

ISNA Intersection Committee Report 7/14/17

A summary of activities since May 2nd 2017, and material to facilitate discussion at the July 18th meeting

Activity since the City's May 2nd presentation of its Bend Hampshire decision:
In Mid-June the Inman Square Coalition (not to be confused with the Inman Square Neighborhood Association-ISNA) released a 7-page proposal advocating a number of changes to the City's approved option which bends Beacon/Hampshire south, cutting Vellucci Plaza in half and creating thereby a new plaza on the other side of Hampshire in front of Punjabi Dhaba and Moona. Protected bike lanes are created throughout the intersection.
The ISNA Intersection Committee has discussed the Coalition's proposal in emails begun around the end of June.
Early Monday morning July 10 th , five ISNA members met with Councilors Jan Devereux and Craig Kelley, and members of the City's Pedestrian and Plantings Committees in Vellucci Plaza.. Jan and the Committee members were solidly in favor of the new Coalition proposal. Craig Kelley had not yet studied the proposal in detail and had many questions about the new proposal.
On the evening of the 10 th 15 ISNA members met at a meeting of the ISNA Intersection Committee and discussed both the Coalition's and the City's proposals.
This conversation will be continued at the ISNA general meeting on July 18 th at Cambridge Health Alliance Healy Building 3 rd floor learning center's A/B rooms. at 7:00 pm.
A few Intersection Committee members will hopefully meet with the Traffic Department's Joe Barr and Patrick Baxter before the ISNA meeting July 18 th . We have left a message with their department.
The City is holding a meeting on July 19th at 8:00 am with an Inman Square stakeholder group. We will make sure ISNA is represented.
Following the stakeholders' meeting, the City will hold a public evening meeting July 25 th at the main Library.

The Inman Square Coalition proposal will:

- 1) Reduce 4 lanes of traffic to 2 lanes of traffic in the middle of the intersection by removing the right turn lanes in both directions on Cambridge St. This allows Vellucci Plaza to be retained and creates a new plaza contiguous with businesses across the street.**

Intersection Committee members appreciate the fact that the Coalition's proposal will increase open space by giving us our social gathering place plaza contiguous with businesses, without diminishing Vellucci Plaza or tree-taking. It would add more trees than the City's proposal. However, some Intersection Committee members fear that the newly created plaza will be smaller in the Coalition's design than in the City's design.

- 2) Add bump-outs and squarings which make turns more sharp to make cars take turns more slowly.**
- 3) Change the street in the intersection from asphalt to brick to signal its pedestrian nature.**
- 4) Make bus stops floating bus stops (already included in the City's design), so that when people mount or dismount to/from the bus, they won't stand in the new bike lanes.**

Now buses pull over to the curb to stop. Under both new designs the places where buses now pull over will turn into extended sidewalk, and the buses will not pull over at all, but stop in the only traffic lane in their direction. Now cars can continue when buses are stopped. In both new designs, cars will stop and wait for the bus to unload and load passengers.

The Cambridge St. Project will:

- 1) **Increase safety for vulnerable bike users by creating a car-protected bike lane on one side of Cambridge Street and a flex-post-protected bike lane on the other side of Cambridge Street.**

This is at the cost of removing nearly half the parking on Cambridge Street from Inman Square to Harvard Yard which reduces parking spaces for Inman business customers and residents.

Advantages of Coalition proposal:

1. **Allows retention of all of Vellucci Plaza and creation of a new plaza contiguous with businesses roughly as large as the new plaza in the City's May 2 design.**
2. **Reduces distances for pedestrian and bike crossings.**
3. **Reduces the length of the intersection.**
4. **Calms traffic to make the intersection safer for all modes of transportation.**
5. **Allows for the redesign of Vellucci Plaza into a child friendly social gathering space, suggested by Elena Saporta's design.**

Intersection Committee Concerns with Inman Sq. Coalition proposal:

1. What will be the cumulative impact of a) the Coalition's 4 measures (mentioned above) that calm /slow traffic, and b) the City's Cambridge St. Project which removes nearly half the Cambridge St. parking between Inman Sq. and Harvard Yard?

Intersection Committee members understand that one key purpose of any successful intersection redesign is slowing vehicle speeds through the intersection to improve safety. A key concern of the Committee is that traffic not be slowed and backed up so much that it damages the Inman Sq. businesses. The Committee is afraid that implementing all aspects of the Coalition proposal might slow and back up traffic so much that vehicles will seek alternate routes which will increase traffic on side streets in the area, and reduce the flow of customers to local businesses.

In a separate City project, all parking on one side of Cambridge St. between Inman Sq. and Harvard Yard would be removed to create a protected bike lane on one side and an flex-post-protected bike lane on the other side. This further reduces parking near Inman Sq. businesses which is another concern for businesses and residents. So when we are measuring the impact of the intersection reconfiguration, we have to assume it is in addition to this other Cambridge St. Project.

2. ISNA members who live on Antrim St. and Fayette St. are very concerned that resultant slowing and backing up of traffic will cause more drivers to use alternate routes, increasing traffic on their two streets, and other streets as well, such as Tremont and Maple. Antrim St. residents don't want the direction of Antrim changed, forcing them to exit into Inman Sq. They fear that the slowed and more backed up traffic will make leaving and coming to their homes significantly more difficult, and just add to the increased congestion in the Square. They want the direction of Antrim to remain as it is, allowing exit onto Broadway. Fayette St. residents are concerned about the increased difficulty of turning either left or right from Fayette onto Cambridge; visibility is poor and vehicles on Cambridge, waiting for the light, block access for turning, causing traffic to back up on Fayette.

Intersection Committee recommendations to ISNA for consideration at the ISNA meeting July 18:

The City shall, before final decisions are made:

1. **Study motor vehicle traffic and report back to residents about:**
 - a. **Individual and cumulative traffic impacts of the 5 measures mentioned above that calm, slow and back up traffic on Cambridge and Hampshire Streets;**
 - b. **The effect of these impacts on the business district and on side streets.**
2. **Study bicycle and pedestrian traffic and report back to residents about:**
 - a. **The impact of a more bicycle and pedestrian friendly Square on the business district.**
3. **Provide parking accommodations for Inman Square Pharmacy and Skenderian Pharmacy.**

Both pharmacies are extremely concerned that their businesses will be seriously hurt by the combined impacts of the intersection reconfiguration. Both have disabled and elderly clients who rely on parking close to the pharmacy, and both will see some customers switch to Walgreens (which has a large parking lot), with Cambridge Street parking removed.

4. **Provide a solid snow removal plan for all of Cambridge Street, especially the business district, given the reduction in parking spaces.**

The City needs to make a budgetary commitment to increase snow removal so that parking spaces are not taken up by snow piles in the winter..

5. **Incorporate ample bike parking to eliminate the need for the temporary bike racks placed in parking spaces during summer months.**

Additional discussion concerns that the Intersection Committee did not address

1. **Traffic and transit changes that may damage the business district:**
 - a. Proposed elimination of left turn from Beacon/Hampshire (headed to Kendall) to Cambridge St east. The effect promotes thru traffic to Kendall and eliminates business traffic into Inman. Also, right turn from Hampshire to Cambridge St. east, hurts Inman businesses.
 - b. Moving #91 bus stop from Springfield St to Prospect St.

Hopefully, ISNA can reach consensus July 18th on recommendations to present at the stakeholder's meeting the following day.