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SCAN TO SIGN UP
FOR UPDATES

The Team

City of Boston Transportation Department

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Technical Consultants

- Toole Design Group (lead)
- Agency Landscape + Planning
- Reed Hilderbrand
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Engagement Consultants

- LivableStreets Alliance (lead)
- Dorchester Bay EDC
- Fairmount Indigo CDC Collaborative
- Jaypix Belmer
- Grayscale Collaborative
- Design Studio for Social Intervention

Images

Photographer: Jaypix Belmer

Project Overview

The City of Boston's Transportation Department (BTD) is leading a project called the "Columbia Road Transportation Action Plan." This project is a road redesign that aims to improve the experience of traveling along Columbia Road for everyone. The project team will consider potential changes to the street's travel lanes, sidewalks, and bus stops. The project involves three main steps:

Step 1 Immediate Improvements

Columbia Road has recently undergone maintenance, including new pavement markings and filling pot-holes. The City plans to repair the sidewalk by the end of 2024.

Step 2 Early Actions

The City will test small-scale temporary changes to important intersections based on community feedback collected earlier this year. These safety interventions will be installed by April 2025.

Step 3 Street Redesign Vision

This fall, we'll be gathering community feedback about options for:

- Making the street safer.
- Sharing the road better between walkers, bikers, bus riders, and cars.
- Adding more green space and shade along the road.
- Improving stormwater management and reducing flooding.



Co-Design Issues on the Table

The corridor redesign will welcome community input on improving everyday life on Columbia Road related to:

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Pedestrian safety: Many crosswalks are long and dangerous. Improving crosswalks is a priority for ensuring safer walking experiences.
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Safe bicycling: There is demand for safer cycling infrastructure. The redesign will explore better bike lane options.
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Bus priority: New designs will prioritize buses and improve public transit efficiency.
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Parking and support of small businesses: Any road changes must balance the need for parking for local businesses with encouraging other modes of transportation.
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Traffic and speeding: Managing the high levels of traffic and reducing speeding is essential to creating a safer street.
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Impact on displacement: It's crucial to ensure that the road changes don't contribute to displacing residents and businesses in the area.
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Green space and places for people: Increasing greenery and public spaces can help create a more pleasant environment for people who live and work along Columbia Road.
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Stormwater management/flooding: Addressing stormwater management is important for reducing the risk of flooding.

What We've Found So Far

Safety for all Road Users

Even one fatality is too many. The City of Boston has committed to eliminating serious and fatal traffic crashes by 2030. Columbia Road is part of Boston's High Crash Network, the streets where investments in safety are needed the most urgently. Over the past 5 years emergency medical services were called to the scene of 650 crashes along Columbia Road. This means a crash serious enough for an EMS response occurs at least every three days on Columbia Road. Two of these crashes were fatal – one involving a person walking, and the other a person driving. Meeting our goal will require attention to safety for all road users, with an emphasis on people walking/wheeling and biking. Lacking the protection of a vehicle, pedestrians and bicyclists are vulnerable road users and are more likely to be seriously injured or killed in the event of a crash.

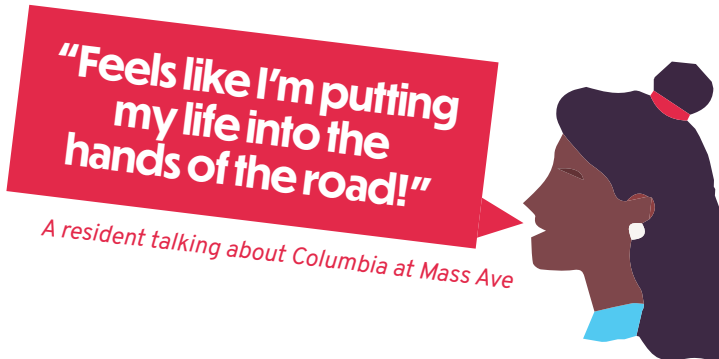
Over half of the crashes on Columbia Road occurred at intersections. The map shows where intersection crashes were concentrated along the corridor. The highest incidence of pedestrian and bike crashes occurred at the intersections with Massachusetts Avenue and Uphams Corner. Overall, 11% of crashes involved pedestrians (70) and 4% of crashes involved bicyclists (23). Crash data does not capture near misses with vehicles, or trips that people chose to not take on Columbia Road for fear of being the victim of a crash.

44% (90 out of 205) of responses brought up specific intersections where they felt unsafe.

The intersections most frequently mentioned were:



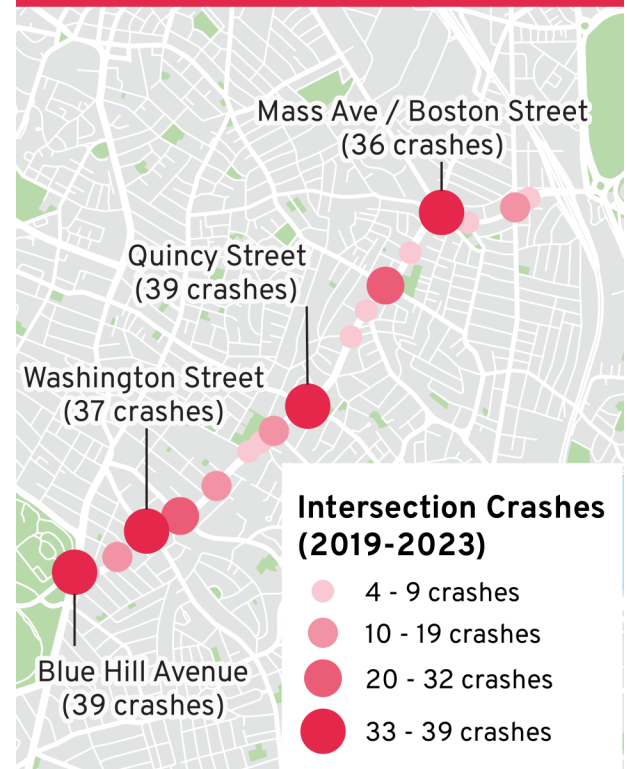
- Washington St!
- Stoughton St!
- Mass Ave/E. Cottage St!



"Feels like I'm putting my life into the hands of the road!"
A resident talking about Columbia at Mass Ave

Street safety on Columbia Road was also a top priority for the community members we reached out to through our summer community engagement events. Almost half of surveyed bus riders shared concerns about safety at intersections. More than half of general survey respondents believed safer crosswalks and bike lanes should be priorities for improvement.

Columbia Road Intersections by Number of Crashes from 2019 to 2023



(Source: Vision Zero Boston)

What We've Found So Far

Condition of the Sidewalks

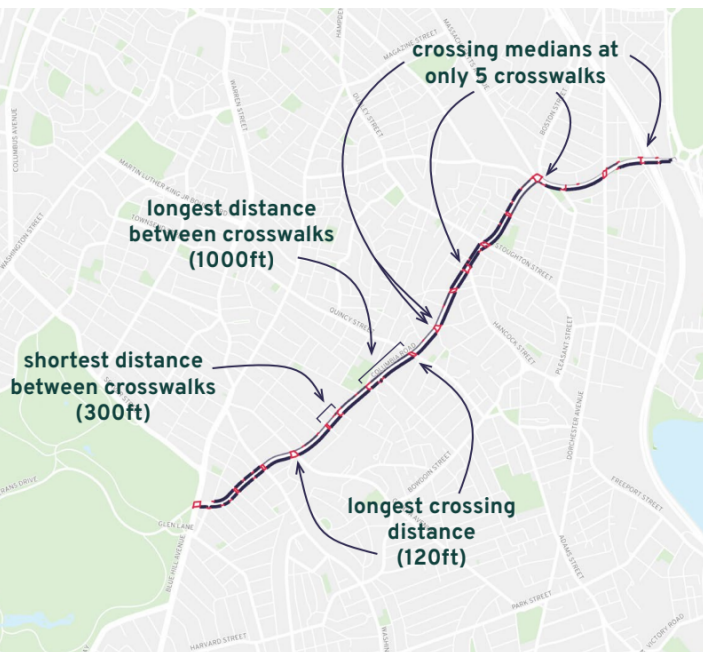
Sidewalks along Columbia Road are crucial. On the north side, sidewalks are narrow, making movement difficult. Wider sidewalks on the south offer more space. The long crosswalks and uneven surfaces in crosswalks can make mobility difficult.

In surveys, residents highlighted the need for sidewalk repairs, seating, and improved signage to point out hazards like cracks. Benches were frequently mentioned, especially by residents who rely on them while commuting. Textured sidewalks at Uphams Corner provide character, but they may pose accessibility challenges. Low visibility of signs and worn sidewalk markings may make navigating Columbia Road more difficult. They present extra challenges for those unfamiliar with the area or with low mobility. Community members also expressed desire for more public art to enhance the character of the area and make it feel more welcoming. Improvements should help create a safer, more accessible, vibrant space that serves the needs of the whole community.



State of Greenery

Greenery is a priority for residents along Columbia Road. When surveying bus riders, 29% wanted more trees, greenery, or flowers. They hoped for more shade and beauty to be enjoyed by all age groups. The current lack of greenery, especially in the medians, contributes to a heat island effect. More trees and greenery would make the road more comfortable for pedestrians, especially in the summer heat. Many residents expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of shade on community walks. They hoped intersections could have a more substantial tree cover. Empty plant pots on medians also highlighted the untapped potential for green spaces. The need for shade is not just an aesthetic or comfort issue but a matter of accessibility. 36% of households along Columbia Road do not have access to a car, so many residents rely on public transit and walking. Shade and greenery impacts the safety and comfort of those walking and waiting for the bus.

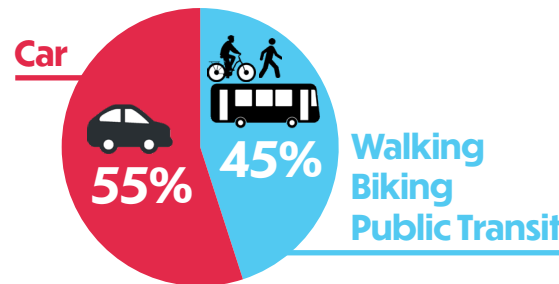
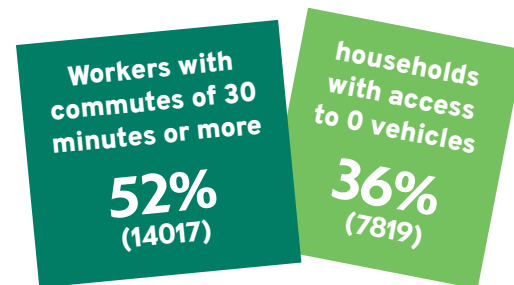


How People Move Along the Corridor

Movement along Columbia Road is shaped by a blend of commuting patterns and transit limitations. Out of bus riders surveyed, 52% (146 out of 281) reported using the bus to get to work. Other bus riders use the bus to get to school or to visit family or friends. 32% of bus survey respondents were frustrated by traffic that adds to their travel time.

The 16 bus is the only route covering Columbia Road and the east-west route. The JFK/UMass station is the most accessible T stop. The Fairmount Line commuter rail serves Upham's Corner and Four Corners/Geneva, but these stations are not convenient for all corridor residents. Cycling infrastructure is lacking, with few safe bicycle connections to other parts of the city.

Better transit infrastructure and safer spaces for walking and biking are needed.



"So many people live on Columbia Rd. There is a major negative impact from the noise, pollution, and physical divide of 4 lanes of speeding traffic + 2 lanes of parking."

A resident comment from the general survey



Engagement So Far



May - June

June - July

Project Kick Off Event · May 2024

The project team hosted a kick off event at the Grove Hall Library on May 2, 2024. During this event, the team shared information about the project and provided opportunities for community members to share thoughts.

Surveying Fairmount Commuter Rail Riders · May 2024

Members of the project team visited Upham's Corner Station and Four Corners/ Geneva Ave Station to engage with Fairmount Line riders about the project. The team explained the project and collected feedback in English and Spanish. They also gave commuter rail riders an opportunity to complete a general survey about the project. To maximize participation, the team included waiting riders and those getting off the train.

Community Walks · May - June 2024

The project team held community walks to gather feedback on street safety at various intersections. Three in-person walks and

one virtual walk were led, covering different segments of the corridor. Community members were asked to rate street safety at intersections along Columbia Road and identify potential spots for art installations.

Surveying Bus Riders · May - June 2024

Between May 14 and June 22, 2024, the project team conducted surveys of bus riders and pedestrians along Columbia Road. The goal was to engage them during peak hours, providing information about the project and gathering feedback on their experiences. Surveys and project information were offered in multiple languages. In total, 281 surveys were collected over 96 hours on the corridor.

Art Focused Engagement Events in Uphams Corner · June 2024

Local artist Jaypix Belmer hosted two art focused engagement events in Uphams Corner. The first event showcased the photography of local artists Archy LaSalle, Jaypix Belmer, and Michael T. Thomas. The event explored themes of the past and

future, with discussions about public transportation. The second event was held at the Burial Ground, and this event focused on art as a connector in the community. Artists Jaypix Belmer and Kalumu Keita led residents in an art workshop and held discussions with the group.

Small Group Conversations & Project Presentations · June - present, ongoing

Throughout the project, members of the project team have engaged in small group project presentations and will continue to do so.

Community Advisory Team meetings · June - present, ongoing

In addition to the project's formal consultant team, the project also has a Community Advisory Team (CAT). The CAT will offer feedback and help guide the project team through the community engagement and co-design process. The organizations on CAT are: Dorchester Bike Kitchen, Center for Teen Empowerment,

New England United 4 Justice, Uphams Corner Main Streets, VietAID, Cape Verdean Association of Boston, La Alianza Hispana, DSNI, and Speak for the Trees.

Early Action Public Meeting · July 2024

The project team updated the public on plans for the Early Action Project. At the meeting, community members asked questions and engaged with staff from the City of Boston.

BTD Office Hours · July - present, ongoing

The Boston Transportation Department staff member leading the project hosts weekly drop in office hours at different locations in Dorchester.