

# **West Station Area Transit Study**

## **Summary of Second Public Meeting**

Online Meeting  
5:00 pm – 6:15 pm  
June 10, 2020

### **Meeting Purpose and Format**

The purpose of the meeting was to 1.) provide the public with an update on the West Station Area Transit Study, 2.) solicit feedback on possible transportation and land development scenarios to be included in the study, and 3.) inform the public of how MAPC will use the information collected to evaluate various land use and transportation scenarios for West Station.

The meeting was organized and facilitated by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the agency undertaking the West Station Area Transit Study.

A flyer with a meeting notice was emailed to multiple email lists maintained by MAPC, as well as to specific contacts with neighborhood groups, nonprofits, and other stakeholders in the Allston-Brighton area. The meeting notice was also shared with contacts at Harvard University, MassDOT (who shared the notice with members of the Allston I-90 Task Force), the Town of Brookline, and the cities of Boston and Cambridge.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, MAPC held an online meeting via Zoom. The meeting included a participant survey and a slide show presentation with updates on the study efforts since the first public meeting in November 2019. Participants were then assigned to breakout rooms to allow for small group discussions (described below). Following the breakout rooms, the meeting concluded with a summary of next steps. The meeting was recorded and posted on MAPC's YouTube channel. A copy of the presentation and a link recording of the meeting can be found on the West Station Study website at [www.mapc.org/weststation](http://www.mapc.org/weststation).

Approximately 60 people participated in the online meeting. MAPC staff who assisted in the meeting were Travis Pollack, Eric Bourassa, Tim Reardon, Conor Gately, Iolando Spinola, Elise Harmon, Annabelle Taylor, Tyrone Calliste, Alison Felix, David Loutzenheiser, Kristen Mei, Sarah Kurpiel Lee, Marah Holland, Caitlin Spence, Ryan Kelly, Alyssa Kogan, and Sarah Philbrick.

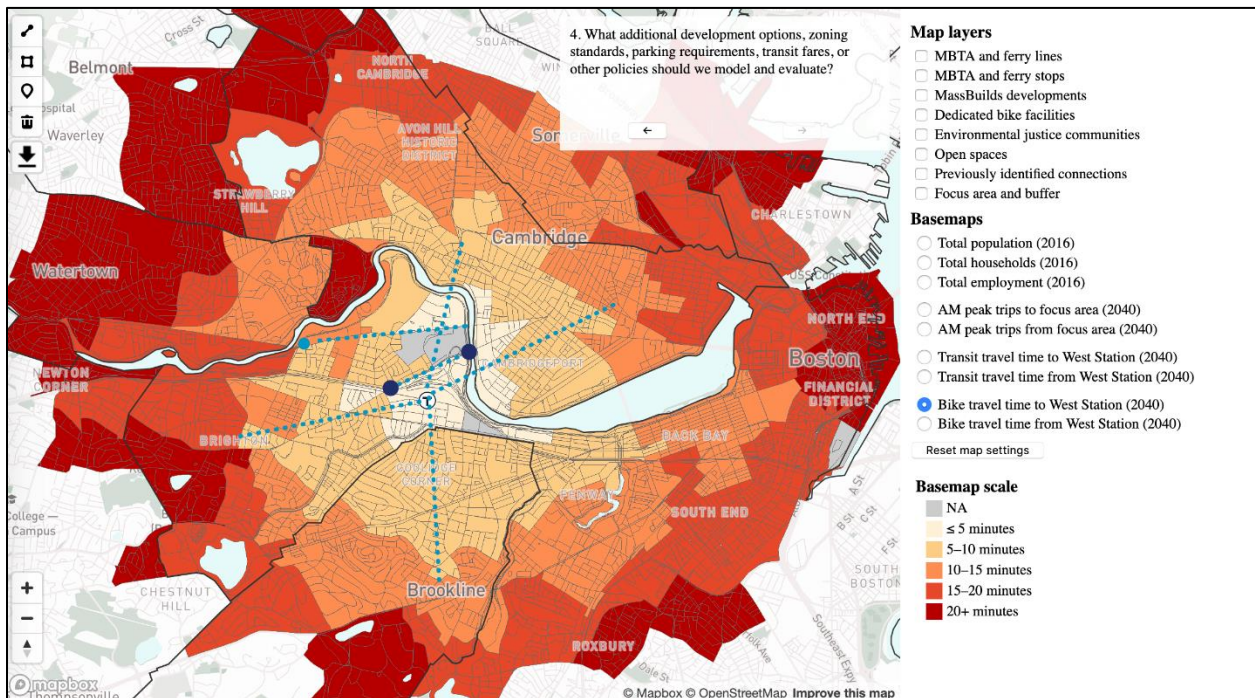
### **Breakout Room Activity and Feedback**

MAPC staff facilitated seven breakout rooms to ask participants their ideas on transportation and development ideas that should be included in the scenario modeling efforts. Each small group addressed four questions:

1. What are the important origins and destinations people will need to connect via West Station (to, from, or through)?

2. What existing transit routes need improvements, and what new services are needed to increase the range of transit access to & from the West Station area?
3. What active transportation routes need to be improved or created in order to provide safe access to and from the West Station area?
4. What additional development options, zoning standards, parking requirements, transit fares, or other polices should we model and evaluate?

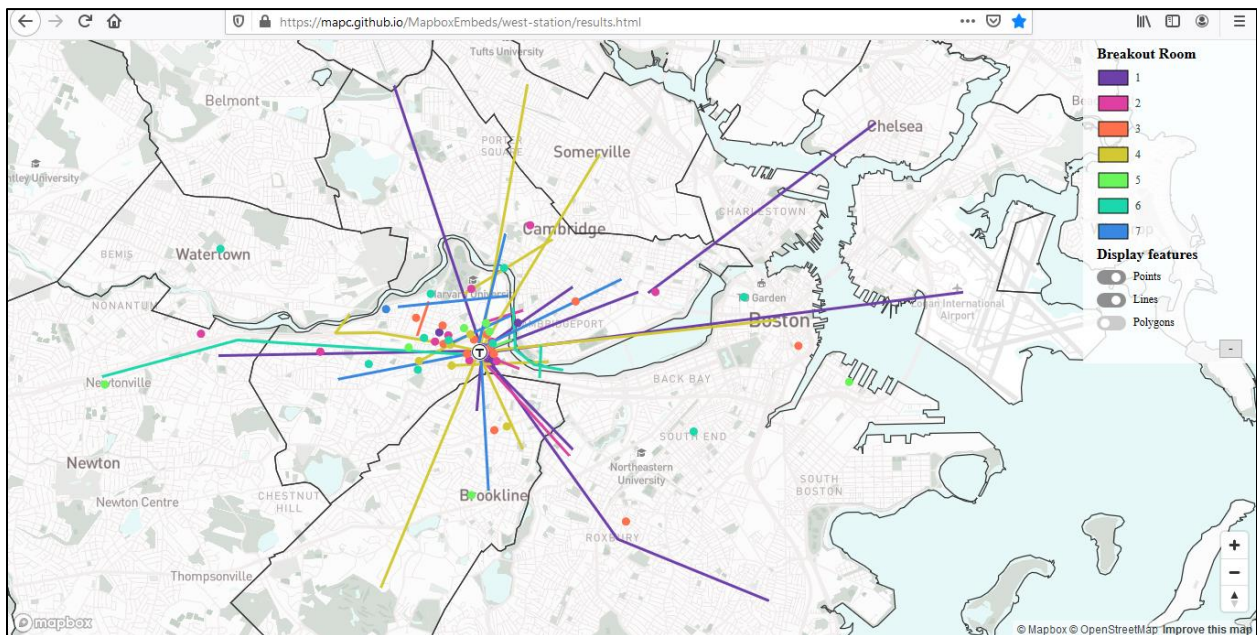
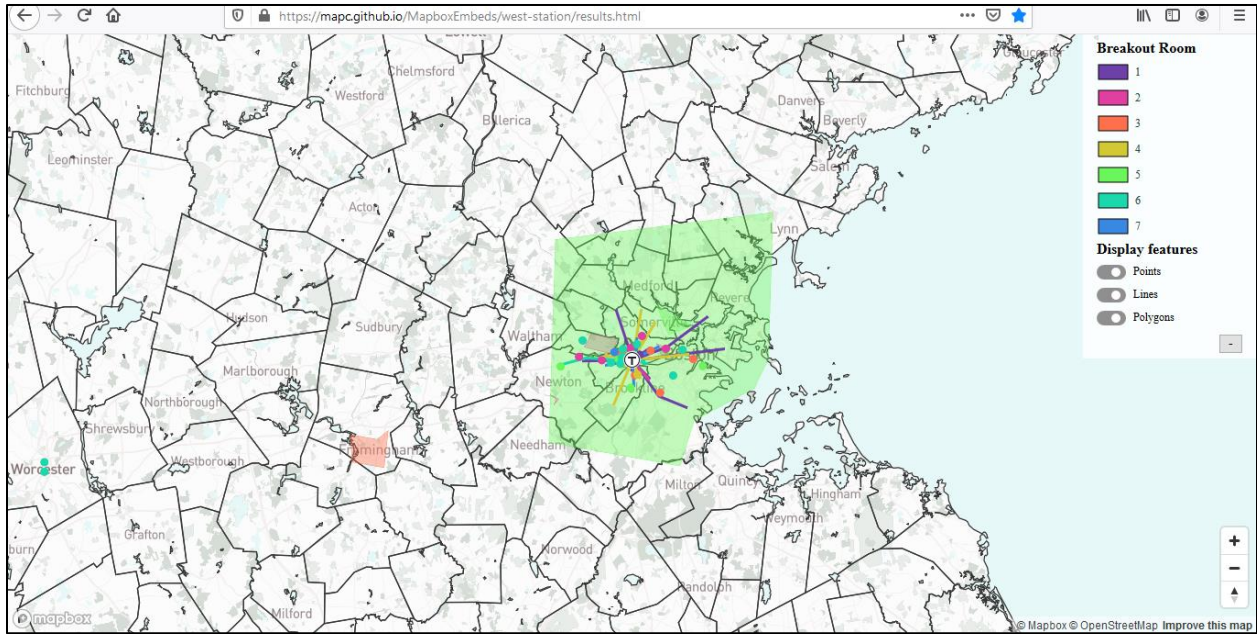
Two MAPC staff participated in each breakout room: one asked questions and moderated the session, while the other noted the breakout room feedback online via Mapbox. A screen shot example of the Mapbox input is shown below.



The Mapbox exercise included map layers that could be toggled on and off to help facilitate the discussion. For example, for the question on better transit services that should be evaluated, the map had a layer showing previously identified transit services improvements in the area, including frequent transit service on the Grand Junction connecting West Station to Kendall Square/MIT and North Station, and a rapid bus network connecting to Brighton, Cambridge, Watertown, Longwood, Roxbury, and Dorchester. This information thus allowed participants to give ideas on additional services and connections that the study should explore.

The maps below show a composite of the key connections and origins and destinations that were identified by the meeting participants in the breakout rooms.





Below are the common themes and ideas identified in the breakout rooms that the study should evaluate. A detailed listing of the responses to the questions for each breakout room is in Attachment A.

### Key Origins and Destinations

- Cambridge, especially MIT, Kendall Square, Central Square
- Longwood area
- Brookline (especially downtown)

- Job access for lower-income households/workers in Chelsea, East Boston, Roxbury, Dorchester
- Western Ave corridor, and other areas of Allston-Brighton
- Watertown
- Framingham and Worcester

#### Transit Service Improvements and New Transit Services

- Frequent 15-minute service commuter rail
- North/South bus improvements, especially for routes 66 and 64
- Proposed bus improvements shown in the to [A/B Mobility Study](#)
- Grand Junction rail service
- Improvements to bus routes 57, 86, 65
- Longer distance Bus Rapid Transit, similar to the Urban Ring Concept
- Reverse commuters

#### Improvements to the Bicycle/Pedestrian Network

- Franklin St
- Western Ave
- Crossing the I-90 turnpike
- Along and to Charles River
- To Brookline
- Cambridge St

#### Other Ideas to Evaluate

- Lower parking ratios, less on-street parking, higher parking costs
- Impacts on travel time and other changes for Environmental Justice neighborhoods, lower-income households
- Less on-street parking, narrower streets, and more space for pedestrians, cyclists, transit
- Change in affordable housing, less luxury housing
- Means-tested fares, changes in transit fares
- Impacts in air pollution and climate change
- Changes in office jobs/housing mix

### **Additional Meeting Feedback**

Over 100 individuals registered and approximately 60 people attended the meeting.

MAPC sent follow up surveys to those who registered for the meeting. Those who participated in the meeting were asked to provide their input on the meeting format, start time and content. Twenty people who attended the meeting took the follow up survey. Most participants stated that the meeting was “some” or “quite” useful, and “some” or “quite” agreed that it was a worthwhile event, and that they learned something interesting. Moreover, most also stated that the format, 5 pm start time, and the breakout rooms were “quite” or “a great deal” effective. For those who could not participate on June 10, the follow up email and project website included links to watch the recorded meeting and provide responses to the questions asked in the breakout rooms. As of July 10, the meeting recording had around 12 views and one person provided responses to the breakout room questions.

## **Attachment A: Responses to questions from the Breakout Rooms**

The following are responses noted by the moderators from each Breakout Room for each question.

### **Question 1**

***What are the important origins and destinations people will need to connect via West Station (to, from, or through)?***

#### **Group 1**

- Lower-income areas of Chelsea, East Boston, Dorchester, Roxbury/JP and Mattapan, so these residents can access the jobs that will be created around West Station
- Need to better understand access to this site for lower wage earners and how many of those job types there will be
- Rt 2 corridor
- Cambridge and Longwood
- Brookline and Kendall/Harvard
- Airport
- Newton

#### **Group 2**

- Longwood medical area and Boston University Medical area, along with MIT and Harvard
- Development in Watertown across the river, with not only housing, but also the redevelopment of the arsenal. A lot of jobs and people there.
- Harvard Square and Kendall Square especially if West Station allows people to get off the Worcester Line early and transfer.
- New biotech facilities that some plans for Western Avenue.
- There will be a new road through the enterprise Research Campus of Harvard; hope to direct traffic away from North Hollywood Street.
- Route 66 bus -no foreseeable future what the demand will be. Some are getting used to working from home. Maybe there won't be so many commuters using transit.
- This neighborhood has changed over the past couple of decades; the job growth in the Kendall Square area and this is also going to be regional jobs center.
- Neighborhoods like Newton corner or, beyond the edge of Brighton – need to know the impacts on affordability of those neighborhoods in particular if these are high income jobs.

- The eastern half of Cambridge has a lot of our service workers for building services. Many of the day to day staff travel from Everett, and Chelsea. It's important to consider where people who would work in those kinds of industries will be coming from, and the type of employment that would be here in this neighborhood of West station.
- Workers can come from Hyde Park and other places, and maybe even further to the south.
- Pay attention to large public housing developments in Allston and Brighton.

#### Group 3

- To and from W. Roxbury and Jamaica Plain is challenging
- Roxbury, Dorchester
- Central Square, Coolidge Corner (Brookline)
- Framingham and Worcester, for reverse and outbound trips
- Back Bay and South Station, to connect to other areas
- Dorchester and Roxbury via better or BRT Rt 66 bus service

#### Group 4

- Longwood and Brookline
- Somerville
- Allston to JP

#### Group 5

- Look at the Urban Ring concept
- Seaport
- Connect Brookline to Cambridge
- How can we shift existing drivers to transit

#### Group 6

- A lot of growth in west Boston, Allston and Brighton proper → both commercial and residential - Stop and Shop redevelopment near Boston Landing, etc.
- South End
- Ex urban core increasing (ex. Watertown)
- A lot of development along Washington street from newton corner up to west Newton, parallel to rail lines (close to Newtonville rail stops)
- Anticipate ridership from that area and from mass pike

- From Oak Square to MIT via Central Square
- Existing development on Western Ave; higher density, thousands of new units added nearby
- North station access to north side commuter rail -- how that happens is up for grabs but important

#### Group 7

- There is a desire to have this as a real regional destination.
- Access to/from the west of the City should be considered (more people will leave the city because of COVID)
- Need connections into Brookline
- Make sure that the Western Ave projects (listed on the BPDA website) are incorporated into the model – hard to tell from MassBuilds layer on map
- Framingham, Newton, Wellesley are places people may move to post-COVID so connections are needed here
- The science center will be big and therefore have a lot of people traveling to and from it
- Need access to Kendall Square

#### Question 2

***What existing transit routes need improvements, and what new services are needed to increase the range of transit access to & from the West Station area?***

#### Group 1

- More service on Worcester Line
- North/south bus improvements & bus priority, especially for bus route 66
- Grand Junction rail to Kendall & North Station

#### Group 2

- Concern that maps show from new Mills station it take 60 minutes to get to West station.
- On the Framingham Worcester line to really be an urban transit service it needs to be down to 15 to 20 minute headways maximum.
- Not everyone can commute by bike, esp. in the winter.



- The BPA is doing a mobility study in Allston Brighton, finding bus routes alternative routes for bicycling there, they're looking at with the zoning on Western and how they might be able to operate bicycling and looking at Cambridge street.

#### Group 3

- Increased bus service is needed across the board. This applies particularly to bus routes 57, 66, and 86. Also dedicated bus lanes.
- Provide BRT service for bus route 66.
- How efficiently buses perform in traffic is just as important as the number of buses on the road.
- Better bus route 65 weekend service, especially needed for seniors.

#### Group 4

- Longwood and Brookline
- Better bus service to Brookline
- Better off-peak service on commuter rail from West Station to Boston
- Better north/south bus routing; almost all current service is east-west
- More reliable transit access Allston to JP

#### Group 5

- Need better connections from Brookline to Cambridge
- Expand Blue Line to Lynn

#### Group 6

- 64 bus route in lower Allston (around Shaws), currently runs infrequently
- Understand where people are working and where jobs are. Essential workers?
- Where are workers going? Some south to Longwood, some north to Kendall to office buildings
- North Station connection to grand junction, making sure that it's not ruled out
- Some residents go to Watertown for healthcare facilities
- How much is it worth to get the commuter rail across the Charles river? What are the benefits?
- How much are you paying to give people access to Cambridge or north station
- Think about commuters coming in from as far away as Worcester
- Grand junction means we could get rid of cars on the pike, people can commute to Kendall square

- People going west (reverse commute), opening up communities that are west of Boston
- Half of all development taking place along Cambridge street, massive growth corridor
- Cambridge and Lindon st, north beacon and Everett st
- Regional hub with bus connections, multimodal connections
- Putting in opportunities to add to west station later (not one and done, but over time process)

#### Group 7

- How many people will be commuting to Western Ave due to all the new development projects? This should be considered when thinking about transit planning
- 64 not useful – infrequent and gets stuck in traffic
- 66 bus is major access point – need good access to Brookline
- Increase capacity and frequency on 64
- There is a lot of development, requires a trolley or BRT at a minimum (to be installed here)
- From Harvard to Western Ave (86 bus)
- Traffic is terrible on Harvard Bridge
- Buses bypass people because there is no room on the bus
  - Need to alleviate stress on both the 66 and 86
  - The 66 suffers from bus bunching
  - Need to enhance pedestrian access (example: are no shelters for the bus)

#### Question 3

***What active transportation routes need to be improved or created in order to provide safe access to and from the West Station area?***

#### Group 1

- Franklin Street ped bridge was the main active transportation thing discussed. Critical to get that right. And making Lincoln Street safer.
- Wider path to and along Charles
- Blue Bikes at West Station

#### Group 2

- Need connected network of protected bike lanes on River Street and Cambridge Street to Charles River. And need places where people can shower at work.
- Comm Ave bike lanes, funnel bike traffic into specific area. Going West: get to bike rack from river (intersection is not clear currently) Going east: follow river
- The Enterprise Research Campus is very car centric. The Nexus project has an 800 space garage.
- The City of Cambridge has a very specific traffic analysis policy called critical systems analysis, to not over saturate our street network. The main choke points in any transportation network which is the intersections and just making sure that intersections are not being overloaded by vehicle trips.
- Look at BPDA mobility study in area

#### Group 3

- Add a bike lane on Everett Street to provide safer access to Western Avenue
- Franklin Street

#### Group 4

- Better bike access to Brookline
- Need better bike and ped crossing the Turnpike
- Dedicated bike facility on the Leo Birmingham Parkway
- Wider cycle tracks on heavily travelled streets
- Safe bike storage and station and on train
- Crossings at intersections and on bridges are where safety improvements are needed most
- Need safe and comfortable sidewalks
- Add bike lanes paralleling bus routes

#### Group 5

- Access to Charles River

#### Group 6

- From West Station needs to be easy access to bike thoroughfare, both sides of river
- How do people navigate into bike paths from the rest of the city
- Connection from Beacon Street to Commonwealth Ave? Keep them in focused networks to help with safety → clear avenue that funnels all bikes away from cars and ped

- Going west, intersection is challenging; Limited options to “jump back in” to protected bike facilities
- Ped crossing at Talbridge street to the river, be able to get onto Western Ave

#### Group 7

- It is unsafe at the end of Western Ave near the Stockyard – this is how you access a park but it is dangerous
- There are no lights, no crossings when you get off of the bus, also no place for the bus to pull over
- People will gather at “The Speedway” (a Notch Brewery is coming this Fall) and the nearby Health Center – popular area
- Western Ave is horrible for cyclists, especially at Leo Birmingham Parkway
- There are not a lot of bicycle connections in the area; need separated bicycle paths like Commonwealth Avenue
- Safe bicycle facilities will encourage employees to get to work without a car
- (Note about the ped bridge being relocated and being taken into account in the planning process)
- Want to see a lot less street space dedicated to on-street parking
- Make it off-street parking if needed (garages)
- Huge waste of public resources (referring to on-street parking)
- Can be wider sidewalks and/or bike facilities (instead of on-street parking)
- Overall need a more robust bike network
- Need bike facility on Cambridge Street

#### Question 4

***What additional development options, zoning standards, parking requirements, transit fares, or other policies should we model and evaluate?***

#### Group 1

- Everyone agreed on low parking and basing parking ratios on the mode splits the city/community wants, not on what ITE says is needed.
- Land to the south will redevelop faster as the project advances and land speculation increases. This could be a scenario we look at. What happens if by 2030 some amount of new growth occurs outside the construction zone and is walkable to the new station. Does that change the demand for it and these other major infrastructure connections?

- Can we measure and report on air pollution changes and how new connections would change or improve travel time for low-income people, people of color, especially for job access?

#### Group 2

- Need affordable housing. As a part of some of the newer development as some of the newer commercial development that will be happening to really include, to encourage people to be able to live and work in Allston Brighton
- Can the model show information about the origins and destinations, for the environmental justice populations; the CTPS model doesn't really do that.
- Can we model long-term impacts of more Work From Home.

#### Group 3

- Need means tested fares, lower parking ratios, higher parking costs, metered parking for businesses – no free parking at West Station.
- Look at different open space scenarios
- Joe Beggan suggested referring to the BPDA's I-90 Allston Interchange Placemaking Study for guidance when planning for open space. Link to the study <http://www.bostonplans.org/planning/planning-initiatives/i-90-allston-interchange>

#### Group 4

- No comments

#### Group 5

- How can best shift the current (car) commuters to A/B? especially when we have wide roads
- Roads should look like local roads
- Look at Boston Landing rail station for projections on commuter rail
- Go big, look at Urban Ring concept

#### Group 6

- Biotech development will generate a lot of jobs and transit needs (Allston landing sound, beacon landing)
- Provide mixed income housing so people can live close to work
- Keep climate change in mind -- area is in floodplain of Charles river
- When realigning mass pike, bear in mind flooding concerns, future challenges to come

#### Group 7

- Current roads are jammed, we need to incentivize transit, walking, and biking
- Beacon Yards is a good example to reference in terms of driving
- This area is not well connected to transit
  - Need low parking ratios (<.75/unit)
  - Allocate less street space to parking – do wider sidewalks or separated bicycle paths
  - It has to be useful for people to utilize these transit services
  - Parking for businesses is important
  - Consider issues of housing affordability
- Want mixed income live/work development
- Will have to make it useful for people to use transit
- Should not be all luxury housing – this means more cars
- Make sure that there are pick up and drop off locations for delivery and TNCs
- Need to model parking requirements for new buildings – it may be jammed; do we need that much parking?
- Can we incentivize people to take other modes? (not drive)