



Boston City Council Committee on Ways and Means

*Dockets #0524-0531 FY21 Budget
Public Works Department/Transportation Department
Working Session: Friday, May 14 2021, 10:00 a.m.
Hearing: Monday, May 24, 2021, 10:00 a.m.*

The following is a collection of questions that were asked by the Committee regarding the FY22 budgets for the Public Works Department and Transportation Department at the Working Session on Monday, May 24, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.

Recording here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNkRo2Yo8kc>

The Administration is requested to respond to all questions in one of three ways:

1. Verbally at the hearing on Monday May 24th, at 10AM.
2. For factual questions, through written responses supplied prior to May 24th, including budget book page numbers or other references where appropriate.
3. By deferring to a specific scheduled departmental budget hearing.

Please annotate and return this information request before May 24th, indicating how each question will be answered.

BTD and PWD Budget Questions

Councilor Kenzie Bok, Chair asked:

DPW

- Thank you so much for the repairs happening right now to the heavily-trafficked Dartmouth St brick sidewalks between Beacon and Boylston. Has the department considered maintaining a dedicated brick sidewalk repair line item?
We have started trending toward this way over the last few years with crew makeup and shifting with a construction team moved to the 2nd shift to better get access to sidewalks without interrupting daily flow of folks. We've seen good success here in our downtown brick area.
- Does DPW have plans to make permeable pavement the default for certain types of projects? I've seen some other cities taking this approach with bike lanes, which can both help manage stormwater and reduce puddles in bike lanes.
- I would like to see us pilot a sidewalk snow removal effort along certain key pedestrian corridors this winter, imitating Syracuse's program. Could we invest in some equipment for such a pilot, or potentially use the equipment we already have for clearing bike lanes to also clear sidewalks in some areas?

Conversations have been had post sidewalk hearing. Should have more information later in summer as scope and responsibilities get ironed out.



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- We have extensive problems with broken sidewalks in the Mission Main area of my district, where we have many elders with mobility challenges; does DPW bundle sidewalk repairs by area, and what is the best way to elevate when a whole zone requires attention?
- Can we get a textile recycling station somewhere in District 8; at a minimum, City Hall (which is easy to service) would be great. **BC- Working with PMD to coordinate City Hall access to Textile Recycling and expanding capacity of Project Oscar at the current location on the Plaza. Also for District 8, We will be working with BFD to look at sites across the City that have enough space to host a bin. We are continuing to seek suggestions for new locations and are adding sites as frequently as possible. Currently there are 29 locations Citywide and growing.**
- I'm not sure if public stairs are the responsibility of DPW or BTM, but we have a stairway up from Fisher Ave on the back of Mission Hill that is crumbling. Our understanding is that it hasn't been prioritized because it would be very expensive to rebuild entirely, but some effective repairs would make a big difference; can you get it repaired?
- In parts of my district, lighting fixtures are very inconsistent (as in the East Fens) and sometimes outdated or inappropriate (as along Blossom in the West End); what program does DPW have for replacing street light fixtures?

PWD Street Lighting Response:

The inconsistency in lighting types exists for a number of reasons. There are DCR managed roadways in many of these neighborhoods. In many cases the DCR lights will look different because they utilize different designs and older lighting technology (High Pressure Sodium or Mercury Vapor), where the City of Boston has upgraded to LED fixtures in most cases.

Another reason is that some of the lights may be old Eversource lights. These lights were purchased in the early 2000's (approx 23,000 lights). They are replaced as they reach the end of their useful life and as available budgets allow.

In terms of a programmatic approach, Street Lighting focuses day to day activities on maintenance, repair and emergency response. Installation of new street light types (poles and fixtures) occur based on a number of



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factors: safety/security, constituent requests, planned construction and available funding.

Please feel free to contact PWD Street Lighting so we can address specific areas of concern.

- Four street lights were out for a long time on the first block of Marlborough St nearly Berkeley; have they been fixed?

PWD Street Lighting Response:

The gas lights present many challenges for the Street Lighting Division.

- 1. They are expensive to repair and maintain.*
- 2. They are extremely fragile which leads to frequent outages.*
- 3. Lead times for these lights are extremely long as they are a custom lighting application made by very few companies, of which, most are located outside the United States.*
- 4. Street Lighting relies on the gas supply from National Grid. Any activity that disrupts the gas supply to the light means the City needs National Grid to perform repairs.*

As it relates to the concerns of the four lights on Marlborough Street, the City is waiting on National Grid to make necessary repairs. We check in regularly for updates from National Grid and will double back this week to see this through to resolution.

- Please describe DPW's role in and plans for Zero Waste and Green Jobs training. How can we create a pipeline for our residents into DPW jobs?
- Is there a plan in place to recruit more women into DPW? It looks like only 7% of your workforce is women.

Yes in short. Many reasons make up that low number best to discuss in session or in person to describe what we are doing as well as some barriers.



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BTD

Overall budget questions

- Please elaborate on the Transportation Community Leadership Academy; what is the program objective, whom will it serve, and when do you expect it to start?
- I still hear so much every day about places where our existing streets do not reflect the Vision Zero priority on pedestrians. Last year, we discussed the prospect of BTD building its capacity to implement targeted street-slowness measures (speed bumps and speed tables, pedestrian-activated flashing beacons, bump-outs, striping/rumble strips) in particular trouble-spots outside the areas of formal ‘Neighborhood Slow Streets’ projects. I have not seen this shift clearly happen; are there still plans on this front?
- Residents across my district feel that there is a lack of parking enforcement. Can BTD provide data on parking enforcement?
- What resources does BTD need in order to study, implement, and enforce a city-wide speed limit of 25 miles per hour?
- Where are we on formal updates to the citywide signalization policy to make signals more friendly to pedestrians?
- It was great to see the pace of installing bike lanes this year. Are we planning to keep this pace in FY22? As we build out the network, have we considered adding bike traffic lights in bike lanes at bike eye level for some of our busier corridors where bicycles and pedestrians most often come into conflict?
- How was the office of streets able to reduce its contracted services? Were any of these services brought in-house? ***CFM has continued to minimize contracted services. The decline is due to an increase of in house: body repair, dealer quality technician training and the addition of advanced scan tools/ testing equipment.***
- Please elaborate on the expansion of the Open Streets program. How often will they be? How many neighborhoods will benefit from the program? Are we looking at Open Streets even where there aren’t Main Streets Districts?
- Please elaborate on the subsidies for public transit options: how will individuals qualify, how many will be available, and how much will the subsidy be?
- What is the plan to recruit more women into BTD’s workforce?



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- It looks like most of your highest paid workforce is white and male. What is the plan to provide professional development?

District-specific questions

- I'm grateful to BTD for putting this on the priority list, but anything we can do to get the median stripe repainted on O'Connell Way in the West End as soon as possible would be much appreciated; it is narrow for a two-way street, and the lack of that line is contributing to the tendency of visitors to park along the curb in a no-parking zone, thereby making it narrower still.
- We've been talking about Cambridge St a great deal through the development process lately, but what is the timeline for city-side community engagement on the future of Cambridge St?
- From the BTD/IGR perspective, where are we re: pushing the State on accelerating the Red-Blue connector?
- What are the repaving plans in Beacon Hill? Some of the neighborhood's streets are in extraordinarily bad condition.-**Construction Management- We recently completed paving of Branch St, Spruce St and Walnut. We will be paving Joy from Mt. Vernon to Beacon. A major project will also be starting to reconstruct Beacon St from Joy to Bowdoin**
- What is the plan for making the Beacon/Arlington/Mugar Way/Storrow Drive intersection, which can be extremely dangerous for pedestrians and bicycles, safer in the near term? Is there an opportunity to take advantage of the Fielder Bridge unfortunately being closed this summer to make some changes?
- Do we know when the MBTA will be finishing its work at Arlington/Boylston, which has been exacerbating safety challenges at that intersection?
- The narrowing of Beacon St in Back Bay was obviously aimed at slowing speeding there, but we are still seeing unsafe speeds; would the city consider speed bumps or speed tables on Beacon? Could such an intervention on Commonwealth Avenue also reduce drag racing?
- How can we improve pedestrian safety at the intersections with Newbury Street, which sees a huge amount of pedestrian traffic? In particular the intersections of Newbury/Dartmouth and Newbury/Fairfield are made less safe by traffic signals



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for cars that are accompanied by small and insufficient signage across the intersection which reads “YIELD to Pedestrians on turns.” I’m curious whether we could convert these to the same kind of four-way stop as other Newbury St intersections?

- Large trucks are not meant to take Commonwealth Avenue into the heart of the city and there is signage indicating as much, but increasingly they are doing so (likely because of Waze); can we make some intervention to stop this?
- What is BTB’s timeline to conduct its study and make recommendations regarding converting some Back Bay metered parking in residential areas into resident parking?
- I’m looking forward to our planned walk around the East Fens; thank you for planning that with us. This is an area that sees frequent cut-through traffic, especially in the age of Waze, and could use traffic calming in a number of places. What are the next steps after we identify a set of issues?
- What is the latest timeline for the project to make Boylston St more pedestrian-friendly and bicycle-friendly from Ipswich to Park Drive? Crossing Boylston remains very intimidating for pedestrians.
- Can BTB install parking signage in the Fenway that clearly outlines the \$100 parking fee incurred by visitors parking in residential permit parking only during Fenway games, concerts, and events? Can BTB make this adjustment to the 7 signs on Queensberry, the 5 signs on Queensberry, the 4 signs on Kilmarnock, and the 4 signs on Jersey? If not, what can we do to deter visitors from using the resident permit parking spots during games and events?
 - The signs currently read "Notice: Parking Fines increased during Fenway Park events." Including the fine amount on the sign would serve as an added deterrent to visitor using the few resident permit parking spots available to residents of the neighborhood
- There are dangerous pedestrian conditions at Huntington Avenue and Longwood Avenue due to lack of advance signage and faded street markings. Are there plans to make this area safer for pedestrians?
- Where the Green Line runs through Brigham Circle, it does not stop with the cars and can create an unsafe pedestrian experience at certain parts of the cycle. Can BTB coordinate a safer pedestrian solution with the MBTA in this area?



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- Do we know what the timeline is for MBTA public engagement on the Columbus Ave bus corridor project? We very much want to make sure the project integrates a mid-block crossing at Roxbury Crossing station, where we see so many people at serious risk when they take the “desire line” to cross from the T station over to the bus station or points northwest.
- All of Mission Hill is very excited about the budget item for redesigning Terrace St and planning overall Mission Hill transportation improvements, and many neighbors would like to be involved; can you walk through the timeline and next steps from the department’s perspective?
- Mission Main has a large number of small streets in need of repaving; is there a way to bundle these into a repaving project?
- Have we put out an RFP for or secured a more local vendor to do towing in Mission Hill yet?

Councilor Ed Flynn asked:

DPW

- There are many locations across District Two where sidewalk repairs are greatly needed. How long does it take to get sidewalks permanently repaired?
- Residents have expressed concern about the lack of notification when the City does sidewalk repairs. How can DPW improve communication with residents when undergoing any work in the community?
Construction Management- Leaflets are required before any location is started. We also send out a weekly progress report of ongoing and upcoming work. We also are trying to use portable message boards to notify major projects
- What is the timeline and status of the Harrison/Albany redesign project?
- What is the status of the reconstruction of Beach Street in Chinatown?
- What are the plans for road repaving in Chinatown?
- Can the City implement more pedestrian safety and traffic calming measures including speed humps, raised crosswalks, rapid flash beacons, road diets, all way stops, pedestrian island, and more blinking pedestrian signs?

BTD

- How can BTD improve enforcement of illegal parking of vehicles without resident parking stickers and out-of state plates?



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- Can a rapid flash beacon be placed at East Broadway in the area near the Stop and Shop and Walgreens.
- Would it be possible to make L Street to Perkins Square or G Street in South Boston a one lane?
- Can you provide an update on a road diet for Preble Street in South Boston?
- Can BTM improve road signage in front of St. Peter's Church in South Boston?

Councilor Matt O'Malley asked:

DPW

- Can DPW provide information on costs related to waste collection and recycling?
- Can you provide a status and timeline on the rollout of curbside composting?
- Are there plans to expand the textile recycling program? **BC-Textile drop off locations are continuously expanding. BPS has recently added sites, and we are looking to work with other agencies (BFD, BCYF, BHA) to find more user friendly locations. Beyond the bins we are working on the details of implementing an on call collection in the near future (similar to the process of collecting tv's or ac's). Creating as much access for all residents as possible is a priority and something we feel confident we can achieve.**

- *BTM*
- Can you provide more information on the street paving priorities for this fiscal year? Was the City able to complete more repavings this year do to the pandemic? **Construction Management- The paving program is generated from the pavement condition index(PCI). The pandemic caused a shutdown of all our construction so NO the amount of paving was much less in 2020.**
- What are the plans for micro-mobility in the City of Boston?

Councilor Liz Breadon asked:

DPW

- Can you provide an update on improvements for the Monastery Path in Brighton?



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- Can you provide an update on improvements for the Foster Street path in Allston-Brighton?
- What are the alternatives that can be used instead of salt to eliminate ice on our streets during the winter?

Salt as of now is the most effective product we can use to maintain the safest roadway conditions in snow/ice events. We are always keeping an eye out for new products/equipment that can help us best fight winter conditions and will continue to going forward.

- What are the locations of the textile recycling drop off areas? BC- All of the currently active sites can be found [here](#). As mentioned, we are always open for suggestions and seeking new locations. Hepsy can work with private entities if anyone is interested in hosting a bin on a private lot. It would be great to see more bins in shopping plazas with large parking lots.

BTD

- What investments were or are being made to implement the recommendations that came out of the Allston-Brighton mobility study?
- How can BTD restrict access to residential parking stickers for certain individuals depending on their address?

Councilor Julia Mejia asked:

BTD

- There is a disconnect in many communities between things like public transit infrastructure and public safety. A lot of people in neighborhoods like Dorchester, Roxbury, Mattapan, and Hyde Park are more skeptical of riding their bikes to work when worried about dodging bullets out on the streets. How are we coordinating our public transit infrastructure efforts alongside violence prevention strategies?
- Black and Brown people make up 36% of your workforce but 0% of your top-ten salary earners. What is the plan to create avenues for professional development for Black and Brown employees?

Councilor Michael Flaherty asked:



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- Can BTD conduct an audit of all crosswalks to ensure they are at a state of good repair?
- How can BTD improve road signage across the city?

Councilor Ricardo Arroyo asked:

DPW

- How is PWD working to reduce the disparity between the number of female and male employees? The breakdowns for this year are almost identical to those from last year: what has PWD done over the past year to try to recruit and hire more female employees?

As noted in Councilor Bok's question we can best discuss this in hearing, but please understand we spent the bulk of the last year not hiring folks because of the pandemic. That does not mean it's not a priority and we can discuss what we are doing and also some barriers as well. This is something in the forefront of our minds as our staff grows/changes.

BTD

- Why is the Go Boston 2030 Tracking and Communication grant being zeroed out in FY22? Was this a one-time grant?
- What is the status of Boston's Neighborhood Slow Streets program? Is there still a backlog and, if so, how long a backlog and when can we expect to catch up?
- For BTD's targeted traffic calming measures, how is the City determining which streets get priority in getting these measures installed?
- Can BTD explain a bit more about the \$2 million increase in contracted services for FY22?
- 90% of BTD's top ten earners are white: How is BTD ensuring that its employees of color are not being locked out of higher-level positions within the department? Similarly, 80% of top earners are male: What measures is BTD taking to ensure that women are not being locked out of higher-level positions?