

MEMORANDUM

To: The Cambridge Redevelopment Authority (CRA) Board
From: Cecelia Cobb, Project Planner
Date: 06/21/2023
Re: 2022 KSURP Annual Transportation Report

OVERVIEW

As part of the 1994 Environmental Impact Report (EIR) update covering additional development within the Kendall Square Urban Redevelopment Plan (KSURP), the CRA was required to conduct annual traffic studies to justify a reduced traffic generation projection used in the MEPA analysis. The CRA conducted the original version of this report on an annual basis from 1994 to 2014. In the MEPA Single EIR in 2015 and the follow up Notice of Project Change in 2016, the CRA agreed to update the scope of the Annual Transportation Report to include a broader multi-modal data collection effort to more thoroughly analyze travel behavior and transit services.

Since 2018, the CRA has contracted consultant firm VHB to design and execute the next-generation version of the Annual Transportation Report. VHB has facilitated the field collection of multi-modal data in the KSURP, and maintained an interactive Annual Transportation Report website using the ESRI ArcGIS StoryMaps platform. Their work also includes a formatted hardcopy report with a more technical trip generation memo. These documents will be submitted to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office to fulfil the CRA's EIR requirement. It will also be shared publicly to organizations, advocates, and residents, allowing all to interact with, download, and explore the data themselves.

Over the past few years, typical transportation data collection experienced widespread disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The 2022 KSURP Annual Transportation Report is the first to include all datasets seen in previous full-scale reports since 2019. In 2022, new transportation patterns began to solidify as society adjusted to new habits and choices in the wake of the pandemic. The CRA is pleased to share the emerging transportation patterns observed in this report, and hopes these findings can inform plans to improve Kendall Square's transportation network. Some of the report's most salient findings include the following observations:

- **Kendall Square Area Commute Mode Choice:** Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the mode share for driving alone had been decreasing for many years. In 2019, driving alone accounted

for just over 41 percent of typical commutes for employees in the Kendall Square area. Transit played a major role in getting people to and from the area, in 2019, achieving a nearly equal mode share of 38 percent of typical commutes. The most recent 2022 mode choice data collected indicate a different commuting landscape in this post-pandemic period. 50 percent of Kendall Square employees now drive alone to work, and commuting by transit has plummeted to 27 percent of total commuters. Biking and walking have seen smaller but noticeable increases in mode share, with walking increasing from 8.5 percent to 9.8 percent, and biking increasing from 7.1 percent to 9.5 percent.

- **Bicycling Bouncing Back Faster than Other Modes:** Notwithstanding their relative changes in mode share, the overall volumes of automobile traffic and transit usage remained substantially below pre-pandemic levels in 2022. Yet bicycling activity (as gauged by the use of Bluebikes bike share), reflect a healthy use level, suggesting an important role of active transportation modes in mobility. Biking activity seems to have fallen by a smaller absolute amount in 2022 versus 2019 than other modes have experienced.
- **Weekday versus Weekend Commuting Patterns are in Flux:** In a time when many companies now offer hybrid work environments, different trends from previous years emerged when analyzing transportation by day of the week. There is evidence of an emerging Tuesday-Thursday occupancy trend in Kendall Square garages, with Monday joining Friday in significantly trailing these midweek days in garage occupancy. In transit ridership (as indicated by boardings at the Kendall/MIT Red Line Station), the difference between weekday and weekend boarding volumes used to be around 10,000 riders; in 2022, that gap has closed substantially, down to approximately 4,000 riders. A similar trend can be observed in the proportion of weekly Bluebike trips occurring in Kendall Square – the proportion of weekend trips is higher in 2022 than it was in 2019. These new patterns indicate that the previous assumption of consistent weekday and weekend transportation patterns may no longer reflect actual commuting behaviors and may not be as useful in developing transit schedules and gauging accurate travel projections.

The interactive report will be linked from the [CRA's Kendall Transportation webpage](#) and the [Transport Kendall](#) website maintained by the CRA.