

Mr. Booth said that the diagonal path is the most used, but the ideal is that all paths will be made safer for shared pedestrian and bicycle use.

Liz Epstein said that the plan is also to disperse the traffic, to improve the safety of other routes around the common.

Councillor Sullivan stated that his observation is that shared space does not work well for bicyclists and elderly pedestrians. "Yield to Pedestrian" signs do not work. In addition, he is also concerned about the loss of six parking spaces from one of the most congested areas in the City. With regard to the letter from Happy Greene, Harvard, he believes that the riders on the Common tend to be Harvard students.

Councillor Sullivan asked how bollards can be spaced to slow bicycles but not impede wheelchairs. Mr. Booth mentioned the possibility of staggering the bollard placement. Councillor Sullivan asked how many bicyclists have been cited for violations. Richard Rossi said that he does not know how many, but he is aware of an instance in which a bicyclist was ticketed for his part in causing a traffic accident.

Ms. Epstein stated that in addition they are working with the police on an education program.

Councillor Sullivan asked why the separated facilities approach of providing areas where pedestrians could walk without encountering bicycles was not being recommended.

Ms. Epstein said that very strong concerns were raised by Historical Commission and the Planting Committee about putting in more pavement in the common. In addition, concerns about the level of enforcement that could realistically be expected contributed to the decision to recommend a shared facilities approach.

Councillor Sullivan asked whether bicyclists are required to have bells to warn pedestrians.

Douglas Kline, Cambridge, said that bicyclists are required to signal pedestrians, but they are not required to have a particular signaling device.

Councillor Born stated that it is very difficult to ride a bicycle down at the end of Garden Street, from the Arsenault Square area east, so she understands why people choose to ride in the Common. She asked whether there are any models for successful mixed bicycle/pedestrians paths that work, and noted that there are many complaints along the Charles River paths.

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Ms. Epstein said that there are some models and that she will provide the Council with information about examples that they can go to see.

Councillor Born asked if the pathway is wider than the present pathway. Roger Boothe said that the present path is eleven feet, which is the width of the Minuteman Bikeway. At most, it could be extended six inches to a foot.

Councillor Born asked if this plan will increase bike traffic in the Common. Richard Rossi said that the pavement will be designed to slow bicyclists down, and street facilities for bicycling will be improved, so they do not expect to see more bicycles on the Common.

Councillor Born noted that bicycle riders who cross at the Law School then end up riding on a very narrow stretch of sidewalk. Ms Clippinger said that the design work would encompass finding solutions for the boundary areas around the common.

Councillor Born then pointed out that there are problems with the tot lot in the Common, especially when kids' soccer games are going on. She then requested a description of the enforcement efforts planned. Richard Rossi said that enforcement of bicycling laws is now part of the regular training of the Police Department.

Councillor Born read an article about Ottawa cyclists campaigning against riding bikes on sidewalks. She stated that in Cambridge, England, bicycles have been barred from some pedestrian areas.

Councillor Born stated that enforcement of bicycle laws needs to be stepped up dramatically before she would feel comfortable with a mixed bicycle and pedestrian path on the Common.

Vice Mayor Russell suggested having officers on details enforce bicycle laws and stated that public education is not working. Bicycle violations are getting worse. She added that a new entrance to the tot lot will not solve the problem of the back - and - forth at the time of soccer games.

Vice Mayor Russell then noted that the bollards will pose a problem for the baby carriages as well as wheelchairs. She urged that the Pedestrian Committee be involved in future planning.

Vice Mayor Russell then invited public testimony in favor of the proposal.

Andy Rugel, 9 Chauncy Street, spoke in support of the plan and noted that it represents a true compromise. The problem is not bicyclists on the common, it is the reckless bicyclists on the common.

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He added that the major three violations are riding against traffic, riding against lights, and riding recklessly near pedestrians. Banning bicyclists on the Common penalizes law-abiding cyclists; the scofflaws will ride there anyway.

Walter Willet, 72 Chestnut Street, spoke in favor of the proposal. As a physician he sees enormous health benefits in encouraging bicycling.

Douglas Kline, 10 Milton Street, spoke in favor of the proposal. The situations of bicycles on the road, a bike path and sidewalks are not really comparable.

Vice Mayor Russell then invited testimony in opposition.

Astrid Dodds, 73 Wendell Street, stated her membership in various pedestrian associations, and spoke in opposition to the plan. She stated that she supports creating bike lanes in the streets and landscaping the Common. She opposes bicycles on the Common for six reasons which include that bicycles and pedestrians do not mix; sidewalk bicycling is already forbidden in business area; ISTE A never intended intermodal to mean adding bicycles to existing sidewalks; the City has not honored the ISTE A public participation commitment, and bicycles on sidewalks should be barred citywide.

Fran Folsom, Speridakis Terrace, spoke in opposition to the proposal. She stated that she was recently the victim of a bicycle accident on Memorial Drive. Bicycles are everywhere in Cambridge; they do not need to be on the Common.

Vicky Cassana, 87 River Street, spoke in opposition to the proposal. Bicycles do not need to be on the Common; it is a dangerous situation. She urged enactment of a citywide ordinance to keep bicyclists off sidewalks.

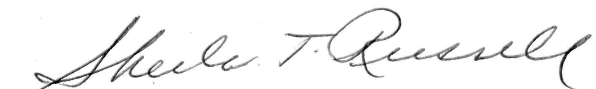
Bruce Sylvester, Franklin Street, spoke against the proposal. Enforcement is viable; and should occur.

Councillor Sullivan stated that the bike path on the Charles River was not made for bicyclists going 50 m.p.h., but that is what is happening.

Councillor Sullivan moved that the proposal remain in Committee and that the Committee request that the City Manager ask the Deputy City Manager to meet with the Pedestrian Committee and the Bicycle Committee to attempt another compromise. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 p.m.

For the Committee



Vice Mayor Sheila T. Russell, Chair

City of Cambridge

The Ordinance Committee held a public hearing on August 8, 1995, beginning at 7:12 p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber for the purpose of discussing a proposed amendment to prohibit bicycles on the Common and a report from the City Manager with an alternative proposal for bicycle and pedestrian path.

Present at the hearing were Vice Mayor Sheila T. Russell, Chair of the Committee, Councillor Francis H. Duehay, Councillor Anthony D. Galluccio, and City Clerk, D. Margaret Drury. Also present were Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi, Susan Clippinger, Director of Traffic and Parking, and Elizabeth Epstein and Roger Boothe, Community Development Department.

Vice Mayor Russell convened the hearing and explained the purpose.

Councillor Duehay expressed his regrets that he had to leave to chair another meeting. He stated that he supports a bicycle lane around the Common, but he is not persuaded that there should be bicycles on the Common, and he does not support the measure.

Vice Mayor Russell requested that Deputy City Manager Richard Rossi make a presentation. Mr. Rossi described the planning process that went into the development of a proposed plan for safe bicycle and pedestrian passage through and around the Common. He stated that the plan is multi-faceted. It also fits in well with Harvard University's plan.

Mr. Rossi then introduced Roger Boothe, Urban Designer, Community Development Department to describe the urban design elements of the plan. Mr. Booth described design and landscaping improvements that will encourage bicyclists to slow down, and bicyclists and pedestrians to keep right.

Susan Clippinger, Director of Traffic and Parking, described proposed safety improvements. A signal will be installed at Arsenault square and pavement markings and guidelines for bicycles. They will look at providing access north of the Common to get around Harvard Square, using Wendell and Everett Streets.

Liz Epstein, Acting Deputy Director of the Community Development Department, described the funding. Costs are estimated at \$500,000. Cambridge will receive ISTEA funds for construction in federal FY97, which begins in October. This City is required to fund the design work. The next step would be a public process to specify the design and a survey. The cost for the design consultant and survey would be \$50-\$75,000.

Vice Mayor Russell asked what path a bicycle would take to get from Garden Street to the other side of Harvard.

Committee Report #2

0-24

Ordinance Committee report
re: proposed amendment to
prohibit bicycles on the Common
and a report from the City
Manager with an alternative
proposal for bicycle and pedestriann
path.

Report Accepted. Placed on File

In City Council September 11, 1995