



**boston planning &
development agency**

A Guide to PLAN: Mattapan's Transportation Planning and the Development Review Process



2021

Introduction

Why This Guide?

Mattapan has more transportation projects and development proposals than any time in recent memory. This guide seeks to help the residents of Mattapan better navigate and participate in these initiatives.

In this guide, you will learn the City of Boston's approach to:

Transportation planning, including why planning is happening now and how City priorities influence the process.

Street design, including the underlying issues you experience and solutions to fix them.

Development review, including how you can get involved.

Did you know that PLAN: Mattapan will help guide future transportation projects and development

proposals? With the community's help, PLAN: Mattapan will produce a neighborhood plan with specific recommendations. Lending your voice to PLAN: Mattapan is a great way to help shape all kinds of future projects in Mattapan, including transportation initiatives. There is still plenty of time to participate and make your voice heard! To learn more visit: bit.ly/PlanMattapan



What Is Transportation Planning?

Transportation planning recommends changes to streets, intersections, and transit based on community priorities, a snapshot of today's conditions, and an estimate of tomorrow's needs.

Generally, planning creates a vision for the future and outlines steps to achieve the vision.



Here's an example of how that could look in a transportation plan.



Why So Much Attention On Mattapan?

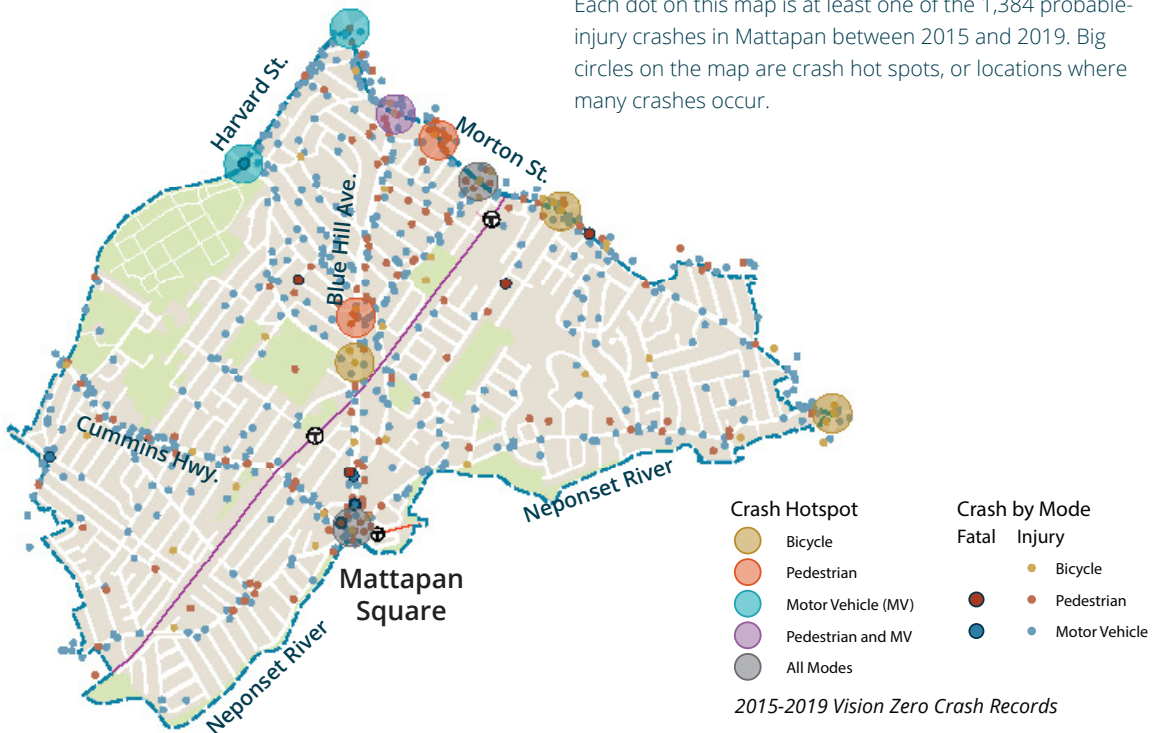
Boston is proactively addressing transportation needs in historically under-served neighborhoods, like Mattapan. This is a deliberate change to better match public resources to the greatest need.

Boston's new equity-based transportation planning process is more responsive to all the ways people travel.

Equity is a guiding principle of [Go Boston 2030](#), the City of Boston's transportation action plan. This plan identifies project ideas, like rethinking [Cummins Highway](#) and [Blue Hill Avenue](#). It also updated how projects are selected. Projects that meet equity goals get advanced more quickly for design and construction.

Why focus on equity? An equity-based approach helps confront past mistakes and avoid them going forward.

Historically, the car-focused planning and design of the 20th century perpetuated and expanded inequities between white communities and Black and brown communities. Some of Mattapan's streets, like Blue Hill Avenue, were transformed during that period to make it easier for drivers to reach other places. This burdens Mattapan today with more speeding, higher crash rates, and more pollution. Each dot on this map is at least one of the 1,384 probable-injury crashes in Mattapan between 2015 and 2019. Big circles on the map are crash hot spots, or locations where many crashes occur.



Transportation Planning

What Are Today's Planning Priorities?

Go Boston 2030 defines priorities for the city's transportation system, which tell planners and designers where and how to focus attention.

Which priorities are most important?

Boston's main transportation priorities are to expand access to transportation options, improve safety, and ensure reliability. Each priority has a primary goal:

Access

Boston neighborhoods will be interconnected for walking, biking, taking transit, or driving

Safety

Boston will substantially reduce collisions on every street by prioritizing moving people safely rather than faster

Reliability

Boston will prioritize making travel predictable on the city's transit and street networks

Are there other priorities?

Go Boston 2030 defines other priorities that make travel more equitable, foster economic opportunity, and respond to a changing climate. Example goals include:

Environment

Boston will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and build for resilience to adverse weather and events

Health

Boston will promote active and healthy lifestyles by connecting and providing access to green corridors

Community

Boston will develop public spaces on streets and at transit stations that are welcoming, clean, and fun

What are the Priorities For Mattapan?

Planners work to solve these known issues: few Mattapan residents have access to transportation options, Mattapan main streets experience many crashes, and all Mattapan bus routes are unreliable.

PLAN: Mattapan uses Go Boston 2030 priorities like a magnifying glass to discover opportunities to improve travel in Mattapan.

For example, when looking through the lens of transportation access, safety, and reliability, specific issues in Mattapan can be better understood:

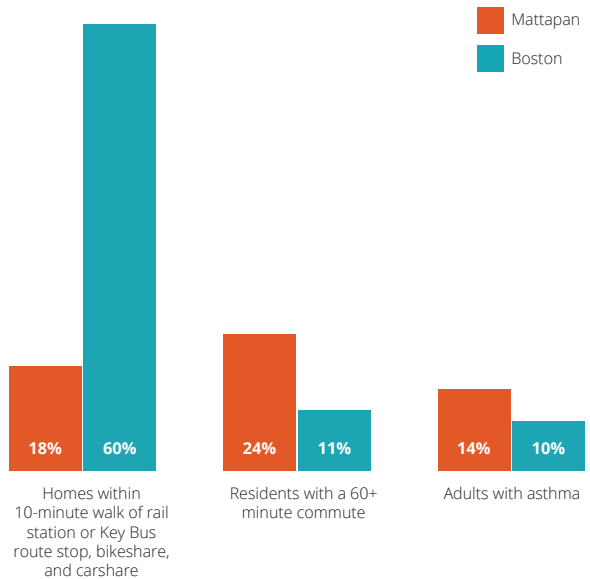
- » In Mattapan, **only 18 percent of residents** are within a 10-minute walk of a rail station or Key Bus route stop, bikeshare, and carshare. Most car-free households are south of the Fairmount Line and near Wellington Hill.
- » In Mattapan, **almost all transit trips are bus trips**, but no bus routes serving Mattapan meet MBTA weekday or weekend reliability targets.
- » In Mattapan, Blue Hill Avenue, Cummins Highway, Harvard Street, and Morton Street have some of the **highest crash rates in Boston**. Five of nine traffic fatalities in Mattapan between 2015 and 2019 involved a person walking.



Did you know that traffic fatalities are not equally distributed?

Nationally, Black people are more likely to die as pedestrians in crashes than white people or Asian-Americans. This could be because Black people are more likely to live in urban areas, but studies have revealed it may be because of racial bias among drivers.

Did you know that, compared to the rest of Boston, Mattapan residents have fewer travel options, longer commutes, and are more likely to have asthma?



Sources: Go Boston 2030, US CDC 500 Cities* 2017

Street Design

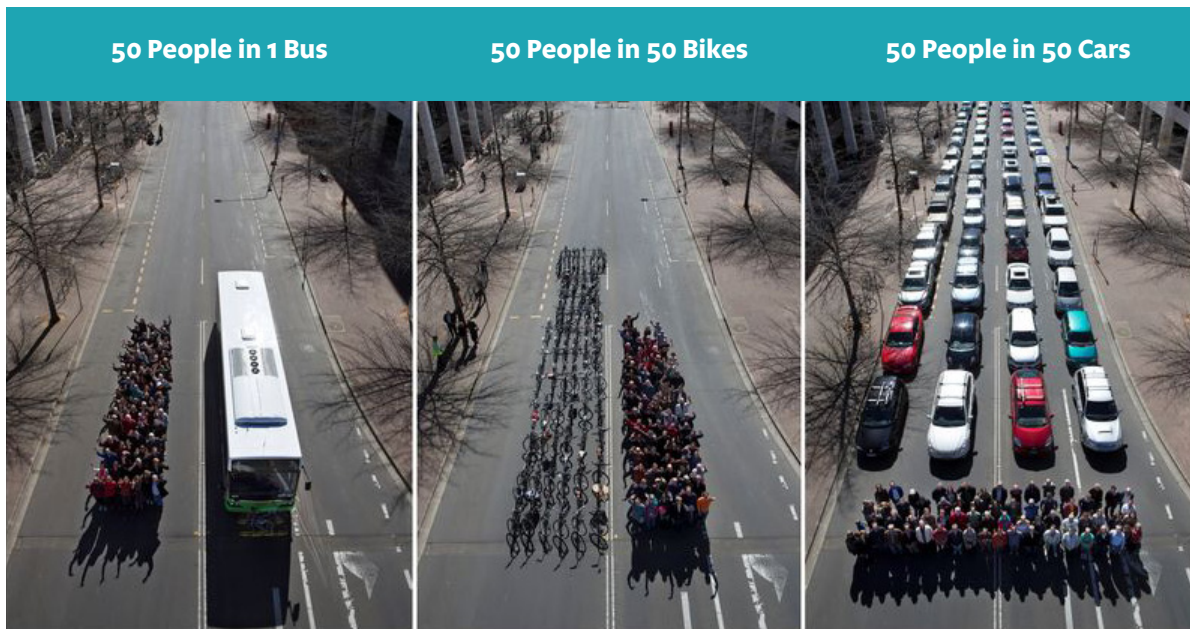
How Are Streets Designed?

Boston's approach to street design is centered on people, whether they walk, bike, take transit, or drive. Designers use proven tools to address specific transportation needs identified during planning.

Boston uses a “Complete Streets” approach.

Complete Streets is a design approach that considers walking, biking, and transit as options that are equally as important as driving. Complete Streets also considers the surrounding land use and context, so that design tools are tailored to their surroundings. If you want to learn more about specific design tools and why they are used, see the [Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines](#).

Have you considered that different modes take up different amounts of space on the street? The comparison below shows the amount of space needed for 50 people to ride in a bus, ride bikes, or ride in cars. Simply put, Boston streets cannot fit all residents and visitors in an car.



Source: Cycling Promotion Fund via [Human Transit](#)

Street Design

Who Are New Street Designs For?

Street projects are initiated to improve conditions for existing residents. Everyone in Mattapan deserves access to safe and reliable travel options.

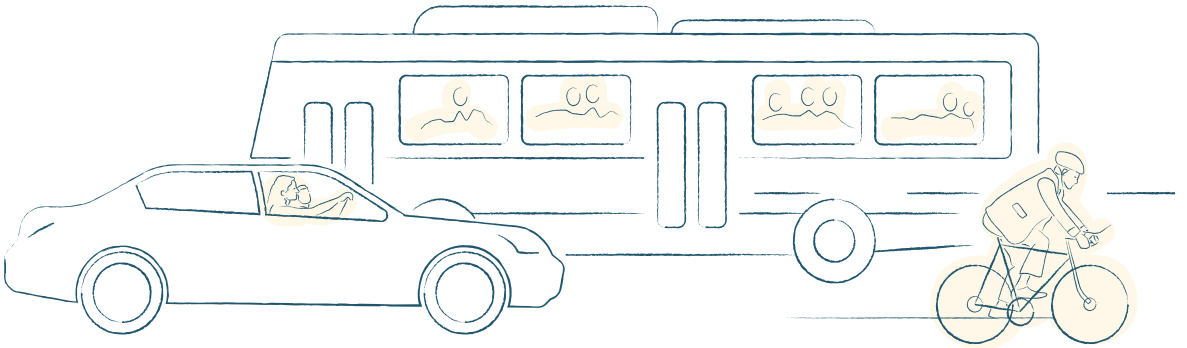
A street best represents its community when it reflects how community members travel.

Not everyone drives, so incorporating diverse voices, perspectives, and lived experiences makes plans and designs better. The design process asks community members to empathize with their fellow community members. Sometimes, creating a design that works for everyone may mean changes to a street's driving environment so that the access, safety, and reliability of all travel options can be best balanced.

How do different perspectives impact a design? Boston considers different "design users" when recommending changes to streets. For example, Mattapan homes are more likely to have families or adults with disabilities compared to the rest of Boston. For these design users, safer park and school access or more accessible sidewalks and transit service may be high priorities.

Did you know that making walking and biking improvements to main streets may increase sales?

Studies show that people who walk or bike to main streets visit more frequently and spend more compared to people who drive. Providing safe and comfortable conditions for all travel modes may boost business activity.



Street Design

How Can Streets Be Made Safer?

Boston uses many design tools to improve safety and comfort on City streets. They help enforce the City’s 25 mph speed limit.

Design tools help create safer speeds, safer turns, or safer crossings, as seen below.

Some tools help target more than one safety outcome. The following pages explain what these tools are and where they can go.

Why make changes? The street feels safe to me. Safety and comfort can mean different things to different people. Crossing multiple lanes of traffic may be fine for an able-bodied person in their 30s, but unsafe and uncomfortable for a family with young children.

What Is The Design Tool? <i>See pages 11–13 for a description and visual for each design tool.</i>	How Does The Design Tool Change The Street? <i>Each design tool is known to result in one or more safety outcome.</i>			Where Can The Design Tool Go? <i>See page 10 for more detail on these streets.</i>	
	Safer Speeds	Safer Turns	Safer Crossings	Neighborhood Streets	Connector Streets
Chicane	Yes			Yes	
Speed hump	Yes			Yes	
Speed feedback sign	Yes			Yes	Yes
Roundabout	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Crossing island	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Raised crosswalk	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Raised intersection	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Road rightsizing	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Separated bike lane	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Signal improvement	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
Hardened centerline		Yes	Yes		Yes
T-ing intersection		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Slow turn wedge		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Curb extension		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clear corner		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stop sign		Yes	Yes	Yes	
Yield to pedestrian sign			Yes		Yes
High-visibility crosswalk			Yes	Yes	Yes
Pedestrian warning sign			Yes	Yes	Yes
Rapid flash beacon			Yes		Yes

Street Design

Where Can Safety Design Tools Go?

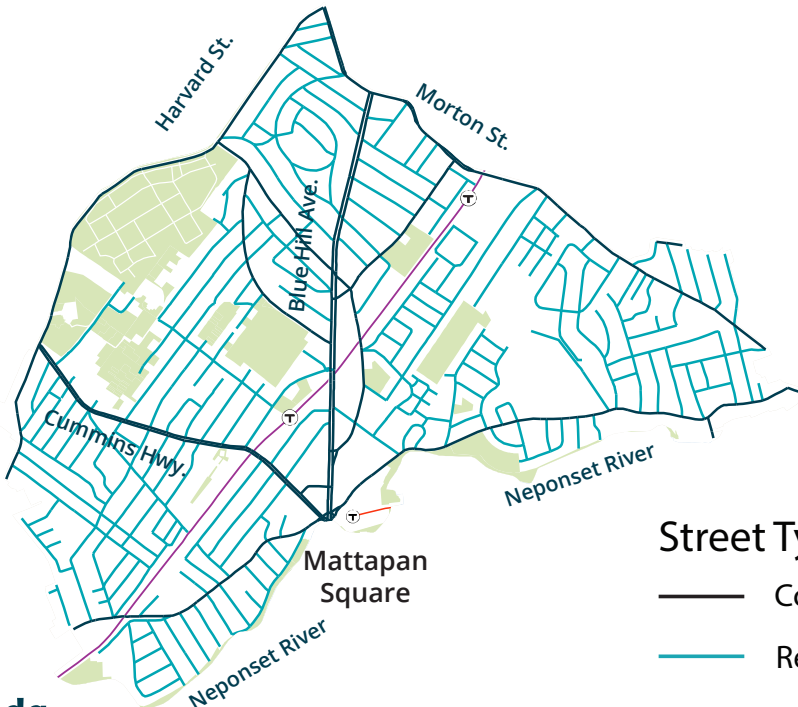
Not every design tool works on every street. “Neighborhood streets” and “connector streets” have different roles, and those roles help identify where certain design tools are appropriate.

Neighborhood streets mostly provide access to homes, while connector streets mostly facilitate travel between places.

Neighborhood streets tend to be narrow, lined with homes, and have less traffic. Connector streets tend to be wider, have more traffic, and have traffic signals and bus stops. Drivers of large vehicles, like buses, trucks, and emergency responders, rely on connector streets, instead of neighborhood side streets, to move between neighborhoods and cities. The presence of large vehicles mean that tools like speed humps and raised crossings are only appropriate on neighborhood side streets.

Did you know that most streets in Mattapan are neighborhood streets?

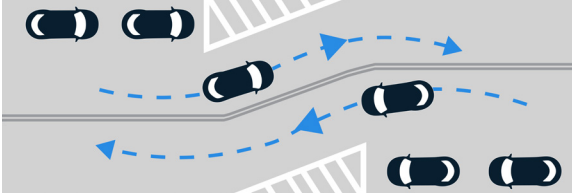
However, most people tend to travel more on connector streets, because they connect to other places and have bus routes and most bike lanes. In Mattapan, physical barriers like the Neponset River and Fairmount Line can make it difficult or impossible to complete a trip using just neighborhood side streets.



Street Design

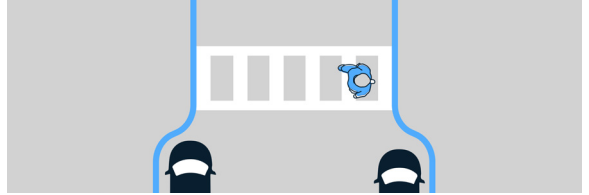
What Do Safety Design Tools Do?

Chicane (neighborhood street only)



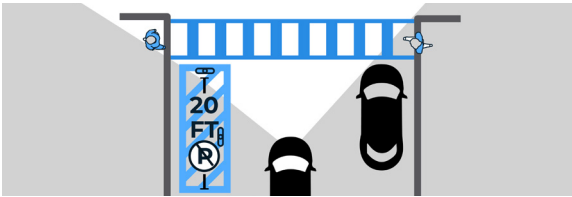
A chicane creates an “s” curve in an otherwise straight street. The curve encourages drivers to slow their speeds.

Curb extension (any street)



A curb extension extends the sidewalk out into the parking lane. This makes crosswalks shorter and improves visibility of people crossing.

Clear corner/parking restriction (any street)



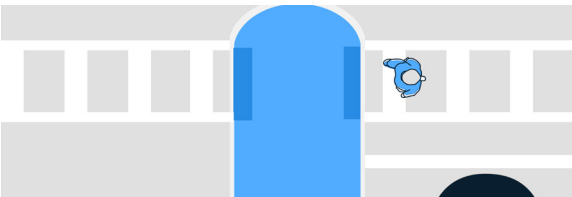
Drivers are more likely to see approaching vehicles or people crossing the street. This reduces the likelihood of crashes at intersections.

Hardened centerline (connector street only)



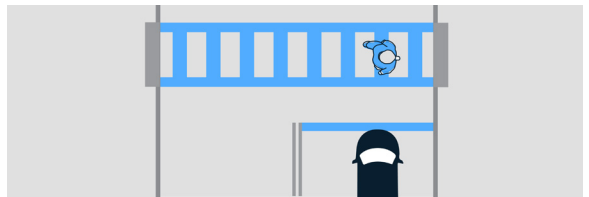
A row of bollards installed on the yellow centerline discourages drivers from cutting turns at higher speeds.

Crossing island (connector street only)



A crossing island gives space in the middle of a crosswalk for people to pause while crossing multi-lane streets.

High-visibility crosswalk (any street)



“Ladder” style crosswalks, with thick white bars and parallel lines, are the most visible type of crosswalk marking. High-visibility crosswalks help improve pedestrian visibility and safety. They also help to clarify where pedestrians should cross the street, creating predictable patterns.

Street Design

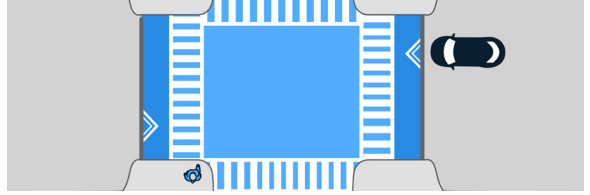
What Do Safety Design Tools Do?

In-street yield to pedestrian sign (connector street only)



These signs are placed on the street at crosswalks without traffic signals. They remind drivers to yield to pedestrians.

Raised intersection (neighborhood street only)



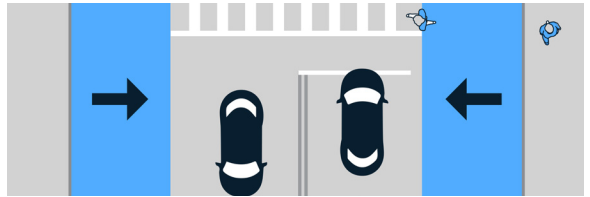
A raised intersection is flush with the sidewalk. They reinforce slow speeds and encourage drivers to yield to pedestrians.

Pedestrian warning sign/rapid flashing beacon (beacon for connector street only)



A yellow warning sign that draws drivers' attention to an upcoming crosswalk. Can include a small, rectangular, bright flashing light that can be activated by a person who wants to cross the street.

Road rightsizing (connector street only)



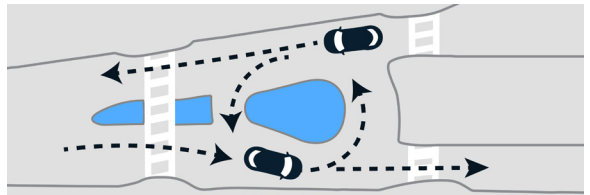
Thoughtful reallocation of space on our streets can calm traffic, create safer crossings, add bike lanes, or more.

Raised crosswalk (neighborhood street only)



A raised crosswalk is about six inches tall, the same height as the sidewalk. They slow drivers and improve yielding to pedestrians in crosswalks.

Roundabout (any street)



A roundabout has a center island, crossing islands, and curb extensions. They are designed to slow speeds and reduce serious crashes.

Street Design

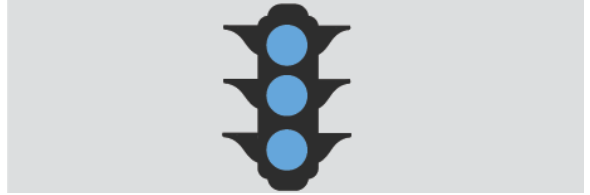
What Do Safety Design Tools Do?

Slow turn wedge (any street)



A slow turn wedge is a combination of pavement markings, flexible bollards, and rubber or plastic curbs or bumps. They slow turning drivers to safer speeds.

Signal improvement (connector street only)



There are many ways a signal can be improved to benefit pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. Signal adjustments can slow speeds, enhance safety, and separate modes.

Speed feedback sign (any street)



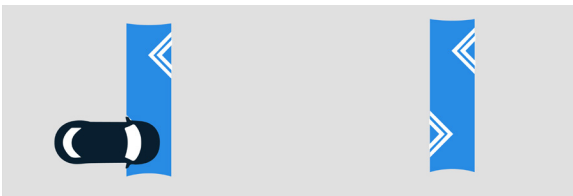
A speed feedback sign is a speed limit sign combined with a digital sign that displays a driver's speed. If drivers are speeding, the digital sign flashes. Speed feedback signs can help reduce the number of drivers going very fast.

Stop sign (neighborhood street only)



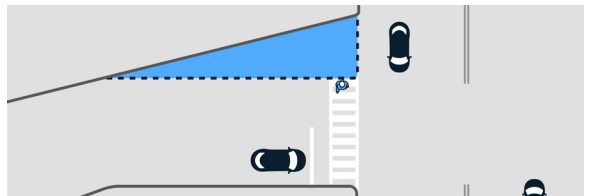
Stop signs are used to regulate flow of people through an intersection. They are not used for slowing traffic.

Speed hump (neighborhood street only)



A series of gradual humps on smaller neighborhood streets keep drivers at a steady, safe speed.

T-ing intersection (any street)



Reshaping wide or irregular intersections to look more like a "T" improves visibility and shortens crosswalks.

Street Design

How Can Biking Be Made Safer?

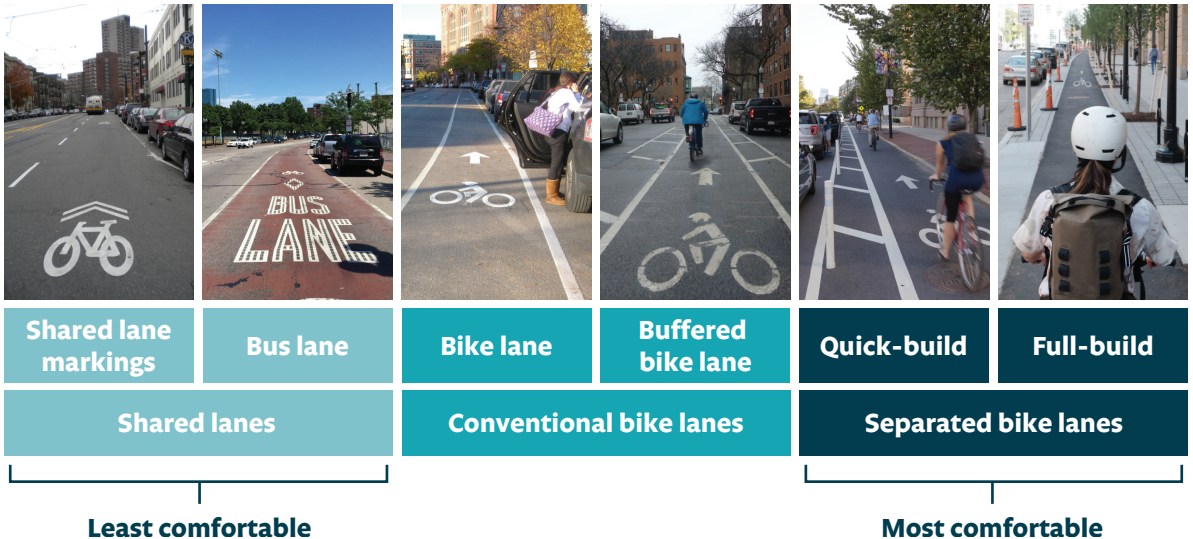
Many Bostonians want to bike but don't feel comfortable in traffic.

That's why the City is designing neighborhood streets that calm traffic and bike lanes that better separate drivers and bicyclists.

The City is providing comfortable, safe places for biking that make streets safer for all.

Through the *Go Boston 2030* process, City residents envisioned better bike facilities. Residents asked for safer, more comfortable bike lanes that connect you to where you want to go, like jobs, schools, and open space. Bike lane designs can vary depending on each street's unique conditions, but the City strives to provide the most comfortable conditions for each project. These designs are shown below.

What is a separated bike lane? Dedicated space for people on bikes, separated from sidewalks and general travel lanes. It may seem strange, but separated bike lanes make streets safer for pedestrians and drivers, too. That's because everyone has their own space, which makes the street more predictable, and pedestrian crossings shorter, which means people crossing are less exposed to traffic.



Street Design

How Can The Bus Be More Reliable?

Most Mattapan transit riders are bus riders, but all Mattapan bus routes are unreliable. Boston will improve reliability by prioritizing bus travel to reduce delays, speed up trips, and make space for more shelters, benches, and amenities.

Better bus service is possible when buses have their own lanes and priority at signals.

Bus lanes move buses out of most traffic and can be located along the curb, like on [Washington Street in Roslindale](#), or in the center of the street, like on [Columbus Avenue in Roxbury](#), as shown below. Center bus lanes best improve bus reliability by moving buses away from double parked drivers. Sometimes traffic signals can be programmed to give buses a head start before the green light for other vehicles.

Did you know that the City is evaluating center bus lanes as part of the long-term vision for Blue Hill Avenue?

These bus lanes, alongside [proposed Warren Street bus lanes](#), could cut bus travel time in half between Mattapan Square and Nubian Square during rush hours. This means a 25-minute bus trip instead of today's 50-minute bus trip.



Columbus Avenue dedicated bus lanes, under construction in early 2021. Source: Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

How Can Streets Be Places?

Movement of people and goods is the primary use for streets, but streets are fundamentally a public space. Boston is creating new public spaces on streets through experimental design approaches.

Streets can create more socially connected and economically resilient communities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that streets should have a broader role than just transportation. Many restaurants may not have survived the pandemic without outdoor dining, an initiative to support businesses with curbside seating by reclaiming some parking spaces. Cities across the world, including Boston, are rethinking streets and seeking opportunities to add more public space, trees, public art, and strategies to address a changing climate.

Did you know that 56% of City-owned land is streets and sidewalks? Boston is experimenting with its streets, creating new plazas, mini-parks, and cafes with low-cost materials. Public space can be created by closing unneeded lanes, repurposing parking, or fixing irregular intersections. City streets can also be canvases for public art, as seen below on Blue Hill Avenue.



Development Review

What Is Development Review?

With the help of the community, the Development Review process provides clear guidelines for the review of certain development projects and directs the resources that help implement planning objectives.

Does BPDA review all development projects?

Any proposed development that is at least 20,000 square feet in size or 15 residential units must go through the BPDA "Article 80" development review process. To learn about each step in the process, visit

bit.ly/PlanMattapan or these resources:

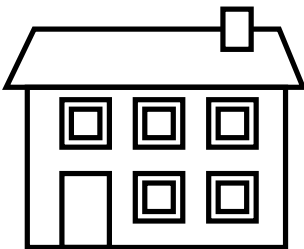
- » [A Brief Guide to Mattapan's Zoning and the Article 80 Review Process](#)
- » [What is Development Review?](#)

Who reviews transportation impacts?

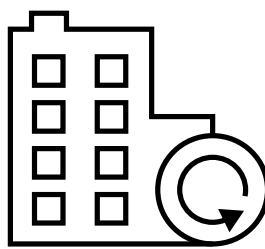
Planners in the BPDA's Transportation & Infrastructure Planning Department work closely City departments, State agencies, and developers to thoroughly evaluate a project's transportation impacts. The BPDA partners with BTM to review "large" projects.

Did you know that large projects require a more detailed review process?

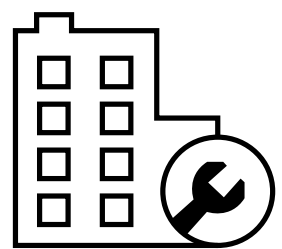
A project must meet at least one of the definitions below to be considered "large." For large projects, BTM and the developer create a legal agreement, called the [Transportation Access Plan Agreement \(TAPA\)](#), that specifies commitments that will reduce a development's transportation impacts.



Any new construction that is at least 50,000 square feet is considered large.



Any change in use, for example from office to residential, that is at least 50,000 square feet (or 100,000 Downtown) is considered large.



Any rehabilitation of an existing building that is at least 100,000 square feet is considered large.

How Is Transportation Reviewed?

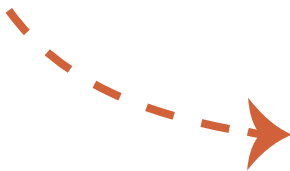
The goal of the transportation review is to prioritize safety, manage parking demand, and improve conditions for walking, biking, taking public transit. Boston aspires to reduce drive-alone rates in half.

How does the transportation review work?

City planners propose plans to lessen the impact of development on the safety, access, and reliability of the transportation system. Developers then refine their proposed project. This can be a back-and-forth process.

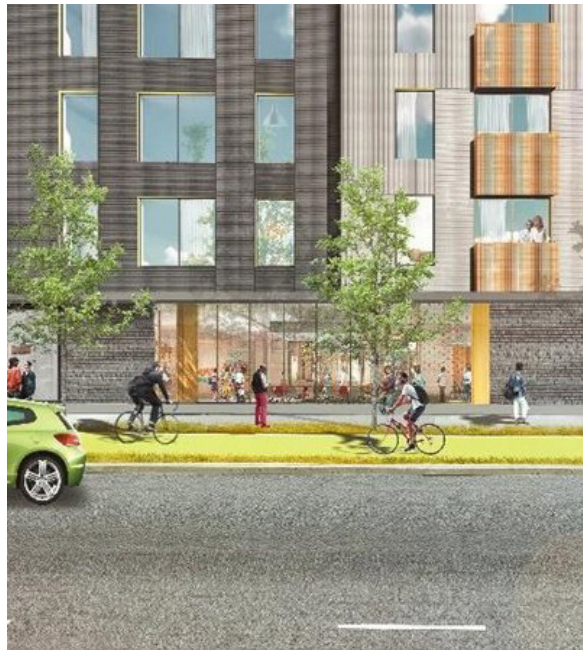
Like the planning and design of City streets, City planners rely on [Go Boston 2030](#) and the [Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines](#) to review:

- » Building access for people walking, biking, or driving,
- » Connections to nearby streets,
- » Sidewalk width, curb ramps, and crosswalks,
- » Bike route safety and comfort,
- » Impacts to nearby intersections and transit, and
- » Bike parking and vehicle parking spaces, including access to bikeshare, carshare, and electric vehicles.



How are transportation impacts reduced?

City planners use transportation demand management (TDM) strategies. TDM strategies, like subsidized transit passes or on-site child care, nudge people to walk, bike, or take transit, instead of drive. [You can learn more about these and other TDM strategies by clicking here.](#)



Mattapan Station development, BPDA Board approved in February 2018.

Development Review

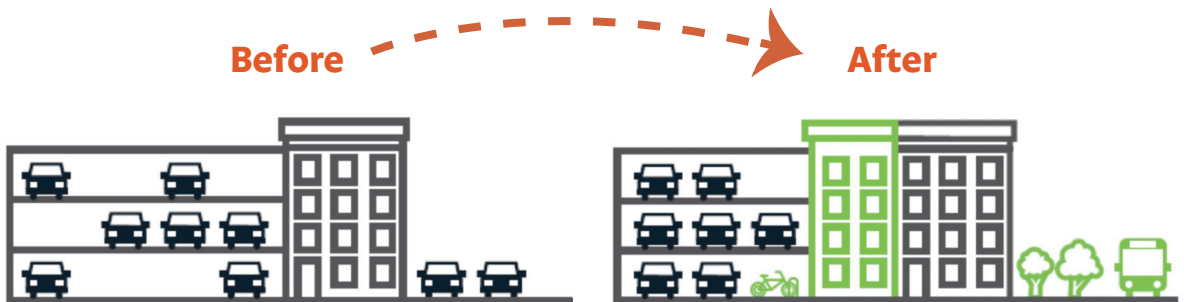
How Much Parking is Needed?

Off-street parking can be convenient for some, but its availability is linked to more driving, higher housing costs, and more greenhouse gas emissions. More parking makes it harder to achieve citywide priorities.

The number of spaces a development can provide is defined by zoning or City policy.

- » For all projects, the Mattapan zoning code sets the **minimum** number of parking spaces required for each type of use, like residential or commercial.
- » For large projects, BPDA and BTM recommend a **maximum** number of parking spaces, requiring fewer spaces near train stations. This also applies to projects with compact dwellings.

Did you know that the Boston region overbuilds residential parking by about 30 percent? That space could instead be used for more affordable housing, open space, or other uses. New parking is also expensive. A single underground parking space in Boston costs up to \$52,800 to build and maintain. The cost of garage parking to renters is about \$1,700 per year, or an additional 17 percent of a housing unit's rent.



Source: [Metro Boston Perfect Fit Parking Initiative](#), Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

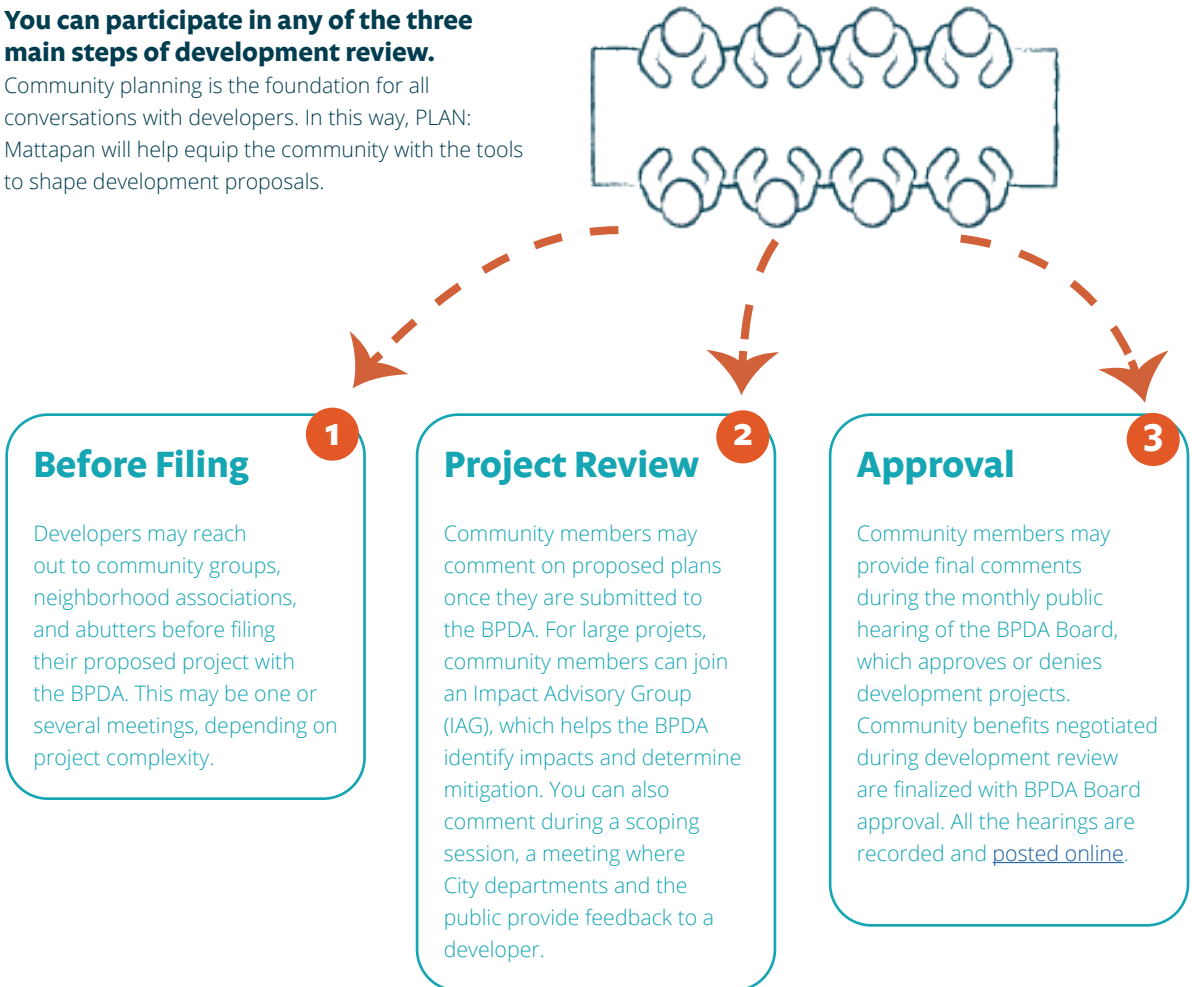
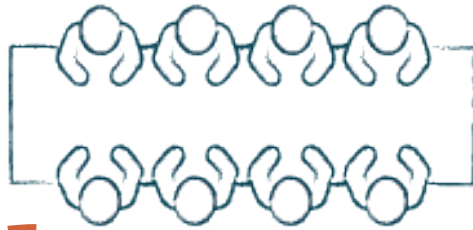
Development Review

How Does The Community Participate?

Community members are encouraged and able to give feedback in a variety of forums during the development review process.

You can participate in any of the three main steps of development review.

Community planning is the foundation for all conversations with developers. In this way, PLAN: Mattapan will help equip the community with the tools to shape development proposals.



How Does The Community Benefit?

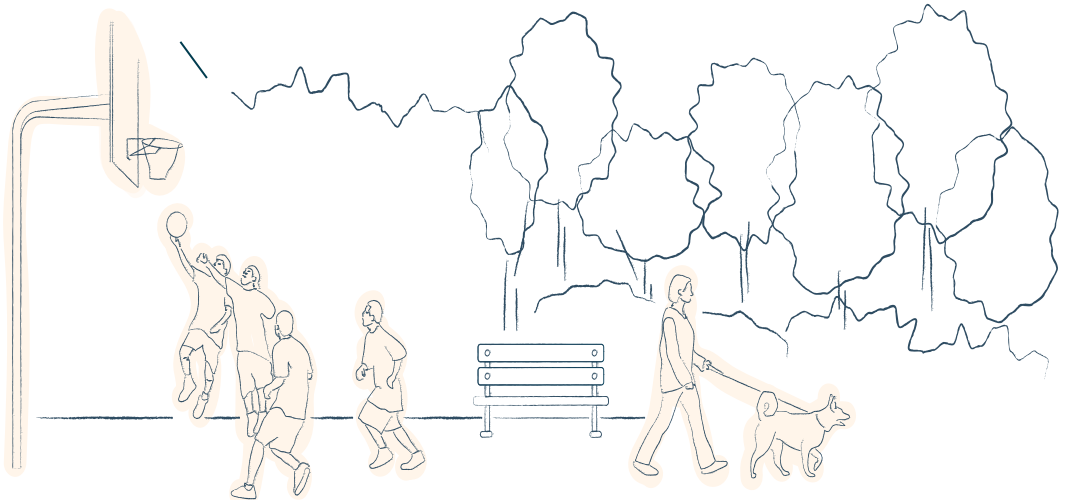
The BPDA works with developers to address the impacts of development projects by providing mitigation. Mitigation can include transportation-related improvements or other benefits.

What is mitigation?

Mitigation can include physical improvements that the developer will provide on-site or within the community, or it can be a monetary contribution to local organizations. For large projects, an Impact Advisory Group helps the BPDA identify impacts and determine the appropriate mitigation. Common examples of transportation-related mitigation include:

- » Safety tools identified on previous pages,
- » Wider sidewalks and new seating,
- » New or upgraded crosswalks and curb ramps,
- » New or relocated bus stops and shelters,
- » New bike racks, bikeshare, or bike lanes,
- » New trees, including their maintenance,
- » New or modified traffic signals, or
- » A transportation study or plan.

Did you know that transportation-related benefits are only one type of community benefit? Developers can also contribute to new or improved public spaces, affordable housing units, community retail spaces, etc. Mitigation from new developments can advance recommended projects identified from community planning efforts, like PLAN: Mattapan.



Guided by Imagine Boston 2030, PLAN: Mattapan is a City planning initiative that seeks to ensure that we preserve wisely, enhance equitably, and grow inclusively. There are many ways to get involved with our work on PLAN: Mattapan and the growth of the neighborhood. Your voice is integral to shaping Mattapan and creating a comprehensive vision.

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Project Website
bit.ly/PlanMattapan



@BostonPlans

Visit Twitter!



@BostonPlans

Visit Instagram!



Visit our website

bit.ly/PlanMattapan

You can also reach out to your local elected official on the City Council. The City Council serves as a link between the people of Boston and the municipal government. Councilors help constituents by connecting them to resources, services, and City departments. They serve as advocates for all Bostonians.



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