



January 17, 2012

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Through: Keri Pyke, P.E., PTOE  
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RE: **Second Community Meeting<sup>1</sup>**  
**Meeting Notes of December 14, 2011**

## Executive Summary

On December 14, 2011 The Boston Transportation Department (BTD) team for the Melnea Cass Boulevard Design Project held the second of a series of community meetings associated with the project. Attended by approximately 75 - 80 local residents, State and City officials, activists, stakeholders, consultants and elected officials including Sen. Sonia Chang-Diaz, Rep. Gloria Fox, Rep. Byron Rushing and City Councilors Tito Jackson and Felix Arroyo, the purpose of this meeting was to continue the project's introduction to the community begun at the initial community meeting on October 12. As part of this expanded introduction, the project team provided an overview of the Melnea Cass Boulevard corridor's history going back into the 19<sup>th</sup> century and addressing the community's stopping of the I-95 extension through Roxbury during the 1970's. Also covered were the goals of the current project include enhanced pedestrian safety, efficient traffic flow and parking, improved accommodation of transit vehicles and bicycles, creating inviting open space that encourages activity and creating attractive front yards for new developments. The current planning effort takes place against a backdrop of increased development interest in the now mostly-vacant parcels along Melnea Cass Boulevard and represents an opportunity for the neighborhood to prepare transportation infrastructure and set the tone for this development. The consultant team under contract to BTD is headed by Howard/Stein-Hudson and includes Crosby, Schlessinger, Smallridge, LLC, Toole Design Group, Inc., GLC Development Resources, Charles River Watershed Association and A-Plus Construction Services.

The meeting also held a small group brainstorming exercise to help the project team get a sense of the community's concerns about and goals for Melnea Cass Boulevard. Breakout groups were given the following three discussion questions to kick off their discussion:

- Are there transportation issues that have not been identified in previous plans?
- What are the community's priorities to accommodate pedestrians, traffic, transit and bicycles?
- What does the community's vision of a successful Melnea Cass Boulevard look like?

At the end of the breakout session, each group was invited to present an overview of their conversation to the full audience. Key themes that resulted from the breakout discussions and full-group reporting included the following.

- The idea of developing a set of early action steps to undertake prior to the broader design effort. These include basic changes such as better street lighting, repainting existing road striping,

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<sup>1</sup> Copies of the flipcharts taken at the meeting are listed in Appendix 1.

improving roadway signage, improving snow and litter removal, and addressing issues of public safety, particularly along the bicycle and pedestrian paths at the edge of the Boulevard.

- Safety for bicyclists and pedestrians using the Melnea Cass corridor should be improved and vehicular traffic should be calmed. The Boulevard's aesthetics should be softened to reduce the current "highway feel" of the road.
  - Safety for transit riders should also be improved. Several groups expressed concern about the idea of a median bus-way as providing inadequate protection for patrons entering and exiting buses.
  - A successful Melnea Cass Boulevard would be:
    - Beautified with improved landscaping; mature trees should be kept.
    - Safe and clean with elements such as gardens and play spaces to attract families with children.
    - Well-maintained, with snow and litter consistently removed.
    - Safe for bicyclists and pedestrians and provide them with connections to other walking/cycling amenities in the area.
    - Able to provide effective transit service through the area with safe spaces to board, exit, and transfer to other transit vehicles.
    - Effectively moving calmed vehicular traffic.
    - Fully integrated with its surrounding neighborhood, providing access to local side streets and a gateway to Dudley Square. Buildings along the Boulevard would front onto the street and invite people moving through the area to stop and visit local businesses.
    - A catalyst for neighborhood economic development providing both construction jobs and permanent employment after work has been completed. Connections to the jobs available in the Longwood Medical Area in particular should be strengthened.
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## Breakout Session Reporting:

- Early action steps should be identified and addressed while the overall redesign is underway. Suggestions included:
  - Improved snow removal to ensure that children walking to school can use sidewalks and are not forced into travel lanes.
  - Basic maintenance with the corridor should be addressed; particularly litter removal, better signage and new road striping.
  - Coordination among the city and state agencies that are charged with maintaining the boulevard should be improved.
- Improved safety on Melnea Cass Boulevard should be a central focus of the design process:
  - Traffic speeds should be lowered to improve conditions for pedestrians and bicycles.
  - Street lighting should be improved to increase safe operations in the corridor and to deter crime.
  - Access points to the future developments along Melnea Cass Boulevard must be safe. The implications of curbside parking should be fully explored.
- With regard to transit:
  - Audience members encouraged the design team to be flexible regarding transit provision and to focus on solutions that work.
  - One group was in favor of placing a dedicated bus lane down the center of the Boulevard, but another group was strongly against it.
  - The use of dedicated bus lanes by school buses should be investigated.
- Elements of the vision for a future successful Melnea Cass Boulevard included:

- A cleaner, more inviting corridor that serves cyclists and pedestrians to help the health of the community. Bicycle and pedestrian connections to other non-motorized infrastructure such as bicycle lanes on Massachusetts Avenue and pedestrian pathways should be tightened.
  - The area should be made “family friendly” with new consumer-oriented businesses introduced.
  - Provision of parking to spur local business growth. Barriers to the access of local stores should be eased.
  - Traffic should be calmed; possibly through the use of signal timing.
  - Reduced noise.
  - Providing a gateway to an enhanced Dudley Square that feels integrated with the community so that people passing through the area will be likely to stop and visit the area rather than moving through without stopping as they do today. The Boulevard should connect to its surrounding neighborhoods and side streets.
  - Improving the connections between the Melnea Cass corridor and the Longwood Medical Area.
  - Road signage should be used to indicate to drivers exiting I-93 and the Massachusetts Avenue Connector that they are now entering a residential area. The speed limit should be posted prominently.
  - More trees and improved landscaping. Current green space should be kept and expanded. Green spaces should be maintained by local businesses.
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## Individual Group Reports:

### *Group Report from Groups 1, 2 and 5*

#### ***Walking and Cycling:***

- Bicycle lanes are becoming common in the Roxbury area; this positive trend should continue with more signage and improved accommodations.
- Walk times should be extended. Pedestrian wait times at intersections can be very long and during these waits, pedestrians feel exposed. A buffer should be placed between pedestrians and traffic.
- Pedestrian refuge islands in the center of the roadway should be investigated.
- Investigate the potential to put a Hubway Station somewhere on the Boulevard.
- High-quality, smooth, separated pedestrian and cycling paths should be provided in the corridor.

#### ***Driving:***

- Driving on Melnea Cass Boulevard can be difficult:
  - The roadway goes between “parking lot and speedway.”
  - The Longwood Medical Area contributes a lot of traffic to the corridor.
  - Making left turns is difficult.
  - The Boulevard should either be widened or narrowed, but the current size isn’t right, especially with new developments coming soon.
- Melnea Cass Boulevard is a pass-through for regional traffic that doesn’t serve locals. It should be “toned down.”
- New York’s idea of taking vehicle lanes to create bus and bicycle lanes should be investigated; it has actually made traffic flow better.

#### ***Transit Use:***

- The area is transit-oriented so accommodations for transit riders, particularly those that provide for safe exiting of buses should be improved. Cars turning right on red present a challenge to patrons boarding and exiting buses.

**Public Safety:**

- Crime is a concern along the Boulevard; drug deals are occurring during daylight hours. At night, Dudley Square is empty. The current bicycle path is a haven for drug use. Drug paraphernalia is stored in the green space along the corridor
- Street lighting needs to be improved; a pedestrian was recently hit at the intersection of Kerr Way and Melnea Cass Boulevard.

**Vision of Success for Melnea Cass Boulevard:**

- Current green spaces are pleasant; these should be improved and expanded.
- Enhance features that attract families with children such as gardens and gathering spaces.
- The area along the Boulevard is currently empty. New developments should be oriented to bring people onto the sidewalk, particularly in the evening. Entrances for Parcels 9 and 10 should be from Melnea Cass Boulevard.
- Melnea Cass Boulevard should drive traffic to Dudley Square with pathways and signage. This and development of the Ferdinand's Blue Store, Bartlett Yard and Parcel 3 should drive economic development in the community creating jobs for local residents during construction and afterwards. The Boulevard should be a gateway to Dudley Square.
- New developments along the Boulevard should open onto it; "don't create more walls."
- The Boulevard should be fully integrated with its neighborhood, not just a roadway through empty land.
- More walking, cycling, and positive, healthy activities; less drug use.
- Fewer vehicle lanes, but more green space, parking and bicycling accommodations. The Boulevard should be "fitness friendly."
- Melnea Cass Boulevard should be user-friendly for all users regardless of their travel mode.

**Group Report from Groups 3, 4 and 9**

**Potential Early Action Steps:**

- Provide a smoother bicycle path next to the Boulevard.
- Improve street lighting.
- Install larger road signs on mast arms over the Boulevard.
- The dedicated bus lane is needed now.

**Walking and Cycling:**

- Vehicle speed is less important than providing pedestrian and bicycle accommodations; focus on traffic calming.
- There are currently too many lanes for pedestrians to easily/safely cross.
- Provide demonstrations of the practicality of cycling; particularly for women with children.

**Driving:**

- Right turns on and off Melnea Cass Boulevard are challenging.
- The speed limit should be lowered.
- There is a significant design difference between Massachusetts Avenue and Washington Street and Melnea Cass Boulevard.
- New signage should be installed to cue drivers exiting the highway that they are entering a residential area.

**Transit Use:**

- Improve access to transit.

**Vision of Success for Melnea Cass Boulevard:**

- The corner of Melnea Cass Boulevard and Massachusetts Avenue at the Roundhouse Suites would be further developed.

- The provision of parking along the Boulevard should be investigated. Providing parking has upsides and downsides and may be dangerous.
- Melnea Cass Boulevard should be more pedestrian-friendly with better street lighting.
- The redesigned Boulevard should support public health.

### ***Group Report from Groups 7 and 8<sup>2</sup>***

#### ***Potential Early Action Steps:***

- Better maintenance, such as snow removal, that benefits pedestrians should be addressed. Madison Park Development Corporation has been carrying an unfair maintenance burden to date.
- The “jumble” of ownership of parcels along the Boulevard has created maintenance issues; this should be resolved.

#### ***Walking and Cycling:***

- Pedestrian safety needs to be improved; a pedestrian was hit the weekend prior to the meeting.

#### ***Driving:***

- The signal progression should be changed to slow the passage of traffic along the Boulevard.

#### ***Transit Use:***

- The safety of riders entering and exiting transit vehicles should be improved. Safe access to school and MBTA buses is paramount.
- The center median bus-way is not preferred as it offers less protection from vehicles to transit riders.

#### ***Vision of Success for Melnea Cass Boulevard:***

- Easy connections to the Boulevard’s cross-streets should be facilitated.
- Ensure the best possible uses for new developments and that access to these developments is safe.
- Well-located and designed parking supply for new developments.
- Improved aesthetics and landscaping along the Boulevard that take away its current “highway feel.”
- The community will be kept involved throughout the project, through the public process, the temporary jobs associated with construction, and permanent jobs brought about by economic development. Access to jobs in the Longwood Medical Area in particular should be improved.

### ***Group Report from Group 6***

#### ***Potential Early Action Steps:***

- Mature trees should be preserved.

#### ***Walking and Cycling:***

- Safety for cyclists and pedestrians should be improved.
- Bicycle and pedestrian pathways should not block storefronts. To ensure an urban feeling, bicycles should be integrated with traffic. Buildings should have an active edge on Melnea Cass Boulevard.
- Bicycle connectivity to Massachusetts Avenue and the surrounding area should be improved.

#### ***Transit Use:***

- The bicycle and walking path runs through the transit reservation; transit should be located there rather than down the center of the roadway.
- Is transit running in the median safe?
- The Urban Ring should remain in the design.

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<sup>2</sup> At the end of the meeting, audience members suggested that breakout group members append their names to their group’s flipcharts. Members of groups 7 and 8 did so, but none of the other groups did. As such, breakout group commentary is presented anonymously.

**Public Safety:**

- The current green space along the Boulevard is a no-man's land and feels unsafe.

**Vision of Success for Melnea Cass Boulevard:**

- The neighborhood will claim the Boulevard.
- Every square foot of land in the corridor should belong to someone and be cared for by them.
- Edge spaces will be improved as well, specifically the south side of the roadway at Tremont Street between Madison Park's parking lot and the sidewalk.
- There will be excellent care of street during design, construction and after.
- The area will remain true to Roxbury with community control of the space.
- Melnea Cass Boulevard will be connected with the neighborhood, including connections to its side streets.
- Noise reduction- limit the street.
- Beautify the area.

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## Next Steps

While the next community meeting has yet to be set, BTD will hold this meeting in late January or early February of 2012. The meeting will take place at the Morgan Memorial Goodwill building or the Boston Water and Sewer Headquarters and run from 6:30-8:30 p.m.

In the interim, the presentation given at the meeting summarized herein, a copy of these minutes and a copy of the next meeting's presentation, when it is completed, will be posted to the project website. A map of the developable parcels along Melnea Cass Boulevard and the owners of each parcel will also be posted. The possibility of having the next public information meeting taped by the Boston Neighborhood Network will be investigated.

## **Appendix 1: Meeting Flip-Charts**

See following page

## Summary

10 Lighting

20 Ped Friendly /  
Traffic Calming

30 Consumer Friendly

40 Things to do Now vs. Later

50 Family Friendly - Women w/ kids

60 Dedicated Bus Lane

70 Large Signage  $\Rightarrow$  signals of Res. N'hood

0 Parking

0 Transit Access

0 Mass / Melna  
Intersection  
DESIGN



## DESIGN IDEAS

- transit median safe?
- personal safety turf barrier  
b/c of no-man's land
  - ↳ development
- what about trees? Different <sup>Road/path/</sup>transit distribution
- how will S.B.H.T design be integrated - set in stone?
- bike path should not be a barrier to store fronts - integrate with traffic. (Not suburban) so that bldgs have active edge
- path is in original 40' space for transit - should transit not be in the median
- bike connectivity to Mass Ave

- ownership → will design  
incl. edge spaces  
(specifically south side @ Tremont between  
Madison Park lot & sidewalk.

- Every square should belong to  
someone & be cared for.

- Care of street during design,  
construction & after on-going

# PRIORITIES

- transit
- noise reduction - ~~passify~~ <sup>pacify</sup> the street
- bike connectivity
- beautify
- Keep urban ring in design
- pedestrian safety (ped injured 12/11)
- cyclist safety
- Keep trees (mature)
- true to Roxbury - community control of space
- reconnect w/neighborhood int. connections to side streets
- have neighborhood 'claim' <sub>road</sub>

① Group 7+8 12/15/11

- Public Safety for Pedestrians
  - Need better maintenance (i.e. snow removal)
- School Buses can ~~to~~ use center busway?
- Overpasses for Pedestrians?
- Facilitate cross connections on the street
- Best possible uses in new developments!
- Access to new development needs to be safe
  - Curb side parking impacts
    - Needed for retail
  - Parking supply for new development
    - ↳ Design & location



(2)

- Aesthetics → important factor & can help change "Highway" feel
  - landscaping, ~~etc~~ design, etc...
- Better Maintenance & Enforcement
- Madison Park has had to do extra maintenance!
- Developments need to take ownership of enhanced maintenance needs
- Clean up ownership jumble & the maintenance problems they have ~~created~~ <sup>created</sup>
- Need to keep community ~~involved~~ <sup>involved</sup> as developments move forward
  - Jobs — both const. & perm. jobs for local residents!

③

- Improve access for Roxbury residents to LMA jobs
- Pedestrian safety — Ped. was hit Th. 3  
Past Wk  
↓ access to/from School + ⑦ Buses
- Change Signal progression to slow Traffic passing through
- Safety of Transit riders in center median busway except  
↳ Need to be protected from vehicles
- Do not want center median busway

Group

$$3 + 4 + 9$$

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▽ "Ped-Friendly"

(Pan)

- Lighting \* \*

- Visual Cues to Drivers / Ped

(Esteban)

What Can be done now?

- Bike Rty?

- Lights?

○ Access to transit

- Bikes practicality to demos, rap music

> Women w/ children - using Bikes?

- Getting to transit

(Byron)

Dedicated Lane for Bikes

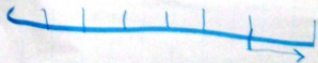
> needed now

o Parking  $\Rightarrow$  good & bad  
                    ↓                 ↓  
                dangerous         ↓

6 Speed Limit?

0 Larger Signage  $\Rightarrow$  Mast Arm w/  
Street Sign

○ Lighting



○ Public Health

○ Are other Urban Ring n'hoods gen?



> Rt turns on & off Melner  
Cass

> Speed less important  $\Rightarrow$  Ped important

> Traffic "Calming" \*

o Lower Speed Limit \*\*

o Design "diffuse" <sup>between</sup> Mass / Melner  $\Rightarrow$  Wash / Melner

o ~~Mass Ave~~ Mass Ave / Melner (corner near Roundhouse  
needs to be Developed)

o Too many Lanes to cross; threats  
to Peds

o Parking?

# Reporting Out

①

- Talked about slowing down MCB, focus on ped + bike safety, emphasis on safety, lowering crime, better lighting
- Entry into Dudley, part of a neighborhood, healthy + cleaner.
- Lots of suggestions on public safety for peds, kids walking on street, removal of snow
- Maybe allow school buses to use BRT lanes
- Go over traffic w/ ped overpasses, improve cycling conditions, connect community, better relationship to Longwood, access to new dev'l must be safe, understand impacts of curbside parking, Enhance Dudley area.
- Want a corridor where people will stop + visit + live
- More trees + landscaping
- Better maintenance, removal of litter

## Reporting Out

(2)

- Better coordination w/ City + State agencies
- Be ready to change transit to make it work
- Slow down traffic, see if signals can do that
- No center busway → down the sides
- Need for improved street lighting, more ped friendly, bring in consumer businesses
- Things done now: Signage, striping, lights
- Make this family friendly
- Dedicated bus lane.
- Larger signs, say we're going into res. area
- Make things better for parking
- Tell people @ Mass Ave Connector that they are off H'way
- Reduce noise on MCB
- Clean up trash
- Bike connections
- Prettier, ped safety

## Reporting Out

Next Mtg early ~~Feb~~ Feb  
late Jan

(3)

- Keep green space
- Reconnect w/ neighborhoods + side streets
- Like transit down the center
- Improve safety in area
- Ease barriers to stores
- Bike connection to Mass Ave
- All spaces should be cared for by local business
- Post speed limit
- Rushing wants an ownership map, and developable parcels will post to web site. → PPT to web in advance → done.
- Fox wants copy of the mtg minutes
- Claire would like video of meetings on BNN



- Bike Lanes popping up in Rox, want more and more signage/accommodations - Warren via Dudley to Gply. ⑦

Bus + Walking Commuter → feels bikes + cars will run her over, area is transit oriented, need walking spaces, need longer walk lights. Safety exiting buses, cars turning on red.

- Like green space + trees
- Ensure safety, issues of crime, there are drugs during daylight, no life @ night in Dudley
- Make things to attract families w/ kids, bring more people, gardens + gathering spaces
- Long red wait times, peds feel very exposed, create more buffer between sidewalk + traffic
- Sometimes driving is hard, goes b/t parking lot + high speeds, lefts are hard, lots of traffic from I-93 on peaks, widen or narrow, current since not right w/ development coming.

(2)

- MCB a pass-thru, doesn't serve locals, find a way to tone it down.
- Looking for peed refuge islands @ ctr of BLVD
- Like NY design of taking auto lanes to put in bike lanes, bus lanes, parking, made traffic better
- Need for better street lighting @ night, person hit recently on MCB → Kerr Way @ MCB
- Want to ensure MCB drives traffic to Dudley, pathways, signage, want to think of Bantlett, Ferdinand, P3 Drive economic development into the Community.  
Create jobs w/ transportation + traffic, get work for local folks on the project, need to think on parcel B
- Area along BLVD is empty, develop things to bring people onto St. Bring people onto the sidewalk @ night.
- Use of bike path as a spot for needle drugs, storage of stuff in green space, needs to be cleaned up.
- Interest in parcels 9+10, entrances should be from Melnea Cass

- Focus in towards the BLVD, don't create more walls. (3)
- Possibility to place Hubway Station on MCB
- Biking good for health + environment. Have something to accommodate them. Likes the SiOC park paths
- Need separate ped + bike paths, get the humps out of the path.

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## Success

- Entry to Dudley, friendly,
- Part of the neighborhood, not just a street thru empty land
- More walking + biking, safer, cleaner, fewer drug users, more positive uses
- Fewer lanes, parking, recreational cycling, green space
- Friendly to fitness, peds + bikes
- Sustainable jobs, econ development
- User friendly for all users