

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

January 26, 2022

2:30 p.m.

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

Present: Franny Osman (Chair), Julia Day, Paula Walsh, Luke Evan

Absent: None

Select Board Representative: Jim Snyder-Grant

Invited guests: Austin Cyganiwicz (Director of Governmental Affairs), Nirupana Velankar (COA Liaison) Rama Balakishna (potential TAC member) and Andy McGee (Consultant for River St project)

1. Opening

Chair Franny Osman opened the meeting at 2:40 p.m.

2. Regular Business

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes – The meeting minutes approvals are tabled.
- B. Select Board Update: None
- C. Citizens Concerns: Daniel Gilfix raised safety concerns about the town's roadways where there were no sidewalks. He felt speed limits were based on the safety of the cars rather than the pedestrians. Austin Cyganiewicz responded that a townwide speed limit of 25 mph for roadways where a speed limit was not already posted has been proposed for Town Meeting. Rama Balakrishna shared that the industry standard is that the posted speed limit is set at the 85th percentile. So, if 15% of drivers can safely drive at a higher speed, then it is possible a study will raise the speed limits even further.
- D. Council of Aging Update by Nirupana Velankar: The center remains open but some activities were suspended due to the inability to safely distance.
- E. Announcements: None
- F. Austin Cyganiwicz updates:
 - a. The RFP (Request For Proposal) for transportation services has incorporated the proposal for some type of microtransit. Looking to use technology such as Uber, as well as looking for evening and weekend services. Issue of the RFP in March will give one month for questions and proposals to come in. In May the contract is expected to be awarded with a start date of September. The current contract ends 8/31/22. Regulations require that an RFP over \$500,000 looks at not only price but also the services being offered. Franny noted that other communities are using an on demand system, such as VIA in Newton, that augments the services and fills in some of the gaps identified on previous MTC studies. Austin shared that other technology programs such as Remix are also helping improve services in other communities, particularly for on demand services. For those folks who

do not have an app, there is an option to call a customer service phone number. . The current draft of the RFP has language that is general enough to include other communities (such as Littleton or Concord), if such technology can be implemented in Acton.

- b. LRTA (Lowell Regional Transit Authority): There have been discussions with Dave Bradley at the LRTA to expand services to Acton. Boston trips still a challenge, looking at creating an RFP for additional service.
 - c. The Taxi program grant for \$15,000 is scheduled to complete at the end of March. A request to extend the program has been submitted to the State. Thus far, Acton has used \$8,000 of the funding.
- G. Sidewalks: Franny was able to share some updates from Corey York. \$750,000 was requested in the upcoming budget and a request to borrow an additional \$7-8 million. Capital plan could be up to \$18 million in borrowing. Taylor Street prep work has started but ran into some Covid related delays. The High Street project has one owner that has been holding out on approval. The Great Road project has some concerns as Mass DOT must also be involved.
- H. Adaptive bikes: No updates

3. New/Special Business

- A. River Street Project: Invited guest, Andy McGee, was hired as a consultant for the River Street project and reported the project was up and running. He was able to update the committee on some features of the project including a possible connection between the Bruce Freeman and Assabet River Trails. The dam has been deemed unsafe and must come down and there will also be the creation of a park at the Shoddy Mill Historic Area (Shoddy Mill=cotton rags). The historic channels will be preserved by using fabric liners before refilling along the trail. Andy was able to respond to a citizen concern about the reddish, foamy appearance of the water by reassuring that the water is not polluted and that the foam is not from an industrial source, it is in fact due to a lot of organic material and provides for good fishing. He was able to address concerns about handicap accessibility and overflow parking. He also elaborated on a question about Flood Plain definition including the usual high water mark, the 10 year high water mark and the 100 year high water mark. An application for a grant of \$1 million would cover about two thirds of the project.
- B. Ridership Forum scheduled for February 15, 2022
- C. Representatives to be invited to a future meeting to discuss Walkable Cities.
- D. Add Traffic Comments to the next agenda.
- E. To be discussed at the next meeting: The Committee had concerns that the sidewalk projects are creeping along too slowly and wondered if borrowing the necessary funds would help move the projects along.

A motion to close the meeting was made by Franny Osman and seconded by Paula Walsh and approved by a vote of 4-0.