

Friday, Sept. 20, 2024

Mayor's Newton Update



Changes Coming to Newton Corner Circle

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) will begin work in a few weeks on some immediate changes to the complicated convergence in Newton Corner where there are exit and entrance ramps to the Mass Pike that intersect with major streets (Washington Street, Centre Street, Galen Street, Charlesbank Road, Park Street and more).

These changes are primarily focused on safety concerns and involve an upgrade to one traffic signal and the addition of another, quite different signal operations, a marked change in the use of lanes via different pavement markings, and new signage in and around the Newton Corner circle.



The Newton Corner Short-Term Improvement Project is the first step in MassDOT's mid- and longer-term improvement projects at these roads and highway ramps over the Mass Pike.

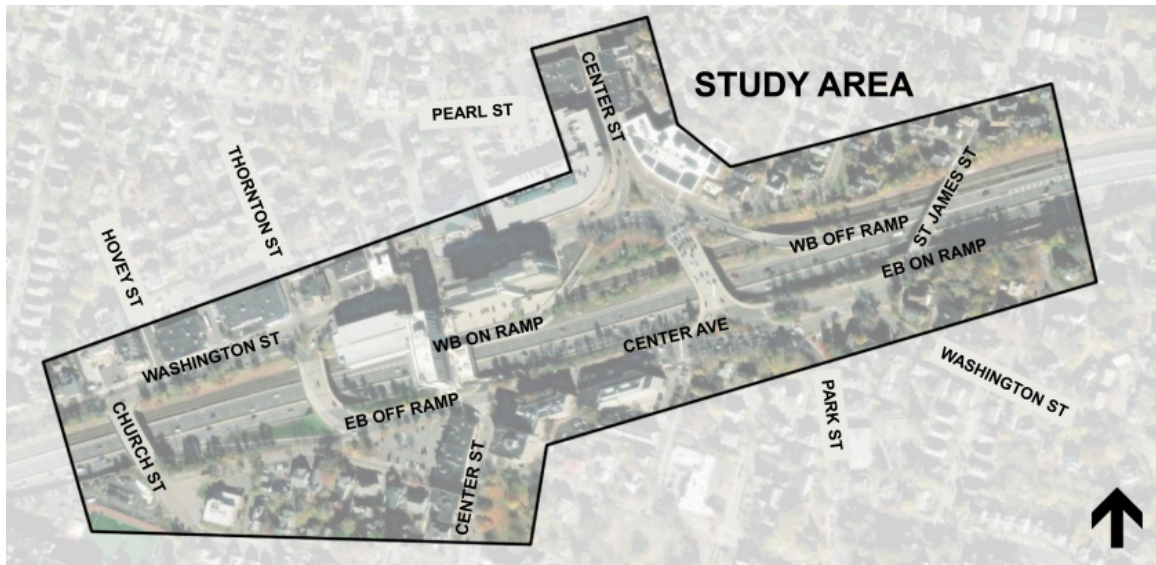
We know this is an inhospitable area for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. We need MassDOT to make significantly more improvements in addition to this first project.

The Turnpike down below, all the on- and off-ramps, and many segments of the circle up above are owned by the State. Therefore this is a MassDOT project. Our residents, businesses and the City of Newton provide input, while MassDOT and their consultants take the lead in decision making (and pay for both the design and construction entirely with State and Federal funds).

Much of the work starting this fall will be completed this calendar year; some additional work will be completed in the spring of 2025 (notably the new,

additional light on the northside of the area where Washington Street converges with the roadway by the hotel garage).

These investments are primarily designed to improve traffic safety and address backups, congestion, queuing and crashes on the Mass Pike Exit 127 eastbound (inbound) off-ramp into Newton Corner.



The most significant change is the replacement of and substantial modification to the traffic signal on the south side of the Newton Corner circle at Centre Street. This newly designed traffic signal will in essence control the two traffic streams – one from the Exit 127 eastbound off-ramp and the other from the rotary traffic. The two traffic streams will be forced to take turns. MassDOT designed this new traffic signal (and changes to the lanes/pavement markings) to:

- Eliminate the dangerous “weave” of the rotary traffic cutting across the Exit 127 eastbound off-ramp traffic to get to Centre Street.
- Provide the Exit 127 eastbound off-ramp traffic during every signal cycle with a “green light” to enter the rotary, which will reduce the off-ramp congestion and the “spillback” of the queue onto the Turnpike main line. This will improve safety and reduce congestion for everyone on the Pike.

That’s the good news.

While MassDOT’s planned changes should improve safety and traffic backups on the Pike, MassDOT expects we may very well see impacts on traffic congestion and queuing around the Newton Corner circle.

In order to better manage these impacts, MassDOT has committed to installing a new, additional traffic signal at the Washington Street eastbound/Washington Street westbound merge (in front of Honda Village). This signal will be installed in the spring of 2025.

These significant construction operations are planned by MassDOT to begin on Monday, September 30.

Learn more about this project at a virtual Public Information Meeting hosted by MassDot on Wednesday, Sept. 25 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. Register to attend the meeting [here](#). Email questions or comments to MassDOT at NewtonCornerImprovements@dot.state.ma.us.

In addition to this immediate Newton Corner Short-Term project, MassDOT is simultaneously doing longer-term planning for Newton Corner:

- The Newton Corner Mid-Term Improvements Project (<https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-improvements-project>), which will make more comprehensive improvements to intersection geometry, traffic signals, pavement condition, and access for pedestrians and bicyclists. These improvements could be in place in roughly six to ten years.
- The Newton Corner Long-Term Planning Study (<https://www.mass.gov/newton-corner-long-term-planning-study>), which is intended to develop a long-term vision for more comprehensive improvements to Newton Corner, encompassing all modes of travel as well as land use, environmental, and quality of life improvements. Such improvements would likely be 20+ years in the future.

Leaf Season Is Nearly Here

The leaves will soon be falling and many of us will be putting our leaves and yard waste curbside. Our DPW team plans to be collecting this year through Friday, Dec. 13, with the understanding that weather can alter this schedule.

Yard waste is collected on the same day as trash and recycling and needs to be curbside by 7:00 a.m. on your scheduled day (or after 4:00 p.m. on the day before). (To keep our worker's safe, please make sure no individual bag or barrel weighs more than 50 pounds.)

Unlike trash and recycling, yard waste pickup is weather dependent. Sorry, routes and pick-up times can change without prior notification. But, try using our *Recycle Right Newton* App to find out about collection schedule changes. Download the free app in the [App Store](#) or [Google Play](#).

If you put yard waste out and it is not collected that day, leave it at the curb and it will be collected on the following day or on a subsequent day as soon as possible.

Did you know that state law bans the disposal of yard waste in trash? View our yard waste collection [guidelines](#). (Placing yard waste in the blue or green cart may result in rejection.)

Newton's yard waste is hauled to a commercial composting facility in Massachusetts. Last year, we collected 22,000 cubic yards of yard waste – approximately 4,000 tons.

Help Us Keep Storm Drains Clear

Storm drains on the side of our roads blocked by leaves can cause flooding and create safety issues for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians.



Make sure leaves from your yard are bagged, mulched or composted and *not* raked into the street unless they will be collected concurrently by you or by your landscaper.

Please consider removing leaves from storm drains near your home, if feasible, before storms; you may also call Newton Customer Service (617) 796-1000 (M-F 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) or the Newton Utilities Division 617-796-1640 (M-F 7:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.) to request a storm drain be cleared.

Tired of Raking? Try “Leaf-Cycling”

Leaves left untouched on lawns and in yards won't break down over a winter. But, there is an alternative to raking – it's called leaf-cycling and all you need is a lawn mower.

Raise the mower deck to the highest setting and mow over the leaves, crossing over them once or twice. Up to 6-inches of leaves can be “mowed” at a time, depending on the type of mower you have. Push mowers can handle smaller amounts but are still effective.

The resulting leaf mulch on the surface of the lawn will only last for a few days. The tiny pieces of leaves will sift down through the grass and provide future weed control and essential nutrients, which in turn may save you money and time.

Come spring, you won't notice the leaf bits, and your lawn may be healthier and greener.



A National Grid crew working on Commonwealth Avenue at the intersection with Ward Street in Newton Centre had a partial detour in place until they punctured a water service line this afternoon. Our Utilities Division staff within our Department of Public Works immediately responded. They fixed the water leak. The complete closure on Centre Street is over and the partial detour is back in place. We'll still experience a bit of a delay until the end of the afternoon. Thank you DPW.

Commemorating Those Lost to Opioid Overdoses

We joined our partners at Newton-Wellesley Hospital on Wednesday to commemorate the 2,125 Massachusetts residents who died of an opioid overdose last year – with each life represented by a purple flag displayed on the hospital's lawn along Washington Street.

(Photo: Shaking hands with Newton-Wellesley Hospital President and CEO Ellen Moloney with Newton's Director of Social Services Jenna Bancroft.)



In Massachusetts, 2,125 of our neighbors got caught in this opioid vortex and we mourn each and every one of them. As we reflect on those lost and offer solace to those touched by these deaths, we can take hope in knowing that there are resources and treatments available for this disease. We can also see that Naloxone (Narcan), a nasal spray that rapidly reverses the effects of an opioid overdose, is saving lives.

The number of opioid overdose deaths dropped nationwide over the past year and fell by 10% in Massachusetts in 2023, the largest single-year decline since 2010. In Newton, we saw a decline in opioid-related overdose deaths of Newton residents from 10 in 2022 to 4 in 2023.



(Photo: An Opioid Overdose Rescue Kit outside the Mayor's Office on the second floor of City Hall.)

In Newton we will be using opioid settlement funds to purchase and place Opioid Overdose Rescue Kits which contain Naloxone (i.e. narcan) in public buildings around the City.

The Newton Health and Human Services Department has information and resources available about substance use disorders at newtonma.gov/hhs.

To those in recovery – we celebrate all that you have overcome; we celebrate your accomplishments; and we celebrate the hope you represent.

Warmly,

Ruthanne



P.S. With the Nov. 5 Presidential election 45 days away, we know that many voters are wondering when their **vote by mail ballots** will arrive. Newton's City Clerk's staff is waiting to receive the official ballots from the Massachusetts Secretary of State's Office. They expect to receive them by the beginning of October.

P.P.S. The **Society of St. Vincent de Paul's semi-annual Clothing Drive** is this Sunday, Sept. 22. Accepted items include clothing of all types and for all seasons as well as coats, linens, towels and blankets. Please bring only clean items that are in good condition. Look for the Society's truck in the parking lot of Our Lady Help of Christians parish, 573 Washington Street (the parking lot entrance is on Adams Street) on Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to noon and from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Questions? Contact the Society at svdp@sholnewton.org.



P.P.P.S. Join world renowned expert in mindfulness and meditation Dr. Christopher Willard of the Harvard Medical School for a virtual discussion, **Mindful Resilience: Practical Strategies for the Whole Family** this Tuesday, Sept. 24, from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. The webinar, presented by Understanding Our Differences, will highlight how mindfulness can help kids and families “slow down,

sit still and single task,” among other things. Advance registration is required. Click [here](#) for more information about the program and to register.

P.P.P.P.S. The **Newton Bakery Crawl** is back on Friday and/or Saturday, Sept. 27 and 28, with at least 17 bakeries across our City opening their doors, dishing out samples, baking special treats, and offering discounts. Take a look at the participating bakeries and get more info [here](#). Be sure and mention you’re a “Crawler” to take advantage of special promotions.



P.P.P.P.S. Green Newton is hosting its third **Sustainable Street Tour** on Saturday, Oct. 5 from 10:00 a.m. to noon in Newtonville right across Walnut Street from Newton North High School at 34 Clyde St. Learn about heat pumps, solar panels, EV chargers, and more from your neighbors who will share how they made their homes more energy efficient. Click [here](#) for more info.

Past P.S.s Happening Soon:

P.S. Celebrate **Newtonville Village Day** with music, artists, performances, a fun train ride for little ones, face painting, food, cake and more. Stop by Walnut Street in the village center near the intersection of Washington Street on Sunday, Sept. 29 from noon to 4:00 p.m. There is plenty of parking at Newton North High School, a few blocks away.



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