



MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY  
**GRADUATE STUDENT COUNCIL**

**Statement in Support of the South Massachusetts Avenue Corridor Safety Improvements Project**

The Graduate Student Council (GSC) represents the 6,900 graduate students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in all matters concerning their quality of life during their studies at MIT. We support all measures that increase the availability, quality, safety, and affordability of transportation services and infrastructure used by students. **We therefore support the South Massachusetts Avenue Corridor Safety Improvements Project and its proposed improvements to bus service and biking infrastructure.**

The South Massachusetts Avenue Corridor Safety Improvements Project focuses on improving transportation along the section of Mass. Ave between Memorial Drive and Sidney Street, adding protected bike lanes and bus priority lanes using “quick build” techniques that minimize construction. According to a campus survey, 27% of students take public transportation, 30% bike, and 28% walk as their primary method of commute<sup>1</sup>. With its focus on improving conditions for bike and bus commuters, we believe this project would have a positive impact on transportation modes heavily relied upon by students.

As compared to other Cambridge streets, this stretch of Massachusetts Avenue has a higher than average incidence of bike accidents.<sup>2</sup> In addition, both MIT and Cambridge data indicate that residents are much less willing to bike on unseparated lanes, such as those currently found on this stretch of Massachusetts Avenue, as compared to protected bike lanes.<sup>3</sup> Adding protected bike lanes would therefore not only make biking along this street safer, but also more pleasant and stress-free.

The MBTA has reported that the majority of this corridor is “unsatisfactory” for transit performance, with significant sections marked as “failing” or “poor”<sup>4</sup>. Along this busy route buses often experience significant delays, which make them unreliable. To address these issues, the plan calls for dedicated bus lanes that would allow them to bypass backed up car traffic. Boston has already successfully implemented bus priority lanes in Roslindale where bus travel times through the corridor fell by 25%, saving as many as 38 hours of travel time per day for the 1100 bus commuters<sup>5</sup>. Their introduction on Massachusetts Avenue could be a proof of concept for Cambridge to begin planning its own network of bus lanes to achieve similar reductions in commute time.

Although the 30% of staff who drive to campus will experience increased traffic following the implementation of this project, those delays will continue to increase unless more attractive, faster alternatives are provided. This section of Mass Ave is an important gateway into Cambridge and MIT; it should serve as a shining example of the future of transportation. As our roads become more congested, we must make better use of the available space and that can only be done by providing safe, reliable alternatives to driving.

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<sup>1</sup> [MIT Transportation Survey](#), MIT (2016).

<sup>2</sup> [Cambridge CDD South Massachusetts Avenue Corridor Safety Improvement Project](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Cambridge Bicycle Survey Summary](#) (2014).

<sup>4</sup> [Cambridge CDD South Massachusetts Avenue Corridor Safety Improvements Stakeholder Meeting 3 Notes](#) (June 2018).

<sup>5</sup> [“Permanent Bus Lane to be Established on Washington Street in Roslindale”](#), City of Boston (June 2018).



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**Therefore, the GSC strongly urges the MIT administration to work with the city to make this plan a reality without delay.** Based on these data presented here, we believe this project will be greatly beneficial for the MIT community that heavily relies on buses and bikes to commute to campus. MIT and Cambridge should prioritize this project in pursuit of sustainable transportation that maximizes the movement of people and the goal for zero traffic fatalities in accordance with the city's commitment to Vision Zero<sup>6</sup>.

*Prepared by the External Affairs Board on behalf of the MIT Graduate Student Council. September 2018.*

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<sup>6</sup> [Vision Zero](#), Cambridge