

SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION TRENDS AND CHALLENGES IN CAMBRIDGE

PRESENTATIONS

1. Commuting trends in Cambridge – Stephanie Groll, City of Cambridge

Key take-away:

Over the past several decades there is an observable trend in Cambridge away from driving alone as a means of commuting and toward more sustainable modes. This trend is exemplified by the experience in Kendall Square, where significant development could be delivered without an increase in auto traffic. Citywide, vehicles and parking permits per household have declined and bicycling has dramatically increased. Tools like upgraded infrastructure and the PTDM ordinance have contributed, and the City is continuing to look at new incentive structure and infrastructure to sustain more efficient, environmentally-friendly commuting trends.

2. Overview of Employer-based Travel Demand Management Strategies – John Attanucci and Adam Rosenfield, MIT

Key take-away:

The Boston area already has a strong tradition of offering employee subsidies for public transit. MIT's Transit Lab has been looking at how employers can reframe the economics of commuter choices to further incentivize sustainable commuting, especially in the context of current Federal pre-tax benefit structures. Key strategies include encouraging the "subscription effect" of eliminating the marginal cost of transit, while simultaneously changing the pricing structure for parking to allow for a daily choice. Supplemental tools like gamification can add in the draw of additional rewards and prizes.

3. AccessMIT Program & Roll-out – Larry Brutti and Susy Jones, MIT

Key take-away:

Rolling out the new daily parking option as part of AccessMIT has important effects on the operation and management of the campus's parking supply. Internal analytical tools help to increase the flexibility and precision of parking assignments, ultimately enabling the daily option to increase the potential "oversubscription" factor of spaces. This will be important as campus parking inventory is reduced in favor of new development.

Raising awareness of new commuter benefits choices among the very large, diverse campus is essential to the success of the program. A new campaign helped emphasize the human side of commuting by sharing stories that staff and faculty could identify with. In particular, the positive theme of "love your commute" helped reframe the way members of the community think about getting to campus.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

- How do commuting statistics in Cambridge compare with other places?
 - Cambridge has some of the highest sustainable commuting rates in the country; in particular, the percentage of people walking is very high, and the rate of single-occupancy driving is low.
- Are some policies more or less effective at managing parking and transportation demand? Is there a point of diminishing returns for some policies?
 - The City is looking closer at the data. In particular, there is a focus on whether free parking or an oversupply of parking in some cases undermines sustainable options. Another area of interest is the availability of commuting choices—people are looking for flexibility and don't just choose one mode over another every single time.
- Is there a card that exists yet that supports both transit and parking?
 - MIT's new ID card has two chips: one for transit, and the other for parking.
- How do you allocate parking spaces if you don't know what demand will be?
 - MIT has been analyzing history from past years, the number of permits sold, and looking at utilization within parking facilities.
- How do you allocate spaces beyond one space for one person?
 - MIT's approach has been to allocate permits for specific areas, and then using utilization rates to estimate the ability to sell more than one permit per parking space. This has allowed the Institute to allocate beyond the utilization for typical commercial operation. A key challenge will be monitoring the couple of very high demand days for parking like bad weather.
- Is the T thinking about adding flexibility for commuters to spend transit benefits on new mobility services?
 - Right now, the focus is on improving the basic functionality of the corporate pass, but down the road, this could be something to be considered.
- How do employer policies affect parking needs?
 - It's important to consider the differing HR calculations of each company. People who create benefits packages are essential to the parking conversation. Different employers may have different ways they choose to allocate the spaces they're allotted. In addition, larger employers with multiple offices may be concerned with parity between different locations.
- How do the economics of development and leasing affect the reality of parking provision?
 - If landlords are too aggressive with reducing parking availability, potential tenants may go elsewhere. In addition, leases with long terms could have things change from options to liabilities as time goes on. Finally, many new developments are increasing employee density, making parking supply potentially tighter than in the past. Overall, parking is a money-loser for a development.