

**Epstein, Alexander (VOLPE)**

---

**From:** Epstein, Alexander (VOLPE)  
**Sent:** Monday, September 15, 2014 3:15 PM  
**To:** 'council@cambridgema.gov'  
**Cc:** amallon@cambridgema.gov; steve@livablestreets.info; 'Becca Wolfson'; 'Jeff Rosenblum /LSA'; 'Jason Stockmann'; 'Jackie Douglas /LSA'; 'John Sanzone'; 'dlopez@cambridgema.gov'  
**Subject:** Comment on Policy Order #11

Dear Cambridge City Council:

I am writing in regard to Policy Order #11, concerning the expansion of truck sideguards to better protect bicyclists and pedestrians. Ahead of tonight’s meeting, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly introduce myself and to offer a high-level proposal for your consideration.

Over the past few years, in my capacity at Volpe National Transportation Systems Center (the fee-for-service research arm of USDOT), I have focused on strategies to improve the safety of large trucks and buses in urban areas, given that these oversized vehicles are disproportionately involved in bicyclist and pedestrian fatalities. Volpe has now worked with Boston, resulting in the new Unprotected Road User ordinance announced last week, and with NYC. I have been in contact with Mayor Maher’s staff since early Wednesday morning on this issue, and we are in the process of putting together a meeting to discuss my research and how we can partner on this very important safety issue.

What Volpe, Boston and NYC have chiefly focused on to date has been side underride guards, which are panels or rails installed between the truck wheels to keep a person from falling under and being crushed by a moving truck. Our research indicates these “sideguards” to be among the most effective bike/pedestrian safety countermeasures in use around the world. The UK has mandated sideguards on large trucks since 1986, the EU since 1989, and subsequently Japan, China, Brazil, and other countries. In side-impact crashes with sideguard-equipped trucks in the UK, pedestrians became 20% less likely to be killed while bicyclists became 61% less likely to be killed. The US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) issued a national recommendation this last year for sideguards on trucks over 10,000 pounds; some of this language is reflected in Boston’s ordinance.

At the same time that I am pleased to see growing awareness and support for sideguards on trucks in Cambridge, I **would like to stress the value of undertaking a more comprehensive initiative**. Most data about truck safety technology still comes from international case studies, so it is critical to develop and analyze local data, and soon: urban freight is growing rapidly (thanks to e-commerce) at the same time that more and more people choose to walk and bike in cities like Cambridge. **Cambridge has a unique opportunity, with the local expertise of both Volpe and MIT, to lead the country in a rigorous evaluation of multiple safety technologies—blind spot mirrors, Fresnel lenses, proximity sensors, alarms and conspicuity lights, different sideguard designs, wheelguards, even apps—and to really develop the best practices for a “Safe Truck of Tomorrow.”**

I look forward to being available as a resource and to working together with the City on this important safety issue.

Sincerely,  
Alex Epstein

**Alexander K Epstein, Ph.D.**

General Engineer | Energy Analysis and Sustainability  
Volpe, The National Transportation Systems Center | U.S. Department of Transportation  
55 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02142 | Web: [www.volpe.dot.gov](http://www.volpe.dot.gov)  
Office: 617-494-2539 | Email: [alexander.epstein@dot.gov](mailto:alexander.epstein@dot.gov)

