

Cambridge, MA

Brattle Street Quick-Build Separated Bike Lane

» Designing for Past and Present

A vital link to Harvard Square from points west, Brattle Street is part of the National Register and passes a National Park Service site. A request for lower-profile separation to preserve the street's historic character resulted in the use of new materials and new lessons.

Taking effect in three phases, this summer will mark completion of the two-way separated bike lane throughout the 1.3-mile-long street. This will help Cambridge achieve its goal of 25 miles of separated bike lanes by 2026.



Instead of the standard 3'-tall flex post, the City opted for 6"-tall precast concrete curbing on most of the street. These curbs harden the separation between cyclists and vehicles without road reconstruction. Concerns about curbing visibility led to installation of reflective tape on the curbing ends and the potential to use raised pavement markers for the final phase of the project. Other new materials include custom pavement markings and signage.



Favored for its smaller cross-section, the two-way cycle track allowed for the preservation of parking and loading in the bustling Harvard Square district. This also allowed for pedestrian safety improvements without compromising cyclist separation or changing existing traffic patterns. Two-way separated bike lanes also allow for street maintenance (street sweeping, snow plowing) to be done with existing equipment.



The City uses its on-call traffic signal contract to make spot improvements during quick-build projects. These include installation of bicycle signals (along with a leading bicycle interval) and flashing yellow arrows for vehicles. We have also been installing "No Turn on Red" signs at signalized intersections. Such upgrades align with the City's goals of moving people safely and encouraging new modes of transportation, thereby reducing dependence on single-occupancy vehicles.