

UNDERSTANDING CHARLES STREET

February 2023

Connect Downtown is a multi-phase project spanning several years. We launched Connect Downtown in the fall of 2019. As part of this project, we will make design changes on Charles Street between Charles Circle and Beacon Street.

Before we propose changes, we need to understand Charles Street better. In our initial outreach, the Beacon Hill community asked us to:

- ▶ Talk directly with each business on Charles Street
- ▶ Conduct a robust data collection and analysis effort

Over the last eight months, we analyzed information about who is using the street and how. We spoke one-on-one with the majority of businesses on Charles Street. We also looked back at a parking study we conducted in fall 2019.

This document summarizes our findings. You can explore more aspects of our work, including links to raw data at boston.gov/connect-downtown.

We talked to businesses one-on-one to get a deeper understanding of their operational needs.

During the summer and fall of 2022, we visited businesses in person. We aimed to reach all businesses and returned multiple times for follow up. We spoke to 77% of the businesses on Charles Street.

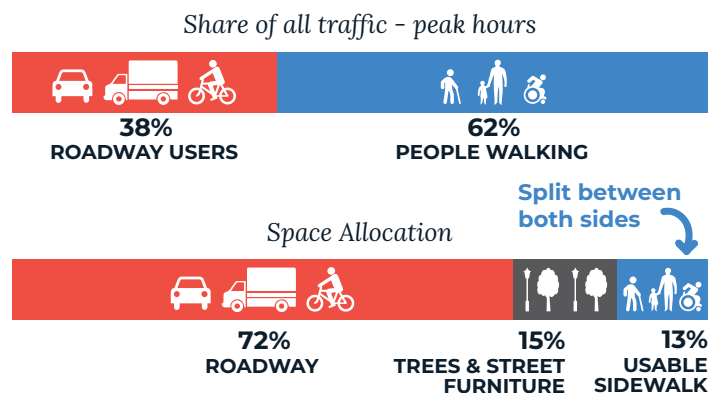
Here's what we learned:

- ▶ Deliveries were frequent: 78% of businesses got deliveries 3 or more days per week.
- ▶ Flexibility was key: many businesses reported little to no control over when their deliveries arrive.
- ▶ Curbside loading may be useful: some merchants were interested in expanding loading zones and other short-term parking.

An open-ended question at the end of the survey gave us the chance to talk about other topics of interest. We heard concerns about the condition of the street and sidewalks and the frequency and duration of utility projects.



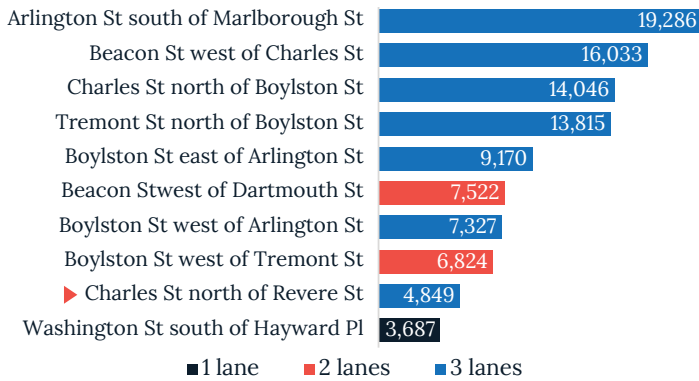
People walking are the majority of users on Charles Street, yet are allocated the least amount of space.



Based on data collected at Charles Street and Revere Street on October 1 - 2, 2019 from 8 - 10 a.m. and 5 - 7 p.m.

Over a 12-hour period in October 2019, most intersections on Charles Street saw around 10,000 pedestrian crossings. That's an average of about 830 people per hour.

Charles Street doesn't have that much traffic, especially compared to nearby arterial streets.



Numbers represent the 24-hour count of motor vehicles. Data were collected on Wednesday, September 21, 2022 or Wednesday, September 28 depending on the location.

Most drivers traveled at safe speeds: 87% were at or below the speed limit of 25 MPH.

Hundreds of people bike on Charles Street every day.

Charles Street is an important existing route for people biking. Looking at data collected from September 2019 through December 2022, we found:

- ▶ In warmer months, 600 to 750 people bike on Charles Street on any given weekday, comprising 10 to 15% of all traffic.
- ▶ Even on cooler days, people biking were between about 5% and 10% of all traffic.
- ▶ A small but consistent stream of people biked northbound on Charles Street.

What's next for Charles Street?

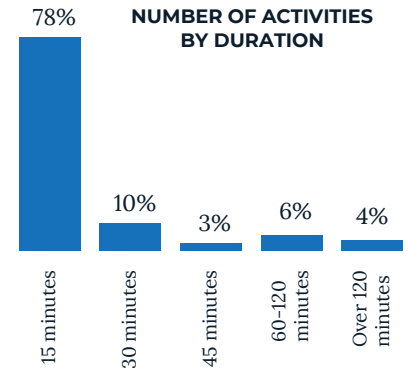
The City's capital budget includes funding for a transformative design that uses materials appropriate to the historic character of the neighborhood. Initial design options, informed by the data we've collected and feedback we've heard, will be shared this spring. We will have multiple opportunities for people to share their thoughts and questions with us. Meeting dates will be announced soon.

Stay up-to-date on the project by signing up for our email list at boston.gov/connect-downtown.

We studied double parking and loading activities on Charles Street.

We know that double parking is common on Charles Street. We also know that businesses rely on Charles Street for loading and deliveries.

In June and July 2022, we gathered and analyzed data to put numbers behind these anecdotal accounts.



We learned:

- ▶ Almost all of the loading activity or double-parking lasted 15 minutes or less.
- ▶ 64% of loading activity happened while the vehicle was double parked.
- ▶ The majority of activity used personal vehicles rather than vans or trucks. These activities include passenger pickup/drop-off, food delivery, or personal errands.

We also studied the parking inventory and utilization on Charles Street

In November 2019, we studied the parking on Charles Street and side streets. We inventoried the number of spaces and curb regulations and collected data on parking turnover.

While there have been some changes to the parking inventory and regulations on Charles Street since then, the data are still valuable to understand baseline conditions. We learned:

- ▶ Most blocks on Charles Street had no space designated for loading.
- ▶ Parking spaces were well-utilized, making it difficult to find an available space at the curb to park or make deliveries.