



TOWN OF ARLINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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Memorandum

To: Arlington Board of Selectmen
From: Nat Strosberg, Senior Planner
Date: October 26, 2017
Re: MAPC's RFP for Regional Bikeshare

Dear Members of the Arlington Board of Selectmen:

Request

I am respectfully requesting the Board of Selectmen's support for Arlington's Bikeshare Working Group so the group can determine whether Arlington should commit to joining MAPC's regional RFP process for dockless bikeshare.

Background

As you know, Arlington's Bikeshare Working Group has spent the past year examining options for bringing bikeshare to Arlington. The primary focus of this examination has been investigating opportunities for expanding Hubway into the community. However, the bikeshare landscape has recently and rapidly changed. Since the late summer, Arlington has been approached by several dockless bikeshare vendors looking to begin operating here. Unlike Hubway bikes, dockless bikes do not require a separate fixed apparatus on which to lock, and instead use an embedded self-locking mechanism; established locking/docking locations are therefore not required.

Per the Board of Selectmen's recent directive, the Bikeshare Working Group and Town staff have been studying local regulatory frameworks and other critical matters pertaining to dockless bikeshare. Simultaneously, over the past month, a new promising regional initiative has emerged: MAPC has been working to issue an RFP for dockless bikeshare on behalf of several neighboring communities outside of the Hubway system. At MAPC's kickoff meeting for this process in late September, which was attended by representatives from Arlington, Malden, Medford, Newton, Watertown, and several other communities, it was agreed that an alternative to Hubway may be needed and an investigation into a potential regional RFP process was warranted. Indeed, those present voiced concerns about the cost of joining Hubway, the

continued lack of critical information for joining (e.g., intermunicipal revenue sharing details), and how the current, fixed-station Hubway model may soon become outdated.

At a follow-up meeting at MAPC on October 24th, several key advantages of a regional RFP process were noted: a seamless user experience among communities; increased system efficacy; significant flexibility in choosing the optimal vendor or combination of vendors; a more thorough vendor vetting process; and a greater chance that the chosen vendor(s) will ultimately succeed in this new tumultuous market. A draft RFP was also reviewed at the meeting; the following are important examples of potential priorities that could be emphasized by the RFP:

- A shared opportunity to set minimum quality requirements
- A commitment to only use the vendors chosen through the RFP process for the duration of the contract
- The freedom for a municipality to add additional local regulations
- The freedom for a municipality to pull out of the contract and entire process at any time

MAPC's timeline for this process is ambitious. The following are major timeline points:

- 11.3.17 – Deadline for a municipality to commit to participating in the RFP process
- Mid-November – RFP is formally released
- Mid-December – RFP responses are due and interviews are conducted
- Early January – Contract is awarded

Of course, there are vital issues that still need to be resolved, such as where dockless bikes would be parked and interoperability with Hubway. To that end, MAPC has been working closely with Arlington and other interested communities to revise the RFP accordingly.

The Bikeshare Working Group will be meeting prior to November 3rd to determine how to proceed. The Board of Selectmen's support, however, is first required before the Bikeshare Working Group can deliberate.

Please let me know if I can provide further information.

Thanks,

Nat Strosberg
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