

REPORT OF THE CAMBRIDGE TRANSPORTATION FORUM TO THE CITY COUNCIL

JUNE 9-NOVEMBER 28, 1973

BACKGROUND

On April 10, 1972, the City Council endorsed the formation of an on-going Cambridge Transportation Forum. In the order that supported the formation of the forum, the Council stated a number of reasons for the endorsement, including the beliefs:

" . . . That only through broad public interaction can a City-wide consensus be reached on issues relating to transportation . . ."

" . . . That the need for transportation projects is best determined and the support for such projects best achieved by a process that assures full, open and fair consideration of the interests of all citizens involved and affected . . ." and

" . . . That a well-informed and involved public can act in a responsible decisive and timely manner and thus have a beneficial influence on the City's decision-making process . . ."

ORGANIZATION

On June 9 of this year, an initial meeting of approximately 50 citizens with an interest in transportation matters was called for the purpose of organizing the Forum. The June 9 meeting was also attended by Mayor Ackermann and Councillors Clinton and Duehay.

Out of people attending this meeting was formed an ad hoc organizing committee, which worked through the summer on organization and defining issues for the Forum to consider. Regular meetings of the Forum were also held to discuss these questions and to help in reaching a broad consensus on how best to proceed.

At the regular monthly meeting on October 4 a statement of purpose, rules and an organizational structure was approved. The statement of purpose, which was approved unanimously, states that:

In order to improve the mobility of people and goods in and through Cambridge; and to reduce the costs of transportation in terms of

pollution, hazard and congestion, as well as money; the Cambridge Transportation Forum shall: provide, by order of the City Council, citizens with a representative forum for expressing views on transportation and its side effects; evaluate issues relating to City-wide transportation matters and make policy recommendations to the Cambridge City Council; and gather and disseminate pertinent information.

Under the Forum's rules, membership is open to any resident of Cambridge or to any group or organization that does business in or has an interest in Cambridge. It is provided that groups and organizations may send an alternate to meetings.

Membership includes the Mayor, City Councillors, neighborhood groups, Cambridge Council on Aging, Committee of Elders, and others. Representatives of the Planning, Transportation, and Police Departments attend the regular monthly meetings. A member is one who has expressed an interest in the purpose and work of the Forum and has attended two or more meetings. Of the 45 listed members, 16 have attended 5 or more regular meetings which are held on the first Thursday of every month. The average attendance at regular meetings has been 26.

In addition to the three elected officers, there is a steering committee with power to appoint special committees consisting of members from one or more standing sub-committees.

After the organizational structure was established and officers elected, the Forum tackled transportation problems in Cambridge.

Regular Meetings and Activities

Items from the minutes of the meetings show the phases of transportation considered and the intensity of the study and research by committees and the Forum as a whole.

August 23: A report was given concerning the B & M crossing on Sherman Street. This was pursued, a letter written to the Railroad Company which responded promptly and explained plans for improving the crossing; and subsequently did paint equipment, put the gates in order, etc., and expressed willingness to help in safety education for the children. The Company has done its part; the City needs only

to improve the paving at the crossing.

Followed a report on an origin and destination study by the Somerville-Cambridge Truck Committee. A representative of HALT elaborated and asked the Forum to pass a resolution requesting speedier action on a recent truck-bicycle accident. A delegation from the Forum had a cordial meeting with the Chief of Police.

Next, bicycles and cyclists - This is not a subject that can be settled in a week's time. With the decrease in dependency on autos, the matter of bicycle regulation must come to the fore, and the Forum now has a background of source information.

September 13: The chief topic was the relationship of the Forum to the City Council, to neighborhood groups, to citizens' complaints, to the various City departments. The Mayor was present and stated her views on the proper function of the Forum: To report only to the City Council; and the reports should concern policy matters -- trucks and parking -- not administrative matters.

This was a long and clarifying discussion, and the Forum felt more secure in its position with the above-mentioned departments of the City and resident groups.

A further report from the Bicycle Committee, and a representative of the Police Department spoke in detail on future plans for cyclists.

October 4: New Business, the effects of the proposed Environmental Protection Agency guidelines in their relation to Cambridge, particularly as they apply to parking. It is at this point that the Forum found itself fully involved in a totally relevant topic. The Forum took as its highest priority the task of making the citizenry aware of EPA in Cambridge.

Federal regulations to implement the Clean Air Act of '71 were explained; also the recommended position concerning the Governor's Clean Air and Transportation and Control plan. Since there are important distinctions between the access and parking problems of downtown Boston and Cambridge, the staff of the Planning and Traffic Departments had serious reservations as to some of the restrictions imposed and their over-all effects on Cambridge.

October 31: The steering committee presented a questionnaire on the EPA proposal,

and alternatives for further consideration were added. This was thought to be necessary to educate people and to give them a focus on each specific recommendation of the EPA. Several hundred questionnaires have been distributed in the hopes that the responses will be of assistance in formulating a City position on the proposed restrictions. Distribution has been made, primarily, through neighborhood and business organizations.

November 1: A representative of the Department of Planning and Development explained the air quality standards for the Boston area. The City of Cambridge was expected to respond at a hearing on October 15, but did not.

Following a lively and in-depth discussion and an airing of opinions by all present. At 10:00 p.m. no real position had been established and another meeting date was assigned.

November 6: The steering committee considered how best to ensure that citizen participation in the Council hearings on the EPA Guidelines would be both informed and representative. Consideration was given to phone lists, the best way to approach the media, mailing of questionnaires to neighborhood groups, business associations and representative organizations. (At this writing the completed questionnaires are still coming back to the Forum.)

The Hearings on the EPA Parking Guidelines of November 13 and 15 in the City Council Chambers were well and enthusiastically attended.

On the 15th, the hearing was open to concerned residents and businesses so that they might ask questions, express their agreement or non-agreement, offer alternative suggestions.

Present and vocal were individuals from neighborhood groups, the Chamber of Commerce, representatives from Wilson Structural Steel, Arthur D. Little Company, Harvard Square Development Task Force, Planning for People, Boston Transportation Coalition -- to list a few. Discussion was lively on the Sticker Program, Commuter Traffic and Parking, Student Parking, willingness of the universities to cooperate, deficiencies of the MBTA, car pools for employees.

The Forum was highly commended for its part in projecting these hearings, and takes justifiable pride in their success.

The Forum is now fully organized and hopes that it may continue to merit the confidence and support of its sponsors; and further, that it may assist and work with the City departments concerned with transportation policies within the City.

December 6, 1973

Cambridge City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, Mass. 02139

City Councillors:

It gives me great pleasure to transmit to you the first Report of the Cambridge Transportation Forum to the City Council.

In its motion endorsing the establishment of the Transportation Forum in April, 1972, the City Council recognized Cambridge's need for a body of citizens that would channel the views of concerned and informed residents on matters of transportation policy to the Council in a timely and responsible manner. I believe that this Report documents that substantial progress has been made toward the goal of developing such a body.

The three requirements for the success of the Forum are (1) providing the relevant information to citizens, (2) ensuring the representativeness of the views heard, and (3) gaining acceptance of the Forum, especially by the City Council.

Further progress has been made in the first two areas since the Report was drafted. At the request of the Forum the Public Library has established a Transportation Information file in the Reference Room, where recent reports and other pertinent material on local transportation policy will be available for use by the general public. Second, the response to the Forum's questionnaire on the EPA parking guidelines has been excellent and comes from a broad spectrum of citizens and organizations. The findings from this survey should prove most useful in formulating a constructive City response to the EPA and State's proposals for parking restrictions.

It is my hope that this Report, combined with further progress toward informing citizens and ensuring the representativeness of the Forum will lead to progress in the third crucial area of winning the acceptance of the Forum's activities by you, our elected representatives.

I would also like at this time to publicly express my thanks to the following individuals in recognition of their important contributions to the success of the Forum: Mr. Bradley Clarke, Vice Chairperson, Mrs. Mary M. Twomey, Secretary, Mr. John Hixson, Mr. Charles Hillman, both M.I.T.

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draft letter to City Council -- page 2

students, Miss Henrietta Davis, of the Planning Department, Miss Pamela Thomure and Miss Jane Sauer.

In closing I would like to extend an invitation to each Councillor to attend one of the Forum's regular meetings, on the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 in the Walnut Room, to observe in person the working of the Forum. Thank you for your attention and support.

Respectfully,

John Pitkin
Chairperson
Cambridge Transportation Forum

18 Fayette St.
Cambridge

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Cambridge
Cambridge Transportation Forum
Chairperson
John Pitkin

Respectfully,

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Room, to observe in person the working of the Forum.
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In closing I would like to extend an invitation to

Miss Pamela Thomme and Miss Jane Garner.
students, Miss Henrietta Davis, of the Planning Department,

draft letter to City Council -- page 2

In City Council

Dec. 17, 1973

LP
Accepted
with
honors
ML