



Public Facilities Committee Report

City of Newton In City Council

Wednesday, January 4, 2017

Present: Councilors Crossley (Chair), Albright, Laredo, Lappin, Lennon, Brousal-Glaser,

Absent: Councilor Danberg, Gentile

Also present: Councilors Leary, Hess-Mahan, Fuller, Lipof, Blazar, Yates, Ciccone, Cote, Harney, Auchincloss, Norton, Sangiolo, Schwartz

City staff present: Associate City Engineer John Daghlian, Commissioner of Public Works Jim McGonagle, Director of Operations Shane Mark, Director of Transportation Nicole Freedman, Police Sergeant John Babcock

#439-16 National Grid petition for grant of location in Ruane Circle

NATIONAL GRID petitioning for a grant of location to install and maintain 175' ± of 4" main in Ruane Circle from existing 3" gas main in Ruane Road, easterly to House #12 for new gas service. [(Ward 3) 12/01/2016 @ 1:42 PM]

Action: Public Facilities Approved 5-0 (Brousal-Glaser not voting)

Note: Associate City Engineer John Daghlian presented the petition to install and maintain 3" gas main in Ruane Circle to provide gas service to #12. Mr. Daghlian stated that the installation will be an extension of the existing gas main in order to accommodate a house converting from oil to gas service. Mr. Daghlian confirmed that Ruane Circle was last paved in 1987 and the trench will be repaved to City standards.

The Public hearing was opened and closed with no one wishing to speak. Councilor Albright moved approval of the item which carried 5-0.

Referred to Public Safety & Transportation and Public Facilities Committees

#7-17 Request for approval of intersection improvements at Harvard and Washington St
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC WORKS requesting approval of the design and installation of intersection improvements including a traffic signal and bump outs at the intersection of Harvard and Washington Street. [12/28/2016 @ 4:35 PM]

Action: Public Facilities Approved 6-0. Public Safety and Transportation Approved 6-0.

Note: The Public Facilities and Public Safety & Transportation Committees met jointly to discuss the intersection improvements at Harvard and Washington Street. Commissioner McGonagle presented the request for acceptance of the design and installation of intersection improvements at the intersection including traffic signals and bump outs. He stated that the intersection is a crash hotspot and has been the site of several pedestrian incidents including two in one month in 2016. The Department of Public Works was awarded a "complete streets" grant for \$400,000 which was approved by the Council in 2016 and will cover most of the project cost; the

total cost of the project will be approximately \$530,000. Public Works hopes to complete construction by June 30, 2017.

Director of Transportation Nicole Freedman provided a narrative overview of the proposed Harvard and Washington intersection improvements (attached). Director Freedman presented photos of the intersection and explained that the priority is to improve safety at the site. She noted that a previous attempt to improve safety (a flashing beacon) has not resulted in fewer incidents. Existing circumstances that contribute to unsafe conditions include; a wide crossing, confusion about the flashing beacon signal and the lack of a crosswalk on the east side of the intersection. Director Freedman stated that studies demonstrate a significant demand to locate a crosswalk on the east side of the intersection.

The Department of Public Works proposes to upgrade the intersection with modern ADA compliant signalization, push button activation and vehicle detection to better accommodate pedestrians, sidewalks will be widened at the crossings, reducing crossing distance. Councilors asked about the sensitivity of the signalization and how many cars would trigger a signal change. Environmental Partners Design Engineer for the project Jim Fitzgerald noted that the settings can be reprogrammed to change how the signal functions. Committee members asked if the signal would be synchronized with neighboring signals. Director Freedman stated that the signal would be made ready to coordinate, but additional upgrades costing approximately \$50-\$100 thousand dollars may be necessary to coordinate the signals now. Commissioner McGonagle noted that while there are some cost limitations to these additional upgrades, the complete streets grant provides for additional flexibility. Should the bids come in lower than anticipated, Public Works will bid as an alternate and include GPS controllers to coordinate nearby signals. It was also noted that the Washington Corridor project planning will begin soon and will include additional upgrades to other signals. Commissioner McGonagle reiterated Public Works' commitment to undergrounding conduit wherever and whenever possible.

An existing bus stop on the north side of Washington Street will be relocated to be legally compliant. There are three options (diagram attached) of where to relocate the bus stop that result in a loss of either 3 or 4 parking spaces. A Committee member noted that it was determined that the businesses at the site prefer Option 1 because the loss of parking spaces is not from in front of the businesses.

Councilors and Police Sergeant Babcock asked if right turns on red would be allowed from Harvard onto Washington. Director Freedman confirmed that right turns on red would be allowed based frequency of cars turning right onto Washington Street because there is adequate sight line visibility. It was stated that there would be concurrent timing; which raised some concerns. Director Freedman noted that the City works with pedestrian advocate Walk Boston and that they are comfortable with the concurrent timing based on the pedestrian and car volume at the site. Mr. Fitzgerald confirmed that the timing can be changed after installation. Committee members were in support of the removal of flashing beacons in the City as they can cause confusion. Councilors were in support of the improvements and noted that there have been significant and ongoing safety concerns from citizens.

Councilor Albright moved approval of the item in Public Facilities and Councilor Ciccone moved approval of the item in Public Safety and Transportation. Both motions carried unanimously.

Referred to Programs & Services, Public Facilities and Finance Committees

#388-16 Authorize the Library Board of Trustees to apply for grant funds for library renovation

HIS HONOR THE MAYOR requesting that the City Council authorize the Board of Library Trustees to apply for any state funds which might be able to make improvements and additions to the Newton Free Library and which will defray all or part of the cost of the design, construction and equipping of the library project; and to authorize the Library Trustees to accept and expend any such funds when received without further appropriation. [10/31/16 @ 2:05 PM]

Action: **Public Facilities voted No Action Necessary 5-0. (Lennon not voting) Programs & Services voted No Action Necessary 5-0.**

Referred to Public Facilities & Programs and Services Committees

#388-16(2) Approval of conceptual library design for grant application

NEWTON FREE LIBRARY DIRECTOR requesting approval of conceptual designs for renovation and addition to the Newton Free Library as basis for application to the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners for a Library Construction Grant. [12/07/2016 @ 3:20 PM]

Action: **Public Facilities voted No Action Necessary 5-0 (Lennon not voting). Programs & Services voted No Action Necessary 5-0.**

Note: The Public Facilities and Programs & Services Committee met jointly to discuss the application for grant funds and City Council's approval of the conceptual design for renovations and additions to the Newton Free Library.

At a Committee of the Whole on December 5, 2016, Library Director Phil McNulty presented plans and described growing needs due to the success of library programs, particularly children and teen programs, and the need for additional community space. Since that time, cost estimates for the renovations as designed were completed and would be \$. Just last spring, the project was estimated to cost only \$33 million. The Director told the Committee there was insufficient time to have the design team revise plans to reduce the scope in time for this year's grant application, and noted they could not expect the City to support a library renovation/expansion project with this price tag. The current building is not quite 30 years old. After Council feedback in December, the Board of Library Trustees worked to reduce the project scope by eliminating nonessential design features. While the changes resulted in cost savings, they did not bring the project cost to a figure that the Council could reasonably support. Because there is insufficient time to revise the plans prior to the January 26, 2017 deadline, Director McNulty stated that the Board of Trustees will not be moving forward with the grant application at this time.

Director McNulty stated that the Board of Library Trustees worked to incorporate citizen input when designing the renovations and noted that the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners seem to give preference to cities with larger percentage of new construction when awarding grants, which he found discouraging. Director McNulty noted that the Board of Library Trustees hopes to take the five years prior to the next grant application deadline and work with the Council to revise the plans so they accurately reflect the library's most significant program needs. An item has been docketed to invite Director McNulty to provide updates and seek Council feedback as needed.

Councilors questioned how the scope of the project became so large, and whether they were tracking costs along the way. Director McNulty noted that the design changes increased the building size by approximately 18% and believes that much of the cost increases can be attributed to construction cost increases. Committee members countered that construction costs have risen but not double in the past year, and noted that the project additionally had significant scope creep which resulted in the inclusion of some unnecessary design features, and the additions were enlarged.

Director McNulty noted that the intention is to evaluate the library's priorities and determine the most efficient path for meeting them. He stated that the space for the children's program is the most critical need, but also the most difficult. He hopes to determine a solution for the children's program and ensure that other improvements are sequenced in accordance with those changes.

A Committee member noted that the renovations to the library included a new archive wing, which can be completed independently and if current archival storage is removed from the center of the first floor, will increase available space for the children's program.

Councilor Albright moved no action necessary of the item in Public Facilities and Councilor Sangiolo moved no action necessary of the item in Programs & Services; both items carried 5-0.

The Committee adjourned at 8:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah J. Crossley, Chair

MEMORANDUM

TO: Deb Crossley, Councilor
CC: James Mcgonagle, DPW Commissioner; Shane Mark, DPW Director of Operations
FROM: Nicole Freedman, Director of Transportation
SUBJECT: Washington-Harvard Signalization Upgrade Project
DATE: January 3, 2017

This memo provides a brief overview of the Harvard-Washington Signalization Upgrade Project in advance of DPW's presentation to the Public Facilities and Public Safety and Transportation Committees on January 4, 2017.

BACKGROUND

The Harvard-Washington signalization project is a CIP designated Traffic Signalization Project. The City has been awarded \$400,000 in grant funding from the MassDOT Complete Streets program for construction. Total construction costs are estimated at \$530,000. Pending approval of the final design, construction is targeted for completion by June 30, 2017.

SAFETY

The City initiated the Washington-Harvard project to address safety concerns. From November 2010 to November 2015, the intersection has seen 17 accidents. Of those, four involved vulnerable user groups: three involved pedestrians, one involved a bicyclist. The intersection stands out as a hot spot in Newton for motor vehicle crashes involving bicycles and pedestrians.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The intersection has the following issues:

- *RRFB Signal* - The intersection currently has a Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacon signal (RRFB)¹. However, despite the addition of this signal in recent years, the crashes persist.
- *Missing Crosswalk* - There is a crosswalk on only one of the two sides of Washington Street.
- *Expansive crossing* - The roadway is an expansive 58' making for a long crossing for pedestrians.

The recent opening of Garden Remedies will further increase pedestrian volumes and likewise exacerbate challenges.

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

The Washington-Harvard Signalization Upgrade Project makes the following improvements:

- *Install full traffic signal* - The signal will facilitate pedestrian crossing and vehicle turn movements, including assisting vehicles exiting Harvard Street. The signal will include modern features such as video detection and ability to synchronize with nearby signals.
- *Provide bump-outs* - Bump-outs (added to the north side Washington Street, and elongated on the southeast side) will shorten the pedestrian crossing distance, provide traffic calming and improve visibility for pedestrians.
- *Add crosswalk* - The project will add a second crosswalk across Washington Street on the east side of Harvard Street.
- *ADA compliance* - The upgraded intersection will be fully ADA compliant with ramps and audible pedestrian signals (APS).
- *Relocate bus stop* - The westbound bus stop will be moved from the middle of the intersection eastwards. Drawings show two proposed options for the bus stop. A final option will be proposed during the presentation.

PARKING IMPACT

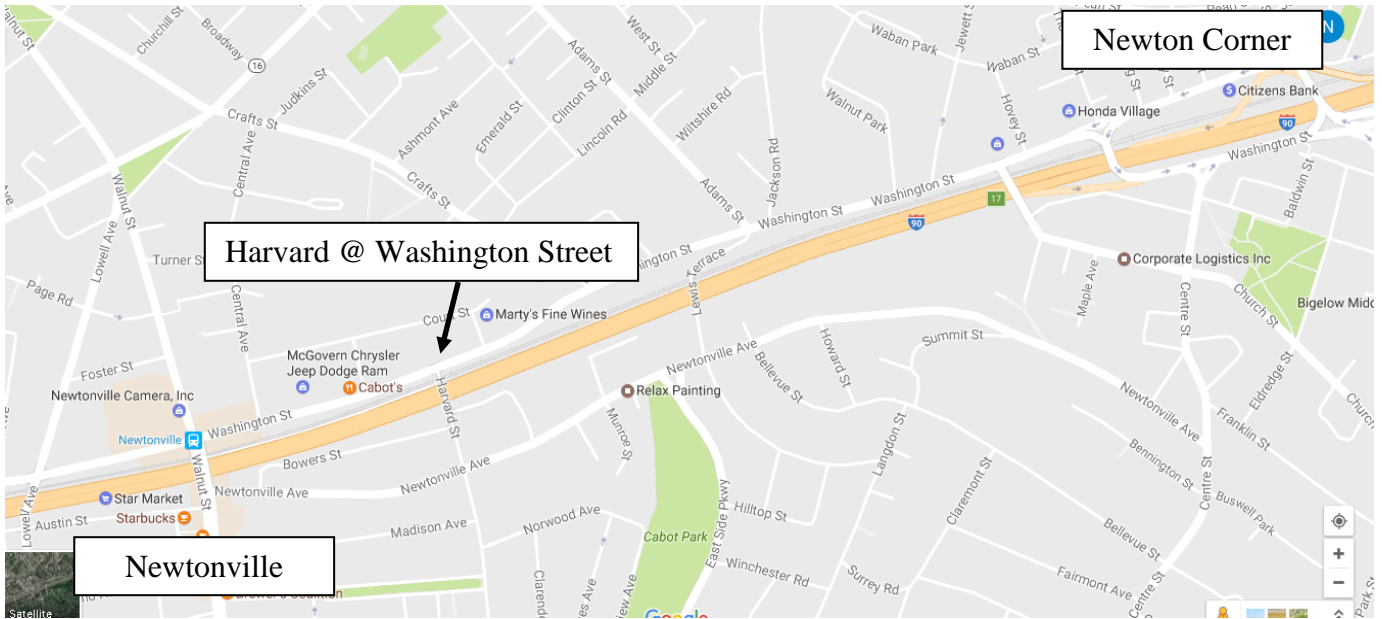
The safety upgrades, specifically installing bump-outs, adding a second crosswalk and moving the bus stop necessitate the removal of up to five to six on-street parking spaces, primarily on the north side of Washington Street.

PUBLIC PROCESS

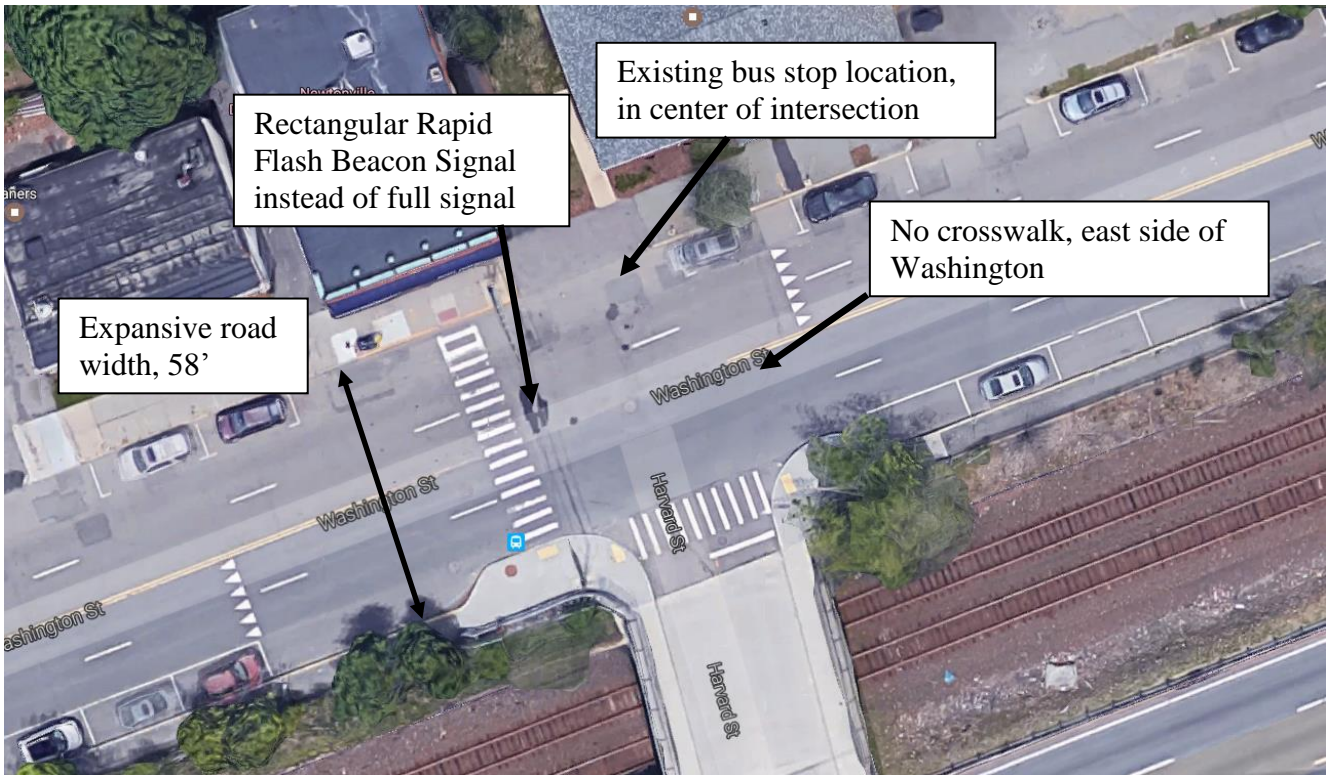
- Planning and/or DPW met and/or spoke with many of the businesses directly abutting the intersection.
- DPW is hosting a public meeting, geared towards business abutters on January 4, 2017.
- DPW met with and briefed leaders of the Newtonville Area Council.

¹ RRFB signals provide flashing lights when pedestrians try to cross the street. The RRFB signals prove most effective on roads with one lane in each direction, a center median, and modest vehicle speeds and volumes.

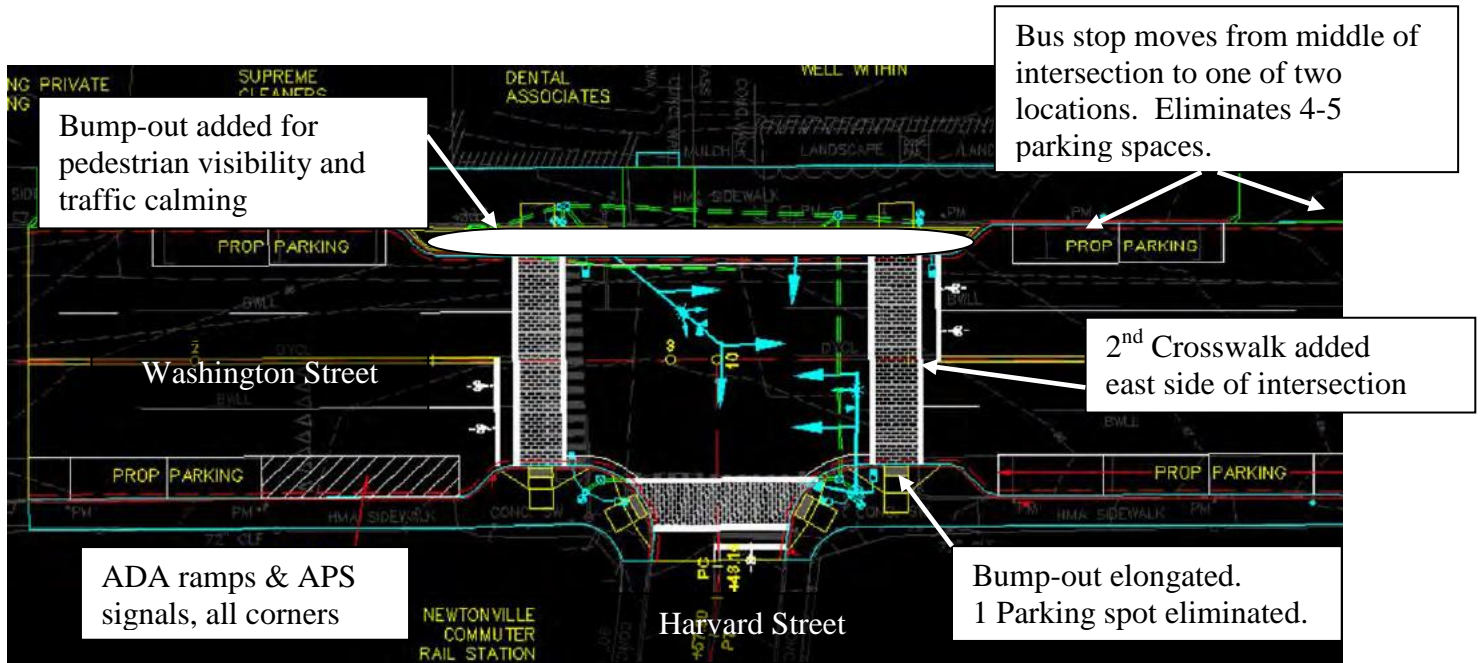
LOCATION

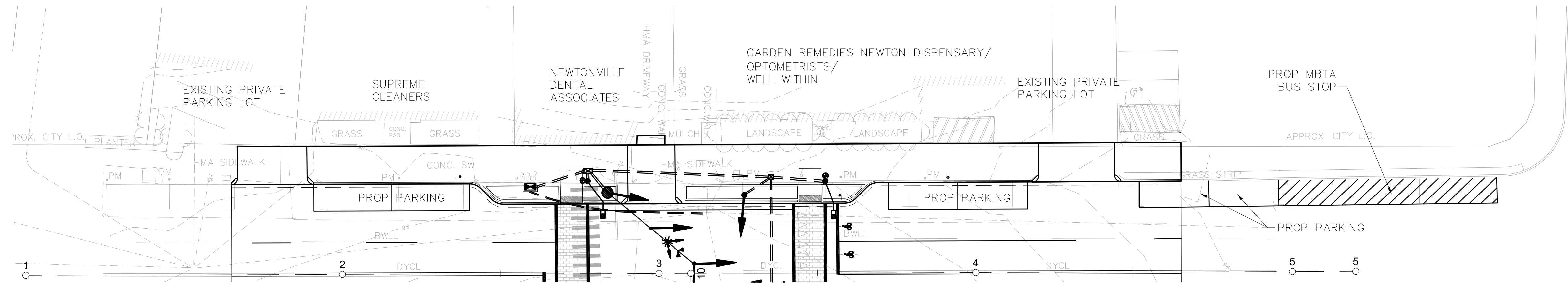
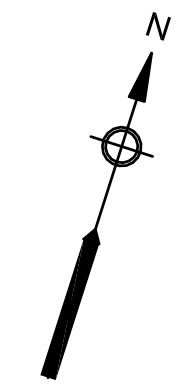


EXISTING CONDITIONS

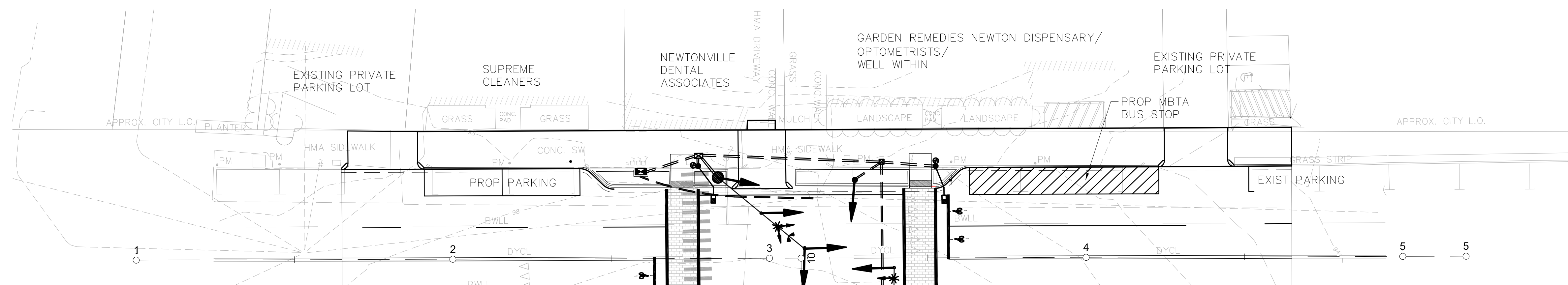
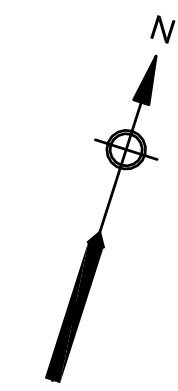


PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

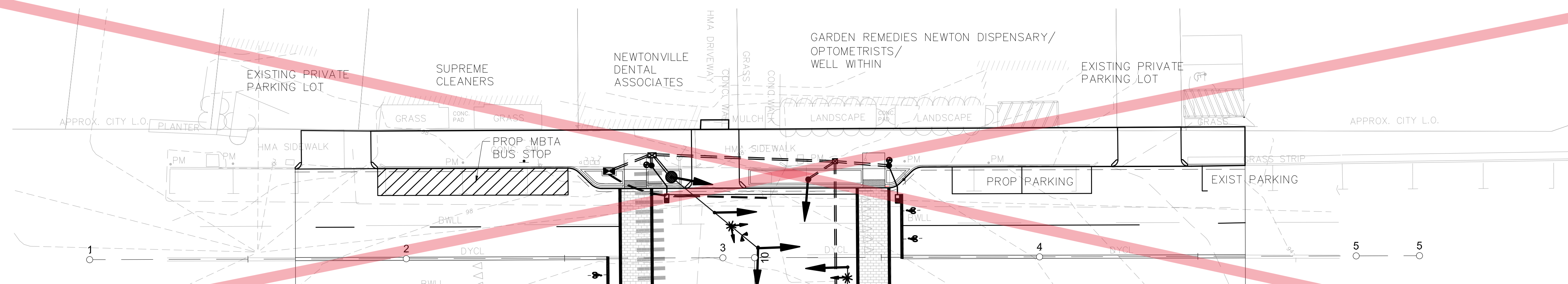
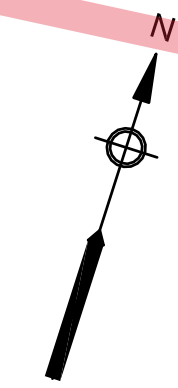




Westbound OPTION 1
(-4 parking space)



Westbound OPTION 2
(-3 parking space)



Westbound OPTION 3
(-3 parking space)

Drawing file: I:\Newton\26-1603 Newton - Washington St at Harvard St\ACAD\ref\PROP_ALIGNMENT_ALT_COMBINE.dwg Plot Date: 26/16/11:43am



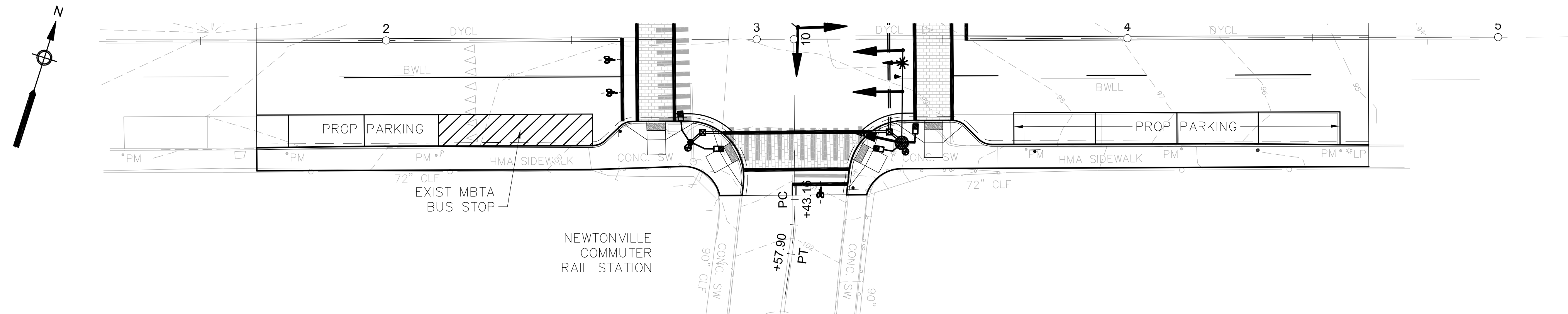
MARK	DATE	DESCRIPTION

Scale	
Date	NOVEMBER 2016
Job No.	326-1603
Designed by	
Drawn by	
Checked by	
Approved by	

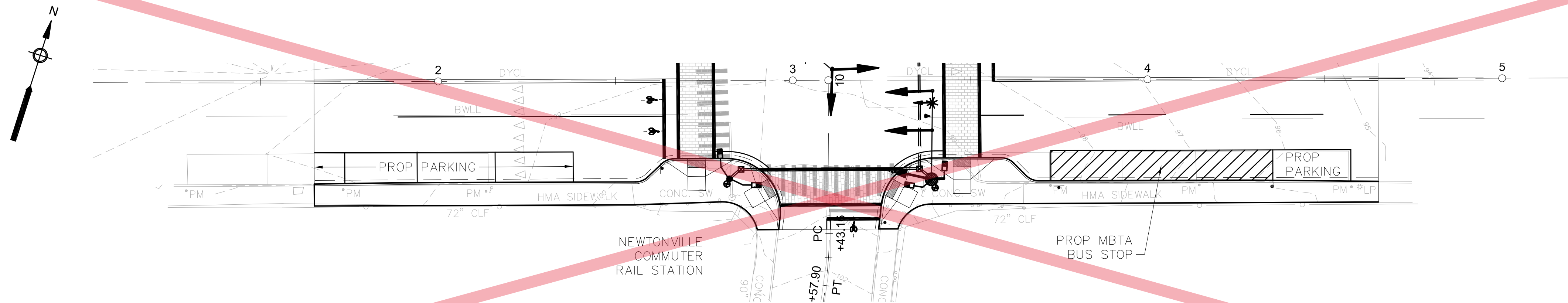
THIS LINE IS ONE INCH LONG WHEN PLOTTED AT FULL SCALE ON A 22" X 34" DRAWING

WASHINGTON AT HARVARD
INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS
NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION
Sheet No.
C-1



Eastbound OPTION 1
(-1 parking space)



Eastbound OPTION 2
(-3 parking spaces)

Drawing file: I:\Newton\26-1603 Newton - Washington St at Harvard St\ACAD\dwg\PROP_ALIGNMENT_ALT_COMBINE.dwg Plot Date: Dec 29, 2016 11:45am



MARK	DATE	DESCRIPTION

Scale	
Date	NOVEMBER 2016
Job No.	326-1603
Designed by	
Drawn by	
Checked by	
Approved by	

THIS LINE IS ONE INCH LONG WHEN PLOTTED AT FULL SCALE ON A 22" X 34" DRAWING

WASHINGTON AT HARVARD
INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS
NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

NOT FOR CONSTRUCTION
Sheet No.
C-2