

November 21, 2010

Ms. Susan Glazer
Acting Assistant City Manager
City of Cambridge
sglazer@cambridgema.gov

Subject: Western Ave Reconstruction Plan

Dear Ms. Glazer:

On behalf of LivableStreets Alliance we want to congratulate the City of Cambridge for the extensive and truly inter-active community input process that was used to develop the goals, conceptual options, selection criteria, and then pick the preferred option for the Western Avenue Redesign Project.

Despite claims by some non-neighborhood critics to the contrary, members of the Community Task Force have commented that the City was committed to the public process throughout, and genuinely invited and incorporated public input. The discussion felt open and honest, and the final results truly reflected the community's input and the City staff's ability to translate that input into a workable design.

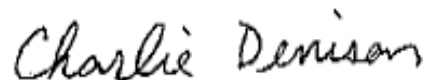
As a result, it is not surprising that the process created a final "preferred" design that so completely fulfills the community's needs – and is, at the same time, so innovative and well thought out. We believe that all traffic plans would be equally progressive if planning processes were always as democratic – if only because, when given the chance to thoughtfully express their views, most people prefer a safe and multi-modal transportation system that similarly balances mobility and livability.

We particularly applaud the way the preferred design slows traffic speed without creating additional congestion; the way it makes it safer for children, people pushing baby carriages or shopping carts, and the elderly – in fact, for all pedestrians – to get across the intersections; the way it makes it more likely that buses will be able to pull right up to the curb for easier entry while creating inviting spaces for people to safely wait; and, of course, the much-discussed bicycle lane that is so ingeniously separated from the sidewalk and from both moving and parked cars – without denying high-speed cyclists the right to continue using the car lanes.

Western Ave is, after all, a street and no design will eliminate all risks. We know that numerous details remain to be worked out to maximize safety. However, as many participants at the public meeting mentioned during the small-group discussions, we are greatly impressed by the city staff's willingness to listen to suggestions and continue to make the small tweaks that any conceptual design should go through on its way from vision to reality.

We predict that Western Ave will be cited as a model design by people all across the country. Cambridge should be proud.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charlie Denison".

Charlie Denison,
Board Member & Advocacy Director