

4 Laurin Donahue in favor of planning of the complete street

I'm here to comment on calendar item 4 in support of the complete street option for the redesign of Pearl St. I sleep at Calvin st in Somerville, although I feel much more of a member of the Cambridge community as I spend most of my waking hours in this city. I'm a research intern at the HSRI in North Cambridge where I'm learning about systems and policy in human services context. I'm a volunteer and member of the Cambridge Women's center, and I'm a nurse practitioner candidate. As such I'm constantly considering progressive means for advancing policy to facilitate healthy communities. As a bike commuter, I ride the Cambridge streets daily.

more importantly

It is well understood that biking is a healthy option, both for our environmental sustainability, as well as for the personal health of community members.

Biking trends are one the rise. The League of American Bicyclists put out a report summarizing the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data for Bike commuting in 2013.

Boston ranked 15th for U.S. cities according to growth bike commuter rates in 2013., showing an increase in bike commuters by greater than 100% from 2005- 2013 Both Somerville(5th) and Cambridge(11th) made the list for the top 25 cities with highest percentage of journeys made to work by bike. Breaking the data down further by region, Somerville and Cambridge were ranked #1 and #2 for highest bike commuting numbers in the East.

And, just to point a striking disclaimer about the data, the authors reveal "it's important to note that the bicycling data in the ACS records only "journeys to work," or commuting. The ACS only counts the "primary" mode. It does not count commuters as bicyclists if they rode only part of the week, or rode their bicycle to transit and the transit portion was longer, etc." So, bear in mind given that disclaimer, estimates of bike commuting are likely much larger.

So we know biking is a healthy community choice environmentally and personally. We know bike-commuting rates are growing. The question is, is our city infrastructure growing along side the data to facilitate this healthy progress?

As a bike commuter, commuting approximately 10-15 miles a day throughout the city, I know all too well the feeling of unease when the bike lanes disappear from my path. Back in November I was involved in a serious bike accident when I was struck by a car. Of note, the particular section my daily commute at which the accident occurred does not have a bike lane. Although I was riding the right shoulder of the road, if I had a designated bike space, I believe, and I think the driver that "didn't see me" would agree, I would have been more visible.

I mention the accident as it sparked many conversations regarding bike infrastructure in the city, serving, as an interesting first hand qualitative research study in owns right. (If only I'd recorded and coded the data!) The need for safer biking infrastructure in our city came crashing in on me, quite literally.

larger need for improving biker safety through the city. In an ideal, balanced world, if we were truly respecting and integrating all transportation options the majority of city streets would have bike lanes.

We can talk all day about other projects that would also improve biker safety, but Pearl Street is the active project at hand right now. This redesign is a tangible opportunity. With each individual redesign project in the city has a choice, either to support progressive health choices, or maintain the unsafe status quo. To let the redesign of Pearl Street go forward without bike lanes would be a sad mistake.

So many of us are drawn to Cambridge is for its reputation as a leader in innovation. Cambridge is a community of progress. As a public health activist, as a bike commuter, and as a concerned member of the Cambridge community, I urge you to please go forth with the complete street redesign for Pearl Street.

*AKD
Anita Matthews
cc: hoppers*