

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

FEB -7 AM 9:15

**MEETING MINUTES**

March 08, 2017

Present: Russel Leino, Brian Burke, Michael Cicalese, Vincent Stanton

Absent: Heather Ivester

Staff: Jeffrey Wheeler and Spencer Gober, Office of Community Development

The Committee and Pare held a public engagement meeting focused on the eastern end of the Path – Belmont Center Railroad Bridge to Brighton Street.

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

1. **7:00 PM** Mr. Leino introduced the consultants and opened the meeting. He provided a brief overview of Study and the purpose of the meeting.

**2. Presentation:**

The consultants presented a PowerPoint presentation on the matrix used for scoring, and the alternative eastern routes for the Community Path and how well each alternative route scored using the matrix.

**3. Discussion:**

- Concern expressed regarding the route north of the MBTA tracks and the impact it would have on the privacy and security of residents along Channing Road. Concerns over data gathered with the survey and the belief that it was skewed and represented the opinions of non-Belmont residents. Question asked about the percentage of local money that may be needed to fund the Path.
- Question regarding the legality of a route through the high school property, and who would own/maintain it.
- Statement made that no one would accept the wall along the north side of the tracks. Concern expressed regarding the impact of it on sun/shade, the tree canopy, drainage, and private property. It was noted that a "taking" isn't just a physical taking, but includes impact on the ability to enjoy one's property and the impact on property values. Directness of the route as a criterion appeared to be an excuse to prioritize the north route and questioned the additional weight given to it. Fatal Flaws appeared to be personal preferences, not based on engineering and that the feasibility study should be an engineering exercise only and nothing more. There should be no fatal flaws.

- No route crossing at grade should be accepted at Brighton Street since it is a disaster at rush hour. However, if an overhead crossing is built, it should be accessible at this location. Question asked about a lack of signalization at Brighton Street and if that would result in a Fatal Flaw.
- The destruction of forest land should be a fatal flaw. The north route impacts established trees.
- A strong support for the Alexander Avenue underpass was expressed. Concern expressed about a route along Concord Avenue and through the Sherman Street neighborhood.
- Questioned if the high school route was a fatal flaw since there was uncertainty surrounding it. Stated that the original CPAC survey was sent out in the water bill and therefore could only have represented the views of Belmont citizens.
- Doubt expressed about the appropriateness of weighting criteria more heavily, but then stated that weighting vehicular conflicts more heavily was a good idea. Expressed support of adding directness as a criterion. A route through a neighborhood negatively impacts the desired experience of a dedicated path. Supported engaging citizens from outside of Belmont as they will be utilizing the Path as well.
- Expressed thanks for the effective public outreach, for the matrix and its results, and the addition of directness as a criterion. Flaws and weights seem appropriate.
- Expressed opposition to placing a bridge in front of the existing historic railroad bridge at Belmont Center.
- Questioned whether long term impacts on abutters had been considered. Suggested that lifelong impacts to abutters should be considered a fatal flaw. Concern expressed about safety and security of those living along Channing Road. Asked why a northern route was even being considered if alternatives exist. Stated that the high school route seemed more feasible.
- Stated that Concord Avenue already has a bike lane and that it should be widened to accommodate the Path.
- Stated that the Waverley Square area lacks a safe and direct route for students to get to the high school. Also expressed concern for businesses on Concord Avenue if parking were to be removed to accommodate the Path.
- Noted that the underpass in Cambridge has proven to be a huge improvement to the community. Suggested referring to the Lexington High School for a precedent of a path going through high school property. Asked if the MBTA had given a preference for a north or south crossing at Brighton Street.
- Asked if it was feasible to have a second tunnel west of Crate Escape.
- Suggested that any crossing should be a fatal flaw. Any cyclist getting hit is a problem.
- Suggested looking at Winchester for an example of a tunnel at a high school.
- Questioned how long the consultants would wait to hear from stakeholders (MBTA, School Committee, Crate Escape, etc.) before making a

recommendation. Suggested implementing a phased approach to construction if the ability to implement certain routes remained uncertain.

- Comment given that cyclists can walk along Hittinger Street and that the parking lot in this area shouldn't be a concern.
- Stated that the concerns of the abutters had been heard, but indicated that these types of concerns are always expressed when similar projects have been proposed in other communities and yet don't seem to materialize once the project is implemented.
- A new resident to Belmont stated that she also considered living in Arlington and noted that real estate listings in Arlington "brag" about proximity to the bike path. Stated that Belmont was chosen because of its proximity to employment in Cambridge and Somerville, and that commuting by bike will be improved by constructing the Path. Expressed support for a true separation of the path from vehicular travel lanes.
- Stated that as a runner she feels safe on the Minuteman Bikeway because of the critical mass of people utilizing it. Asked how much Belmont, state, and federal governments will pay.
- Stated that the majority of Belmont's population is south of the tracks and would be better served by a route located along the south. Stated that the T has the worst derailment of any other commuter rail in the country.
- Stated that trains are extremely noisy and would detract from the user experience if routed along the north. Expressed lack of concern about cyclists having to get off of their bikes to cross streets or get through pinch points – this already happens on existing paths.
- Questioned the location of the railroad gate at Brighton Street
- Questioned whether or not the School Committee had the jurisdiction to prevent the Path from going through high school property. The audience was reminded about the failed attempt to move the library onto high school property.
- Stated that the physical safety of the people on the Path was paramount and that separation from vehicular travel lanes is important.

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.

**The meeting concluded at 9:15 p.m.**