

**TOWN OF BELMONT
COMMUNITY PATH IMPLEMENTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**MEETING MINUTES
November 16, 2016**

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2017 MAR -9 PM 2:3

Present: Russel Leino, Chair; Brian Burke; Michael Cicalese; Heather Ivester
Absent: Vincent Stanton
Staff: Jeffrey Wheeler, Office of Community Development

The Committee and Pare held a public engagement meeting focused on the central area of the Path – Belmont Center to Brighton Street.

Prior to the meeting, presentation materials were available for the public to review at 6:30 p.m.

7:00 p.m. Meeting began.

Mr. Leino, introduced the consultants and opened the meeting. He provided a brief overview of Study and the purpose of the meeting.

The consultants presented a PowerPoint presentation reviewing segment options and the matrix. Questions from the audience followed that the consultants responded to. The attached memorandum from Pare, dated November 17, 2016, summarizes the public feedback received at the meeting.

At the conclusion of the meeting, the consultants noted that the PowerPoint presentation and a link to the Belmont Media Center broadcast of the meeting will be made available online through the Town of Belmont webpage.

10:05 p.m. Meeting ended.

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MEMORANDUM



DATE: November 17, 2016
TO: Jeffrey Wheeler – Belmont Planning
CC: Project File
FROM: Amy Archer

RE: Meeting 4 – Eastern End Alignment Notes

Community Meeting No. 4, focusing on the eastern section of the Belmont Community Path from Belmont Center to Brighton Street, was held on Wednesday, November 16, 2016. The following summarizes the discussions held during the meeting:

- It was mentioned by Belmont residents that input on the path received from Belmont residents should outweigh input received from non-Belmont residents as this is a Town of Belmont study.
- Any modification to the rail signal at Brighton Street may require federal (FRA) involvement or approval. The team should investigate this prior to proposing modifications.
- It was mentioned that attendees of the meeting should receive an email with the link to the presentation files.
- Safety concerns at the existing Brighton Street crossing were mentioned and the superior safety benefits of the overpass alternatives were discussed.
- The differences in “safety” were brought up. Safety concerns regarding isolated sections of path are much different from safety aspects associated with physical separation from vehicles. The safety ranking seems to over emphasize remoteness. Safety should focus more on driveways and roadway conflicts and children safety using the path.
- The topic of getting to Concord Avenue from Belmont Center was discussed. There is either the option of crossing Concord Avenue at the roadway underpass or constructing a new bridge adjacent to the rail bridge that would carry the path over Concord Avenue on the south side of the rail tracks.
- The dangers of mixing pedestrian and bicycles at the Concord Avenue/Common Street intersection were discussed. Resident stated that many treatments have been tried in the past and the existing intersection “free for all” layout with lack of controls is the best available option.
- The length of the Alexander Avenue underpass was brought up as a potential safety concern. It was suggested that the length of the tunnel, approximately 50 feet, was too long and would create an undesirable feeling. It was explained that the underpass would

be much wider than the pedestrian underpass at Belmont Center and much shorter than existing. The Yerxa Road underpass was given as an example of what the Alexander Avenue underpass could look like.

- Widening of the sidewalk at the Concord Avenue underpass was generally opposed by the majority of people in the crowd. However, there were some supporters of generally improving the pedestrian amenities in Belmont Center.
- The roundabout option at Belmont Center had some support with regards to the improvement on pedestrian crossings. Pedestrian crossings would be located across each intersection leg. It was also noted that previous studies had depicted a roundabout option at this location and the team should investigate why this option was ultimately abandoned.
- The depth of the Alexander overpass was presented as a drainage and flooding concern. A history of flooding and drainage problems in this area was discussed.
- Maintenance issues associated with the path, such as snow plowing and removal, was mentioned. Details regarding the maintenance of the path will be investigated further along during the design phase of the path. Weight restrictions on the overpasses were also mentioned regarding public safety vehicles and snow removal equipment.
- Time restrictions of the path were also brought up. Time restrictions and enforcement issues will be addressed further along in the path design phase and are not yet defined.
- It was questioned how and why the Sherman Street alternative was added. The public was unaware of this option prior to the meeting. The team explained that it had been added to provide an additional alignment north of the rail line to avoid the long pinch at the F&M property and to provide a connection to the Winn Brook Elementary School; similar to the Midland/Waverley option added in the Central Area to avoid constraints on the south side of the rail while making a connection to Town Field and the Senior Center.
- The question of how the final path alignment is selected and who will make this determination was brought up. The consulting team will make a recommendation; however, the ultimate selection of the path alignment will be determined by the Board of Selectmen. The following steps will be securing a funding source for the project, preliminary and final design, and then construction. This is estimated to be approximately a 5-year process if no major setbacks are incurred.
- Jeffrey Wheeler explained where the project website was located and how to get to it from the Town's website. Comments can be submitted directly to Jeffrey Wheeler via email.
- Parking and increased traffic concerns at Channing and Alexander were discussed. There is concern that connecting to a path at Channing/Alexander will encourage individuals to park along Channing Road to access the path, particularly for the purpose of commuting to Alewife. Additionally, there is concern that the underpass will encourage parent drop-off and additional school related traffic along Channing Ave. How these issues will be dealt with should be addressed. Though there may be drop-offs close to Alexander

Avenue, it was noted by one resident that this may improve some congestion at the Concord Avenue underpass and Brighton Street crossing.

- It was mentioned that the property impacts category of the matrix should account for more than just the physical taking of land and also consider the path's impact to adjacent users. There are many more impacts to adjacent properties than just taking land such as privacy concerns and noise.
- The number of curb-cuts on Concord Avenue, near Belmont Center, makes for a very dangerous stretch of path along this section.
- It was mentioned that previous costs estimates of the Alexander underpass have been performed and had exceeded \$8 million. The consulting team should look at previous efforts for the underpass.
- A traffic signal at the Brighton Street/Hittinger Street intersection was discussed as a promising feature that would increase overall intersection safety. There are significant safety concerns currently at this location.
- It was questioned why the Brighton overpass near the French and Mahoney building could not start to elevate closer to the roadway. It was explained that there was not enough room in this area to allow for the ramping of the path without significant impacts to the F&M property.
- It was expressed that the Sherman Street option was not a path at all, but really just an expanded sidewalk system that was not consistent with the goals of the community path. The width of Sherman Street and Brighton Street were questioned as to whether they could support a widened sidewalk/path.
- It was questioned whether cyclists' exposure to pollutants from vehicles was under consideration when ranking alternatives. It was explained that that was being considered under the user comfort level and overall experience.
- It was brought to the team's attention that the snow shoveling monitoring program, as part of the Town's safe routes to school program, may be a resource for providing connections to the path.
- The connectivity constraints associated with the overpass options at Brighton Street were mentioned as a concern.
- The team was cautioned to consider that what is planned is not always built. The recent Belmont Center improvements that were ultimately not included were used as an example. The team noted that this is why cost estimating and funding source analysis is needed.
- Residents noted that they believe children are safest with long, uninterrupted portions of path.
- Two concepts of connectivity should be considered: connectivity between attractions in Town and the path as well as connectivity of the path itself and the directness of the route.

- If the path goes along the north side of the tracks, it may impact the many trees on the slope. Efforts to maintain these trees should be made to preserve the existing buffer to residences.
- Testimony was given that The Minuteman Path was originally opposed but is now a great benefit to the area.