

Town of Sharon



Transportation Advisory Board Meeting Minutes February 24, 2021

Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) Members

David Straus, Chair	Linda Hager
Neil Coplan	Terri Rawding
David Fixler	

Other Attendees

Peter O'Cain, Town Engineer, DPW Representative
Mike Littman - resident

Administration

- The meeting of the Transportation Advisory Board was called to order at 7:05 PM via ZOOM.
- Future scheduled meeting(s): 3/24/21

Meeting Opening

- This was the first meeting since the Board last met in March, 2020. Chair Straus stated that we are continuing TAB Activities. Due to the impact of the pandemic we are in a different place. At the last meeting on March 11, 2020, almost a year ago we were in the process of working on the train station user feedback. Sharon residents aimed at giving us a sense of how the station was accessed. The survey results are in the Town Report. Over this time community behaviors have been impacted. The train station usage is way down.
- Mr. O'Cain said there are approximately 20 cars on the Boston side and less on the Providence side.
- Mr. Fixler said we are in a completely different position in regards to the initial charge of the Select Board to review a parking garage. Commuting patterns will return for many. A lot will make sense moving forward but not in the near term. When people return we need to make sure it's safe and will operate efficiently.
- Ms. Hager said ridership is down. Many companies will continue telecommuting. COVID changed ridership on trains.
- Chair Straus said we need to get a sense of future commuting patterns.

Minutes

- Ms. Hager moved to approve the minutes of 3/11/20. Ms. Rawding seconded the motion. The Board voted 5-0-0 in favor of approval. These minutes were prepared by Ms. Rawding.

Train Station Survey

- Chair Straus said we technically completed the survey. Comments have been provided to the Select Board. No further discussion needed.

Signage and Traffic Flow

- Chair Straus commented that with the PSC Report there were a number of signage changes being proposed including recommendations for no stopping and no standing. Focus was on safety and reorganizing the entrances and exits on the outbound side and continued discussions on redesign to access bad egress station itself.
- Mr. O'Cain said they did the drop off lane configuration on the Boston side. They added signage and then COVID hit. They did not explore how effective changes have been. Holding off on redesign as there is zero revenue but still costs at the station like personnel and maintenance items. It is prudent to wait and see how long this lasts. He will do an RFP for design work to have ready. He wants to see how to reconfigure. They have a 4 million dollar transportation bond pending for roadway and parking at the train station and \$700,000 for drainage on Robin Road. They are in limbo right now but will prep for moving forward. Also got a 40 thousand dollar grant for marketing plan for station - MassDot funded. There is a grant for signalization near Shaw's Plaza that hinges on MassDot approval. Maskwonicut Bridge is in the 100% plan phase and close to being finalized. There is also a survey being done for bike lanes and sidewalk project. For the 4 million dollar grant they need full blown plans, utilities, topography, design stage, reviews etc.
- Chair Straus said some companies are extending work at home until the end of the year. From the TAB side we may want to ask residents what they have heard from their employers about return to work. Will they drive, telecommute or use train. We still do not know MBTA cuts that will be made to service on peak and off peak trains which could force people in a particular direction.
- Ms. Hager said that the MBTA is looking at shutting down stations. Maybe we could progress with design, do something with pick up and drop off. It would be good to take advantage while there are not many cars in the lot.
- Mr. O'Cain said he will do the RFP and pass to TAB. You cannot put out the bid unless you have funding.
- Ms. Hager asked if here are any changes to Chapter 90 projects.
- Mr. O'Cain said he has not heard of any changes. Our Chapter 90 was not reduced. This year we are paving roads as it's earmarked for roadway projects.
- Mr. Fixler said he sees this as a series of stages. In the short term we do not know what the patterns will be. Come up with the best use of the existing space. If the bond bill passes we would have money for changes. He suggested getting on the Select Board agenda to hear our thoughts. We need to react to the data. People may not be going back to work 5 days in the office. We need a safer better design regardless of usage.
- Chair Straus says he agrees 100%. If the bond bill comes through and funding comes through then access/egress and safety issues will be addressed.
- Mr. O'Cain said if we receive funding he will have an engineering firm look at the design work and move into the construction phase once we have a plan.
- Ms. Hager suggested working on safety issues for pedestrians.

- Mr. O'Cain said the DPW can look and think this through. Can we make the sidewalk friendlier? All parking spaces are undersized so any walking lanes would minimize spaces. He said it's a balancing act between pedestrian safety and maximizing spaces. He will forward pictures of current train station improvements to the TAB.
- Chair Straus asked for any details on bicycle and pedestrian access issues around the neighborhoods.
- Mr. O'Cain commented that they are currently surveying Shaw's Plaza and PO Square to seek approval for dedicated bike lanes. It would not be a big jump down to the station. Its 3.5 miles of roadway.

Parking Pass System

- Chair Straus asked what approach we want to take.
- Mr. Fixler said in the past people complained about the method used to purchase passes. Now there is no issue. Things have changed. We can consider if there is a high use again. Is it the right price.
- Chair Straus said he agrees it is worthwhile but not a high priority now. We need to think about it if the demand comes back. How can we improve the customer experience. How can we attract people back?
- Mr. Fixler said he is unsure if everyone will go back to the station but we need to create a first class experience.
- Chair Straus said this can be the impetus from quarterly to daily pass sales. Once we know the future demand does it allow for opening to non-residents.
- Ms. Hager said we discussed 1, 3, 5 day passes but we need to look into how to manage this.
- Mr. O'Cain said he will talk to Mr. Turkington about the train station lease.

Objectives

- Chair Straus asked how we want TAB to move forward. We need to think of safety improvements from the bond bill monies and post pandemic work.
- Mr. Fixler said to provide the Select Board our thoughts with a hybrid pass system, what can we advise that's fair and equitable and think about nonresidents. Let them know we still exist.
- Mr. O'Cain said there is insecurity with having all daily's. Have to be in reactionary mode. If we write the lease with the MBTA we get monies. We need a plan for existing and daily parking for each type of space.
- Ms. Hager said the survey asked people days they park. Can we extract that data? She agrees to let the Select Board know about the parking pass system and safety issues.
- Mr. O'Cain said we need a few different parking pass plans.
- Mr. Fixler said the town needs to be ready regarding parking passes.
- Mr. Straus said he will put in to be on a further SB agenda.
- Mr. O'Cain suggested doing a survey regarding people going back to work plans.
- Chair Straus said this is imperative to help focus on parking policies.

Adjournment

Through unanimous consent and by a vote of 5-0-0 the meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Submitted:

Rachelle Levitts

Transportation Advisory Board Administrative Assistant

