

Public Comment – Jesse Hefter – TMM P14

Select Board – March 25, 2025

Good evening. My name is Dr. Jesse Hefter, and I am a member of the Brookline School Committee, but not speaking as a School Committee member. I am a member of the Pedestrian Advisory Committee and not representing them tonight either. I am also a Town Meeting Member from Precinct 14, that happens to be where I live, and it so turns out that I live on Chestnut Hill Avenue.

So, I am directly impacted by the Renovation Project Plan recently brought forward, with initial drawings no less, to a “Public Hearing” of the Bicycle Advisory Committee of the Transportation Board on March 5, 2025.

I put the words “Public Hearing” in quotes since the residents of Chestnut Hill Avenue were mailed a one-page announcement from the Engineering Department that a discussion about the ENTIRE project was going to be held at the Bicycle Advisory Committee at their most recent meeting.

The truth is that none of the other TMMs in Precinct 14 received notice. The Town website was only updated with the proposed design just before the BAC meeting. Significantly, there was no neighborhood input prior to the BAC meeting. The BAC group requested that the input that evening only be related to biking. Meanwhile, the proposed renovation project impacts all the residents of Chestnut Hill Avenue in many profound and impactful ways.

Further, the project, in its current imagined state, has the potential to seriously affect many of the 15,000 vehicles every day, including MBTA buses, delivery trucks, first responders, and tractor trailers that transit the street as drivers use the street to get from Allston/Brighton to Route 9 to go west to Route 95 or to proceed to Lee Street and points south.

The plan only BEGAN to receive community input from a very small group of residents at the BAC meeting, and from that evening, the Engineering Group took action items to develop a new plan. Once again, there is no neighborhood interaction with the Town during the current redesigning. We will have to wait until the next iteration, expected in late April to early May, followed by a presentation to the Transportation Board.

Since sharing the news of this major renovation with more neighbors and residents on nearby streets, nearly 50 people so far have signed a petition to slow down this process, involve more citizens in the development of the proposal, consider other roadways for

alternative bicycle routes, and develop a collaborative consensus on what the final proposal might look like.

You have heard this evening about many of the shortcomings of the initial plan and the next phase being drawn up. Our neighborhood will be providing Public Comment where we can in an attempt to develop a collaborative process. But so far, we are deeply concerned about the disconnect between the Transportation department of the Town and the citizens for whom they support. We can do better, together.