability and Greening
Basic Cross-Section: **MBTA**

**Discussions:**
- Station Consolidation (City took lead in performing preliminary analysis)
- Accessibility Upgrades
- Mechanics, Funding and Timing of a potential Joint Project

**Status:**
- A number of challenges to fully meeting accessibility and station consolidation goals – *will be major $$$*
- *City project* can progress and *not preclude* future MBTA station improvements
Basic Cross-Section: **MBTA**

Inbound Track:
- Establish the new curb 21’ from MBTA centerline
- Generally 6.5’ from where it is today
- Roadway shifts toward south (and narrows)
Basic Cross-Section: **MBTA**

**Inbound Track:**
- Allows existing platforms to be widened; or new accessible platforms at any location
- Allows secondary egress walkways at any location
Basic Cross-Section: MBTA

Inbound Track:
- Allows existing platforms to be widened; or new accessible platforms at any location
- Allows secondary egress walkways at any location
- Provides room for landscape buffer at all other locations (contributes to “greening” goal)
Basic Cross-Section: **MBTA**

Outbound Track:
- Constrained by Carriage Road
- Existing platforms *already* encroach several feet
- New or upgraded platforms will be 3’ +/- wider

Maintain this curb “as-is” for this project
Comm. Ave is critical corridor: Project must provide high quality bicycle facility.
Considered various types and locations for primary bicycle facility

- The Carriage Roads appear to work well for the most part (low speed, low volume, intuitively connected at either end of project)
  - Considered shared use with conflict mitigation
  - Considered separated cycle tracks/buffered bike lanes
  - Head-in angle parking presents conflicts in either case
Basic Cross-Section: *Bicycles / Carriage Roads*

- One-way cycle track concept
- Issues include “new” conflicts at each end, and left turns out of Carriage Road
Basic Cross-Section: *Bicycles / Carriage Roads*

- Carriage Road / Cycle Track Design Concept

![Diagram of Carriage Road / Cycle Track Design Concept]

- 3' Buffer + 5' Cycle Track
- Safety Barrier Required
- Outbound Carriage Road
- Outbound T
Basic Cross-Section: *Bicycles / Carriage Roads*

- Cycle Track Design Example – *Sands Street, Brooklyn, NY*
  - Width accommodates standard street plows
  - Mountable curb

- Comm Ave space is narrower
- Need to discuss mountable versus totally flush
Basic Cross-Section: *Bicycles / Carriage Roads*

- Cycle track not compatible with “left side” parking in the Carriage Road
- Concept eliminates most left-side parking from corridor
- Consistent with goal of “re-greening” corridor and consistent with other City streets
Basic Cross-Section: *Pedestrians and Accessibility*

- Pedestrian location in cross-section same as today; ensure consistent 10’ min. sidewalk

- Major pedestrian improvements will be achieved:
  - From intersection and accessibility improvements
  - From providing additional accessible crossings
  - From restoration of consistent green edge adjacent to consistent and accessible sidewalks
Basic Cross-Section: **Vehicles**

- Studied several configurations, including reducing main line from 4 lanes to 2

- **Recommended maintaining 4 lanes:**
  - Operational flexibility including winter
  - More signal time available for pedestrians
  - Consistency with adjacent segments = safety
Basic Cross-Section: *Vehicles*

- Recommend left-turn lanes at major intersections:
  - Reduces multimodal conflicts; increases pedestrian crossing opportunities and safety

24 E-W Conflicts at Harvard intersection
Basic Cross-Section: *Vehicles*

- Recommend retaining vehicular median:
  - Controls unwanted/unsafe left and U-turns
  - Difficult to light the road without median due to MBTA
  - Provides formal pedestrian refuge at key locations
Basic Cross-Section: *Parking / Loading*

- Left-side parking: not compatible with cycle tracks or Olmsted Boulevard concept
- Right Side: replace angle parking with parallel parking
  
  • Consistent with other City streets, and consistent with historic landscape and greening goals
Parking Snapshot (July 2015 - Day)
Parking Snapshot (July 2015 - Night)

Nighttime Parking Occupancy
Harvard-Warren Outbound

Nighttime Parking Occupancy
Harvard-Packards Inbound

Nighttime Parking Occupancy
Warren-Harvard Inbound
Basic Cross-Section: *Landscape/Urban Design*

- Restoration of planted edges envisioned by Olmsted
Proposed planting along MBTA*
- MBTA concerns with trees/leaves on tracks
- Historically was a tree planted edge
- Helps give definition to roadway

* Contingent on PWD securing a maintenance agreement
Basic Cross-Section: Landscape/Urban Design

- Proposed planting within roadway median*
  - Helps control jaywalking
  - Potential stormwater feature

* Contingent on PWD securing a maintenance agreement
Basic Cross-Section: *Landscape/Urban Design*

- Restoration of planted “Boulevard” medians envisioned by Olmsted

VS.
Basic Cross-Section: Preserve Existing Trees
Basic Cross-Section: Preserve Existing Trees

- Preservation of Healthy Trees along the Corridor

- Preservation of Healthy Trees along both Carriage Roads
Basic Cross-Section: *Putting it All Together*
(looking east – dimensions in feet)
Key Intersections

[Map showing key intersections: Harvard and Packards]
Key Intersections: *Packard’s Corner*

- Complicated Location
- Importance for Peds/Bikes Grows as a result of I-90 Redevelopment
Key Intersections: *Packard’s Corner*

- Community Desire for Mid-Block Crosswalk at Naples in 2A
- Provide “Missing” Crosswalk at Packards instead
Key Intersections: *Packard’s Corner*
Key Intersections

Packards

Harvard (the "Showcase" location)
Key Intersections: *Harvard Avenue*

- **Core Idea:** Truncate Carriage Roads at Intersection
- Provides significant programmable space – a real “there” there
- Major safety improvement (simplifies intersection and reduces conflicts)
Key Intersections: *Harvard Avenue*

- Initial concept of truncating carriage road prior to intersection
Key Intersections: Harvard Avenue

- Reversing Gorham and Royce allows Carriage Road truncation at Royce
- Design must still allow for emergency and delivery access
- Mitigates safety issue at CVS driveway
Key Intersections: *Harvard Avenue*

- Design must allow emergency and service access
Harvard Intersection: A new neighborhood center
Harvard Intersection: A new neighborhood center