

Harvard Allston Task Force
Meeting Minutes
Monday, June 11, 2007
Honan Library
6:30 p.m.

I. Attendance:

Harvard Allston Task Force

Ray Mellone, Chair
Paul Berkeley
John Cusack
Rita DiGesse
Michael Hanlon
Millie Hollum McLaughlin
Harry Mattison
Brent Whelan

Harvard University

John Audi
Harris Band
Nathalie Beauvais
Will Donham
Chris Gordon
Peggy Hayes
Kevin McCluskey
Kathy Spiegelman
Maile Takahashi
Tracy Wall
Stefan Behnsich, Behnisch Architekten
Stefan Rappold, Behnisch Architekten
Ted Sandstra, Behnisch Architekten
Martin Werminghausen, Behnisch Architekten
Joe Quitter, VHB

City of Boston

Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority
Vineet Gupta, Boston Transportation Department

The Task Force Chair called the meeting to order at 6:40pm.

Gerald Autler, Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) said the agenda would be an update on the proposed Harvard Allston Science Complex and on parking.

An audience member announced the Riverfest on Saturday celebrating the Bicentennial.

Gerald Autler, BRA, said Harvard is getting close to filing the Draft Project Impact Report (DPIR) for the Science Complex. It will include analyses of the transportation and environmental impacts. There will be a 75-day comment period. At the previous meeting the Article 80 Review and the transportation access plan agreement to be filed with the Boston

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Transportation Department (BTD) were discussed. The BRA will keep the Task Force updated on the material that falls outside the Article 80 review process (BTD Agreement, Construction Management Plan, and Cooperation Agreement). There is still a lot of work to be done on roadways and the public realm, and this involves review by other city agencies including the BTD and the Public Works Department. There will be a series of public meetings prior to the 25% design of the roads. In response to an earlier request by a Task Force member for a summary of the different city regulatory processes to which Harvard's buildings and infrastructure improvements are subject, Gerald has put together a draft and continues to work on it. Gerald handed out an example of a Transportation Access Plan Agreement (TAPA).

Gerald addressed the District Attorney's letter to the BRA regarding the applicability of the open meeting law. He stated, "It is still the position of the BRA that the Open Meeting Law does not apply to the Task Force." He said he would leave it up to the lawyers to work out the applicability of the law, but that it had always been and continued to be the intention of the BRA to conduct the process in an open, participatory way. The Task Force and all the meetings are not required by law, but are the BRA's way of giving the public input into the process. If the Task Force Chair feels that some closed meetings are necessary, that was a decision that the BRA would leave to him.

The Chair of the Task Force added that "with all due respect, the Task Force is made up of volunteers and is not a regulatory agency and executive sessions are necessary." He asked if "anyone really believes that I and the Task Force are conspiring with Harvard?" He noted that the Executive meetings are necessary to talk with Harvard one-on-one to get direct questions to bring back to the larger group. He announced that next Monday night there would be an Executive session to discuss construction mitigation so the process can move forward. He then asked that all questions be held to the end of the meeting.

Kathy Spiegelman from the Allston Development Group at Harvard University addressed the group. She noted that Harvard is very close to filing the DPIR and thanked the Task Force and the Community for all their hard work. There have been at least 25 meetings. She then gave updates since the last Task Force meeting:

- Meeting was held with BTD and the BRA to talk about construction access and keeping it as far away from the neighborhoods as possible.

She then outlined the agenda for the evening:

- VHB, Harvard's transportation consultant, will present transportation findings.
- Stefan Behnisch, the architect for the proposed Harvard Allston Science Complex, has come back to the group with renderings of the buildings from the street-level, as requested by the group, and to provide clarification on building heights.

Kathy noted that Harvard will continue to post building graphics on its website at www.allston.harvard.edu.

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She also noted other items:

- Update on public realm improvements- Harvard is testing paint colors on Algonquin Gas and plans for street plantings are underway.
- Thank you to Rep. Moran who initiated some sidewalk improvements on Eatonia Street.

A Task Force member asked about an outstanding request for the Harvard Commencement parking plan. Kevin McCluskey, from Harvard, answered that it has been sent to the Task Force members and was unsure about what more information was being asked for.

Joe Quitter, from VHB, presented the transportation impacts of the Science Complex, which is a summary of the findings to be included in the DPIR. Slides and handout can be viewed on the ADG website at: <http://www.allston.harvard.edu/projects/projects.htm#science>

The three main findings of the analysis are:

- Area traffic volumes reduced
- Some Science parking relocated to north of Western Avenue
- Limited new roadways

He then walked through the elements of the analysis, including:

Study Methodology - Existing Conditions

- Existing conditions inventory
 - Pedestrian and bicycle facilities
 - Transit routes and ridership
 - Lane utilization and traffic control
 - On-street parking regulations
- Data collection program
 - Pedestrian and vehicle counts
 - On- and off-street parking supply and demand
 - Existing site driveway counts
- Vehicular traffic operations analysis

Study Methodology - Future Conditions

- No-Build traffic
 - 1% annual regional growth
 - WGBH Headquarters relocation trips (Brighton Landing)
 - Mount Auburn Hospital expansion trips (Cambridge)
- Site traffic
 - Estimated based on ITE rates
 - Adjusted for mode share, VOR, displaced trips

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- Distributed based on Harvard employee data

First Science Projected Peak Hour Trip Generation by Mode (2011)

	Vehicles	Transit Riders	Bicycles/Peds
Morning (8-9am)	200	175	45
Evening (5-6pm)	190	165	40

Displaced Parking and Trips

2006 Traffic Volumes include site uses:

- Total Spaces Displaced: +/- 850
- Peak Hour Trips Eliminated: 400 to 500

Area-Wide Net-New Trip Generation for Science

	Science Vehicle Trip		Displaced Vehicle Trips		Net New Vehicle Trips
Weekday Daily	1280	-	2950	=	-1670
Morning (8-9am)	200	-	505	=	- 305
Evening	190	-	395	=	- 205

1,670 Fewer Daily Trips

Windom Street Traffic Volumes

	2006 Existing	2001 with Science	Reduction
Morning Peak Hour (8:00-9:00am)	610	440	-170
Evening Peak Hour (5:00-6:00pm)	255	225	-30

Proposed Roadways for First Science

- Two-way Stadium between Western and Windom Street
- Rotterdam Street discontinued
- Access to First Science via Stadium Way, Windom Street, and New Rena Street
- Two-way New Rena Street from Stadium Way with cul-de-sac
- No change to existing Travis Street
- No change to existing Rena Street

First Science Parking (2011)

Meet demand, but do not encourage auto use

- Parking supply for Science right-sized at 500 spaces

150 spaces relocated north of Western Avenue

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Protect neighborhood from spillover parking

- Harvard will work closely with BTD and the neighborhood to add resident parking and improve enforcement

MBTA and Harvard Science Shuttle Route

Task Force members questioned the base numbers and the percentages of transit riders (current and future).

VHB answered that the numbers were standard BTD mode shares, which have been modified to reflect the proposed site uses. BTD stated that the analysis in the DPIR must use just the BTD mode share for North Allston.

Harvard added that ridership consists of graduate students and scientists who tend to use alternate transportation – they are committed to sustainability.

A Task Force member asked if Harvard would commit to having the shuttle up and running by the opening of the buildings. Harvard replied that the shuttles would be operating by then.

There were questions from the community regarding WGBH's numbers; whether Genzyme was factored in; the validity of the mode share numbers; how much time will it actually take to get home each night. A comment was made by a Task Force member on the seemingly high number of bus stops on Western Avenue.

A Task Force member suggested the MBTA get in on the discussions. The BRA agreed and said that the MBTA will get involved once the DPIR is approved.

There were questions from the audience about the impact of Harvard parking: if it is limited won't people park in the neighborhoods? VHB and Harvard noted that Harvard has an existing centralized parking system that is limited, yet doesn't impact the neighborhood.

An audience member asked about Stadium Way and using it as a pass-through. Harvard/VHB said that they are still working on Stadium Way and want to create an ideal situation, so are saving that for another round of planning.

Stefan Behnsich was invited back to the Task Force meeting at the request of the Task Force to address the building heights and to present images of street-level views of the Science Complex.

He walked through the heights of the buildings, describing the heights of the roof lines, the mechanical penthouses, and the stacks for the mechanical equipment, and presented the following information.

Bldg	Roof	Penthouse	Stack	
BI w	90'-6"	120'-10"	135'-10"	(15')
BI e	107'-6"	125'-10"	149'-10"	(24')

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BII	61'-6"	83'-6"	108'-6"	(25')
BIII	61'-6"	89'-6"	109'-6"	(20')
BIV	76'	121'-9"	141'-9"	(20')

He noted that the stacks are considerably lower than originally thought and are for ventilating the building naturally and are not related to lab output. He suggested that people think of them as “solar chimneys.”

He described the site, stating that the entire First Science Site is 6.3 acres with more than half of it (3.8 acres) devoted to green space. There are bridges on levels 3, 4, and 5 of the buildings with a courtyard approximately the size of a football field. Wintergardens are green inside and the green can be seen from the outside. The ground level will feature retail space with terraces that animate the exterior of the building.

An audience member asked about the height of the trees that will be planted. Behnisch noted that the trees can't be planted when they are too big as they don't survive. He also mentioned the redesign of the garage entrance – it was too prominent in an earlier design.

A Task Force member asked for a 3-D model of the building. Another asked for a model all the way down to Hopedale Street. Chris Gordon, from Harvard, said Harvard would look into doing this.

An audience member asked about the building height in relationship to Charlesview. Behnisch responded that Charlesview was approximately half the height of the Science Complex.

Another audience question: What is the diameter of the chimneys? 2-3 feet.

What is the building material? Light limestone, glass, and terrazzo.

What will the sidewalk width of Western Avenue be? 14 feet – set back slightly. Western Avenue will be more urban; while Rena Street will be more green. There was concern about the WGBH building being right on the sidewalk – “everyone hates it.”

Question to the BRA: is the zoning going to allow this building to be right at the sidewalk? Gerald assured the group that Behnisch has met with the BRA urban design staff a half a dozen times.

A Task Force member asked about public art. Chris Gordon said there hadn't been anything planned but Harvard would be willing to look at it as a possibility.

A Task Force member was concerned about stack emissions. Behnisch said there are very strict guidelines on emissions.

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An audience member voiced concern about the penthouse on top of building 4, stating that it didn't seem to complement building 1 and asked if the mechanical equipment could be placed in the courtyard instead. Stefan said it would be too noisy and that the air handlers have to be near each other to work efficiently. The audience member asked whether there could be a central plant. Behnisch replied that it would be fine for energy production, but not for air handling. Behnisch said it would have to be dealt with architecturally.

An audience member asked why the tallest building was on Western Avenue. Behnisch noted that it was the most urban area, and is furthest from the neighborhoods. The trade off would have been one giant building.

A Task Force member asked about the total square footage of the project. Behnisch replied that the total project was over 1 million square feet total, with approximately 600,000 square feet of that above ground.

A Task Force member asked what scientists will be in the buildings. Harvard responded that the Harvard Stem Cell Institute has committed to half of the space, but that others haven't committed yet. The Task Force member then asked whether Harvard could just build half the building. Harvard responded by saying that all of the space will be occupied but that the specific tenants of the rest of the building have not been identified.

The Task Force Chair said that the Task Force should give the benefit of the doubt that the planners know what the scientists need. He added that the Task Force can't ask Harvard to stop and re-purpose this project that they have been reviewing for the past year and a half.

A Task Force member asked about public spaces and the community access to childcare and fitness. Harvard answered that the programs have not been expanded, and that 10-20% of the childcare is devoted to community use. Fitness will be for Harvard affiliates only. The top floor lounge will not be open to the general public.

An audience member asked if the building will present biological, chemical or radiological danger. Behnisch answered, "No."

An audience member asked what is going under the "football field" sized space in the courtyard. Behnisch answered that it would include parking and mechanical space.

An audience member asked whether the below-grade construction will inhibit tree growth. Behnisch explained that the designers have allowed for room – by maintaining 3-feet of soil between the underground facilities and the ground level.

Another audience member asked about discussion of non-institutional uses at Harvard's properties on Western Avenue. This led to more questions about retail space size and usage. Gerald Autler said that the focus of discussions will be on the Science Complex for at least the next few months until the DPIR process is finished.

An audience member thanked Stefan Behnisch for addressing community concerns and returning to discuss his responses to the questions that have been asked.

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Representative Moran commented that limestone wasn't in keeping with the neighborhood, stating that he prefers that the buildings include brick to look more like the Harvard Business School, not One Western. Behnisch responded that One Western is primarily brick, but not red brick.

A Task Force member asked about the status of Resident Permit Parking. Vineet Gupta, from the BTD, said that the BTD is committed to implementing this. It was suggested by the Task Force member that Harvard pay for enforcement. Chris Gordon said that Harvard would need to know what that means.

The issue of the District Attorney's request to have the Task Force stop meeting in Executive session was raised again. A Task Force member suggested that perhaps the public be invited as "audience members" and they could come and listen but not participate.

The Task Force reiterated that they need to be able to streamline the process.

The BRA said they will continue to inform the public of meetings and give information.

The meeting was adjourned.