

**Town of Needham
Mobility Planning & Coordination Committee
Minutes for Monday, April 14th, 2025**

HYBRID

Charles River Room, Public Services Administration Building
500 Dedham Ave, Needham MA 02492

or

<https://needham-k12-ma-us.zoom.us/j/81086838535>

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Webinar ID: 810 8683 8535

ADOPTED JUNE 9, 2025

- 6:00 PM Call to Order:
A meeting of the Mobility Planning & Coordination Committee was convened by Tim Bulger, Chair.
There were technical difficulties with video sound in the beginning so role call attendance could not be heard. Members present included Tim Bulger, Guus Driessen, Duncan Allen, James Goldstein, Stephen Frail, Wooseong Kwon, and DPW designees Shane Mark and Tyler Gabrielski. Paul Molta and ex officio member Carys Lusting joined on Zoom.
- 6:02 PM There was no old business. There was a recap of minute adjustments because of a new employee doing the minutes. Mr. Gabrielski recommends adopting of changes specific to a Select Board and Town Meeting piece of the proposed minutes. The minutes read: “output of the Joint Committee Meeting of the Transport Committees to present to Town Meeting and the Select Board so it can be included in the funding.” The recommended phrase is “output of the Joint Committee Meeting to present to the Select Board so that it could be included in the goals for the year which inform budget discussions.”
- 6:05 PM **Motion by Mr. Bulger to accept the minutes from the March 10th Meeting with the amendments. Seconded and unanimously approved through a roll call vote.**
- 6:06 PM Envision Needham Center Pilot Update and Alternatives:

Mr. Gabrielski recapped the information sessions, they were joint presentations from the Town and the designer for the project. Walking tours, open houses, webinar with Chamber of Commerce. It was reiterated that this project is in the early stages and not anywhere near ready to break ground. A lot of people were hearing about this project for the first time and that resulted in a meeting with business owners and the Select Board. All the feedback has allowed for internal discussions on how the project should move forward. Additional stakeholder meetings for business owners were planned for 5/1 and those will include a recap of the project to date.

Changes were made to the design to reflect the priorities that were discussed. The focus of the Pilot was changed to the road diet and this will be laid out in the upcoming public hearing.

- 6:10 PM Mr. Mark confirmed 5/1 date for the stakeholder meetings.
- 6:11PM Mr. Gabrielski continued discussing the intended layout for the hearing. Town officials will lead and not the consultants. To allow for direct dialogue between the Town and Stakeholders. This is a focused forum for feedback. Mr. Bulger briefly mentions the events to date and mentioned future planning on how things can be communicated directly to businesses in the future. Ms. Lustig outlined the overall response from the previous hearing that most people felt “not notified”, “Notified but not aware of extent”, “concern of the reduction of traffic lanes”, “concern towards the addition of bike lanes”, “concerns towards the reduction of parking”. Overall, the consensus was a fear towards the viability through disruption from the pilot towards the businesses. 5/1 is an opportunity to re-present the project to the business communicate and allow context to why the project exists and mainly address the drainage issues that exist in that area. There are two sessions planned for 5/1 to allow for flexibility to business owners, 8:30 AM and 4:30 PM. Mr. Driessen asked, “how would you characterize the plans 10%, 15%, 20%” and gestured at the paper plans on the table. Mr. Gabrielski responded and explained that with the involvement of the Pilot is not a traditional design, bid, build plan. The Pilot would be considered a 50% mark and then once it has concluded using the data gathered put together a final plan. Ms. Lustig explained the Pilot alternatives from APEX and how she would like to explore the possibility of having a Phased Pilot. Phase 1 would be to explore the lane reduction and Phase 2 would focus on parking.
- 6:25 PM Cross talk and interruptions from Non-Committee Members. Mr. Bulger explained that it was not a public comment hearing and that the Committee would not be answering their questions.
- 6:26 PM Conversation with the committee resumed and discussion about parking commenced. Mr. Gabrielski discussed exploring the possibilities of different drop-off and pick-up zones, moving some parking to Dedham Ave, loading and unloading areas for trucks, parking signage for public lots, clearer signage at permit parking spots so they are more easily interpreted. Mr. Frail asked if the consultant has any case studies from previous projects on their impact on the businesses. Ms. Lustig responded that because most of these projects are publicly funded, publicly funded projects don’t typically have extra funding for economic benefit studies after construction, but DPW did challenge Apex to find some information from previous projects, but this will primarily be anecdotally. Mr. Bulger asked if there were any questions about the designs on the table. It was suggested the Mr. Gabrielski pull them up on the screen and walk the committee through them. Mr. Gabrielski explained:

Alternative #1 is a bolder approach. The main difference is in parking with the bike lane interaction. Ms. Lustig mentioned that this allows both sides of the street to have wider sidewalks and that is why parking is reduced. Mr. Gabrielski continued on to mention that this option maximizes pedestrian improvements, with sidewalk safety, beautification and place making.

Alternative #2 is a more conservative approach with lesser impact on parking so instead of expanded sidewalks there is parking in those areas instead. Mr. Molta asked if Traffic circles have been considered for the town center and Mr. Gabrielski replied that they would encroach on private property. Ms. Lustig included that the green spaces have an added benefit of improving the drainage issues in that area.

Mr. Mark included that Needham Fire Department and Police department are being consulted and included and there is a meeting on the books with them for their feedback on these designs. Mr. Mark also mentioned that for anyone that may have not been able to attend previous meetings they are all recorded and posted on the Town's website with PowerPoints. Mr. Gabrielski mentioned a correction to one of his previous statements that the 5/1 public meeting will not be fully public it will be for invited stakeholders from the business community.

6:47 PM Multiple interjections from non-committee members. Mr. Bulger reminded the group that this was not a public comment hearing and asked them to please refrain from interrupting.

6:48 PM Mr. Goldstein asked when the next public hearing will be for the Envision Needham Center Project. Mr. Gabrielski responded that after the meeting with the business stakeholders, there will be a Select Board Meeting where the next iteration of the designs will be presented with feedback from the stakeholder meeting. Ms. Lustig explained that the 5/13 Select Board Meeting will allow for public comment. 5/28 is a public hearing with the Envision Needham Center committee, but that does not allow public comment.

6:52 PM Updates: Highland Ave Roadway Improvements Project & Marked Tree Road Reconstruction:

Mr. Gabrielski discussed the plan to have a public hearing to review the survey and present it to the public. The hearing would be informative, presenting the survey results and how they will influence the design and discussing the next steps in the process.

Mr. Gabrielski discussed the student engagement that he began with projects involving bike lanes to offer an alternative perspective that may not always get heard.

Mr. Goldstein asked if there were other organizations outside of the Chamber of Commerce to make sure all businesses or engaged during these projects. Mr. Gabrielski responded that he is unaware of other organizations but that he can use the Economic Development Manager to facilitate direct outreach.

7:07 PM: Mr. Gabrielski explained that he started working with the school department and a program called DART. They have student data that is going to be included in the design process. They have all bus stops, which ones are the busiest and the neighborhoods/homes where the children at those bus stops come from. This helped to understand the pedestrian traffic. Once the design is finalized it would go to a public hearing and be presented.

7:11 PM: Bike Lanes:

May Street – Mr Gabrielski explained his observations from St. Joes. Their school pick up is done in the parking lots that exit to Pickering Street and left turn onto May is not allowed. There are 3-hour parking signs. Mr. Gabrielski noted that there were individuals that did ignore the left-hand turn restriction. Further down May Street away from the school where street parking is allowed, it was noted that there were no cars parked on the street in the middle of the day. All this data is anecdotal. There was no mockup of the May Street Bike Lane design.

Harris Ave – Mr. Gabrielski shared the concepts, he asked from concepts of any version. There was a concept that had bi-directional bike lanes hugging the median avoiding potential parking and traffic disruptions and shares the same profile through the corridor. This would only require paint buffers and flex posts. Putting the bike lane in the median is not possible because of the trees and pole layout down Harris Ave. Mr. Gabrielski explained that the Great Plain Ave and Harris Ave designs are separate designs and not one large one because the combination of any concept would change the connection.

Great Plain Ave. – Mr. Bulger suggested a two-way on the south side of Great Plain Ave to maintain parking by eliminating some of the sidewalk width on the Hersey Station side. Mr. Gabrielski mentioned that the intention of this was not a construction project, but just a painting project. Mr. Gabrielski will share Mr. Bulger's suggestion and feedback with the designers to evaluate the feasibility of bidirectional bike lanes on the south side of Great Plain as this was not included in the original concepts. Mr. Bulger also suggested that the bike lanes go through to Dedham and not stop at the intersection.

Conversation shifted back to Harris Ave and Mr. Bulger expressed concerns about the bike lanes being in the middle next to the median. He mentioned that as a parent he would feel safer with his child not having to cross traffic to get to the middle and avoid the breaks in the median. Mr. Gabrielski asked the group their thoughts on Mr. Bulger's concern and there were no other strong opinions. The consensus was to have designs drawn and to review at the next meeting.

8:07 PM Street Design Guide Award:

The Finance Manager accepted the contract and the contract was awarded. Mr. Gabrielski mentioned that it was negotiated down slightly and the process to award

will be processed. Once the contract is executed, it will be able to move forward.
Approx. 3 weeks out.

8:08 PM

Adjourn

Motion to Adjourn by Mr. Bulger seconded, unanimous roll call vote.