

Rena Street Neighbors Meeting
March 14, 2007
6:00 PM
175 North Harvard Street

Harvard Allston Task Force Members

John Cusack, *Meeting Chair*
Rita DiGesse
Mike Hanlon
Harry Mattison

Harvard University

Harris Band
Chris Conklin, *VHB, Transportation consultant for Harvard University*
Will Donham
Ken Johnson
Mike McBride
Kevin McCluskey
Alison Reinhardt
Nancy Stack, *VHB, Infrastructure consultant for Harvard University*

Discussion and Questions

- Question about if Harvard has conducted traffic studies for the existing conditions.

Chris said yes, and that we would be happy to provide more information if there were questions after the presentation.

- Concern about the location of the loading dock and entrance to the science complex.
 - Harvard should use the existing truck routes. Trucks should enter on Western Avenue so that the neighborhood streets are not affected.
- Concern about the plans for residential housing and how Harvard can establish the transportation system for this area now when the plans for residential housing haven't been developed.
 - How will Oxford Street be affected? Harvard needs to develop the ideas for Oxford Street more.
 - What will be the road access for the residential houses? How will residents drive to and from these buildings? What will the traffic flow be?
 - Where will the residents park?
 - If Harvard makes decisions about how Rena Street will work now, can it present some alternatives for the traffic flow for these residential houses?
 - What is the ratio of cars to graduate students?

Harris said there are still so many options for the residential housing. He said that one option is to locate the residential houses closer to the science complex and create a more cohesive Rena Park.

- Concern that Rena Park would only be temporary and in the future Harvard will eventually develop it.

Harris said that it's Harvard's aspiration to provide more open space including appropriate buffers between the campus and the community.

- Questions about the time frame for the development of Stadium Way.
- Question about the number of projected cars that will use the extended Rena Street and if the science building will generate traffic seven days a week.
- Concern about the increase in traffic on Rena Street if the road is extended.
- Concern about the current traffic problems on Kingsley Street and the difficulty to turn off Kingsley Street onto North Harvard Street.
- Concern about the illegal tow yards on Rena Street. When will this be eliminated?
- Concern about the current traffic problems on Windom Street. Getting off Windom Street onto Cambridge Street is difficult.
- Discussion about the creation of a road between Science 1 and 2. The road could be parallel to Travis Street and extend from Seattle Street so traffic could be on Harvard property.
- Concern about traffic on Travis Street because it is a neighborhood street and a lot of the neighborhood children play there. Even another 10 cars a day is a major traffic impact.
- Concern about how Harvard will enforce traffic regulations if the streets are dead-ended or limited to shuttles or "official" vehicles. It's important that Harvard answers this question.
- Concern about if new traffic circulation and regulations will work 20 years from now.
- Windom Street is restricted to trucks. Concern about the proposal to extend Windom Street to allow Harvard faculty/staff to use Windom Street to the new science complex.

- Concerns about the WGBH traffic study that was conducted by VHB. The community doesn't think this is a valid study.
- Questions about what's going to happen to the Cable Vision building.
 - Neighbors already have problems with the Cable Vision tenants now.
 - Support for having construction workers use the Cable Vision site for construction worker parking.
 - If the neighborhood gets residential parking permits then construction parking won't be such a problem.
 - Concern about how Harvard will regulate construction workers from going down Kingsley or Rena Street when they leave the site.
 - Will Travis Street be an exit route for construction vehicles?

Ken said that about 1/3 of the eastern side of the Cable Vision building will be demolished. He said that the tenants of the Cable Vision building will probably be out by the Fall of 2007.

Ken said that he would talk more extensively about construction mitigation issues at the meeting on March 28th.

- Representative Mike Moran made the following points:
 - Harvard should be responsible for housing every single car on its property that is generated from the science project.
 - Harvard should consider the option of creating a new road between the site for the first and second science complexes.
 - Rena Street doesn't have to be connected. It should be kept a dead-end street and physical barriers such as curbing, sidewalks and trees should be put in place. The same should be done for Kingsley Street.
 - Very pleased to see that Harvard has a proposal for a temporary road on its own property for construction vehicles to access the science site without using Windom Street.
- Concern about making all the streets dead-ended. This could limit circulation and would mean that only one street in the neighborhood is a through street.

Harris agreed and said there needs to be a balance between isolating the neighborhood and creating connections for the community to the campus.

- Question about the kinds of benefits Harvard is offering in return for the increase in air pollution.
- Concern about the location of the loading dock and parking entrance for the science building.
 - What are the pros and cons of locating it on the new Rena Street and not on Western Avenue or Stadium Way?

- Locating it on the new Rena Street puts the loading access right across from a potentially new, great park.

Harris said that one reason is because Harvard envisions Stadium Way to be a very unique, landscaped boulevard. He also said that from a safety perspective alone it made more sense to locate it on the new Rena Street. There was a request to see the study that shows why it is safer to locate the loading dock on Rena Street.

- Concern about the timing and phasing of Harvard's development because there are so many unknowns about the future development around the science building.
 - Is there a parking garage planned further down on Stadium Way?
 - Why does Harvard need all these new roads when it doesn't know what is being developed around them.
 - Harvard should come back and talk to the neighborhood when it has concrete proposals and is actually ready to talk to the neighborhood.

Harris said the Master Plan has a high level of predictability for a 50-year plan. He said that Harvard didn't want to provide too much specificity so that it could continue discussions with the neighborhood about its preferences.

- Question about the timing of the two roads.
 - Will they be built in conjunction with each other?
- Question about whether the 500 car parking garage in the first science complex will serve the second science complex and the residential houses.

Chris said that it would serve the second science complex and potentially the residential houses. He said that another garage located to the south might also serve the residential houses.

- Support for locating the loading dock for the science building on Western Avenue because Harvard designs attractive loading docks.
- Support for limiting the curb cuts on Western Avenue. Even going from 8 curb cuts to 2 curb cuts would be an improvement.
- Support for restricting Harvard shuttles from driving down Kingsley or Rena Street and regulating their frequency.

Mike and Harris said that Harvard could provide information on different gate control systems and how it could be enforced.

- In summary the options for the extended Rena Street are:

1. Extending Rena Street all the way through to Stadium Way for regular vehicle use. Options for whether the traffic flow is one-way or two-way can still be explored.
2. Restricting access to part of the extended Rena Street to bikes and official vehicle use.
3. Restricting access to part of the extended Rena Street to bikes and official vehicle use and extending Seattle Street to the new Rena Street.

John Cusack thought there was general support for the 2nd and 3rd option. He also asked Harvard to show a fourth option at the meeting on March 29th that shows Rena Street dead-ended and all vehicles, including official vehicles, are restricted from entering Rena Street and Travis Street.

- Questions about whether Rena Street or Stadium Way will be private roads.

Harris said this is still up for discussion with the City of Boston. It may be the case that Harvard owns the road and is responsible for maintenance but access to the roads isn't restricted.

- Questions about the dimension of the new Rena Street and whether it will be wider than the existing Rena Street or whether it would be the same.

Harris said Harvard intends to make the dimensions of the streets as pedestrian friendly as possible. John Cusack asked whether Harvard could bring the street dimensions to the meeting on the 29th.

- Support for a new road through the site of the first and second science sites because it would help to create public access to the Harvard quadrangle and green space between the two proposed science sites.
- Support for restricting access to Travis Street for bikes and official vehicle use only. Developing a new road through the proposed science sites could take away some of the green space.
- Questions about what options the Boston Transportation Department prefers.
- Questions about if use of the science garage will be restricted to the occupants only or if it will be opened for event parking. Request for Harvard to restrict access for event parking for the first few years.

Harris said that it might be opened up eventually for event parking but that most likely other proposed parking garages would be more preferred options for event parking.

- Request for Harvard to commit to restricting shuttles from accessing Rena Street and Kingsley Street.