

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE REPORT

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 17, 2012

Present: Ald. Ciccone (Chair), Swiston, Yates, Fuller, Schwartz, Harney and Kalis

Absent: Ald. Johnson

City Staff: David Koses, Transportation Planner; Captain Marc Gromada and Sgt. Jay Babcock, Newton Police Department and Bill Paille, Director of Transportation

Others Present: Jerome Grafe, Citizen Representative; Andreae Downs, Chair, Transportation Advisory Group; Lois Levin, Chair, Bicycle Advisory Committee and Rob Caruso, Co-Chair, Commission on Disability

#269-12 ALD. JOHNSON, requesting a discussion re plans for proposed bike lanes within Newton. [08/27/12 @ 9:18 AM]

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 5-0, Ald. Fuller and Schwartz not voting**

NOTE: Mr. Paille provided Committee members with a PowerPoint presentation, attached to this report. His presentation covered background information, bicycle network plan, the process, photographs of typical markings and signs, typical applications and separation alternatives. Mr. Paille said that Committees were formed to identify various appropriate routes throughout the City. Most recently, the Committees updated and revised various routes. This is the initial plan; this is just the beginning. All alternatives have to be considered and how they will work in order to move forward.

Chair Ciccone said that in August 2012, the Executive Department created the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) and the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) to recommend bike route locations throughout the City.

Bicycle Network Plan – This plan includes a list of preferred routes, completed routes and routes to be marked.

Preferred Routes: Seven preferred routes have been identified. This is not the final list. Routes are necessary in north, south, east and west bound directions.

Completed Routes: Four completed routes (markings have been installed on the pavement, signs have been installed and routes have been approved by Traffic Council).

Fall 2012: Two routes have been approved. The two routes have been designed and laid out. It is anticipated the City will make markings on these bike lanes in the near future.

Committee members expressed their questions, concerns and suggestions.

Questions:

Committee members asked if the bicycle network plan is a proposed plan or “THE” plan? They asked if there is a specific order to implement preferred routes. They asked how often bike lanes are painted, could colored paint be used or lanes marked differently to easily identify them?

They then asked if the aqueduct, Upper Falls greenway or the Charles River path could be considered as a potential area because they provide safety and links to neighboring communities.

Concerns:

Committee members said that they are concerned with some bike lanes not working properly and agree that proper education and additional signage are necessary. They said that they are concerned about removing parking in order to implement bike lanes and some areas should never be considered. They then said that they are concerned about speeding vehicles and the dangerous impact speed leaves with bicyclists.

Suggestions:

Committee members suggested notifying residents when striping the bike lanes will occur. They also suggested and said that educating the public is necessary to encourage changed behavior. They suggested that presence at City outings in order to notify the rest of the community is necessary to change peoples' behaviors and opinions. They suggested installing signs when entering Newton to the effect that "Newton is bike friendly, share the road". They then suggested perhaps implementing alternate routes off major collector roads.

Mr. Paille answered that the TAC, TAG and BAC Committees recommend proposed bike routes. Proposed bike routes are a great start; issues remain which need a resolution. He then said approximately every 2 years bike lanes need repainting. Some routes require yearly painting. He will discuss possible paint alternatives with the contractor hoping the product will last 2-3 years. He agreed some bike lanes need to be re-striped properly and perhaps the installation of additional signs. He said that in order to implement bike lanes, educating the public will be necessary in order to reduce speeds because bike lanes are a safe route to travel in. He agrees some bike lanes are not working properly especially where traffic is queuing up by striping and signing the location properly to make the area safer and facilitate movement. He then said the City plans to take a proactive approach to educate the public on the City website, Newton Tab, sandwich boards and notify the merchants.

Sgt. Babcock agreed educating the public (motorists), message boards and enforcement are all necessary. Massachusetts State Law enforces the prohibition of vehicles travelling in bike lanes. The Newton Police Department conducted directed patrols on Beacon Street for approximately one month. The first two weeks, verbal warnings were issued to motorists and they were educated not to travel in designated bike lanes. The last two weeks, motorists were fined \$20.00 per violation, according to City ordinance. Most recently, the Police Department is issuing \$100 fines. Approximately 400 tickets were issued including 20% warning and 80% fines.

Chair Ciccone opened the discussion to members of the public who were present. Ms. Downs said that some areas of the City are in higher demand for bike lanes and that the priority list continues to shift. Ms. Levin said that efficiency is necessary to make it from point A to point B. They agree education is necessary. Alternate routes will be considered in the plan to create safe biking areas.

Committee members were informed that this item would be discussed in the future when more information is available. Without further discussion, Ald. Swiston moved no action necessary, Committee members agreed 5-0, Ald. Fuller and Schwartz not voting.

#297-12 DAVID KOSES, Traffic Council Chair, requesting review and discussion of Traffic Council Policy #2, requests for Residential Handicap Parking Spaces.
[09/24/12 @ 10:53 AM]

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 5-0, Ald. Fuller and Schwartz not voting**

NOTE: Mr. Koses said that the Traffic Council Policy #2 was adopted in December 2008. The policy is distributed to the petitioner and Traffic Council members. The policy assists the petitioner with the necessary requirements and assists Traffic Council members as a tool in the decision making process. Mr. Koses explained the process for handling requests for handicap parking spaces in a residential neighborhood.

Mr. Caruso said that the Commission on Disability (COD) first reviews the petitioners' request. The COD reviews the site, reason for a handicap parking space, perform traffic counts, speed and later determine the need for the request and make their recommendation to Traffic Council.

Mr. Koses said that Traffic Council reviews COD's recommendations made and determines the need on a case-by-case basis; all factors are considered.

Committee members gave an example of a handicap parking space in West Newton Square and asked if the space on the slope is an appropriate location? Mr. Koses said that the City does not have a procedure to remove handicap parking spaces that are no longer necessary. Mr. Paille said that the space must meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards including appropriate curb cuts.

Without further discussion, Ald. Yates moved no action necessary, Committee members agreed 5-0, Ald. Fuller and Schwartz not voting.

#298-12 DAVID KOSES, Traffic Council Chair, requesting review and discussion of Traffic Council Policy #3, Prioritization of On-Street Parking and Bicycle lanes.
[09/24/12 @ 10:53 AM]

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 5-0, Ald. Fuller and Schwartz not voting**

NOTE: Mr. Koses said that this policy has been revised as Committee members requested in June 2012. At that time, Committee members suggested and later provided alternative language to revise the "Policy Statement" section of the policy.

Mr. Koses said that the Transportation Advisory Group (TAG) developed this policy to assist Traffic Council's decisions in the implementation of bike lanes and removal of parking. The policy intends to provide a baseline of supporting bicycle lanes in the City to provide safety, create all users equally and the primary functions of a street in order to move vehicles.

Committee members did not have any questions on the policy. Without discussion, Ald. Yates moved no action necessary, Committee members agreed 5-0, Ald. Fuller and Schwartz not voting.

#296-12 DAVID KOSES, Traffic Council Chair, requesting review and discussion of Traffic Council Policy #1, On-Street Parking Guidance. [09/24/12 @ 10:53 AM]

ACTION: **NO ACTION NECESSARY 6-0, Ald. Fuller not voting**

NOTE: Mr. Koses said that the Traffic Council Policy #1 was adopted in April 2008. He briefly described to Committee members the nine most frequently observed policies relating to on street parking to be used as a reference in Traffic Council.

Committee members reviewed and made suggestions to update the policy in the following sections:

Section (2) Institutions: Delete the words *Dover Act* and replace with words *Dover Amendment*. The Dover Amendment does not protect the Newton-Wellesley Hospital. Delete the words *nonprofit institutions* and replace with *nonprofit educational institutions*.

Section (5) Other Public Buildings and Parks: Delete the word *libraries* and replace with *library*.

Committee members did not have any further suggestions. Without discussion, Ald. Yates moved no action necessary, Committee members agreed 6-0, Ald. Fuller not voting.

At approximately 9:35 pm, Ald. Yates moved to adjourn. Committee members agreed 6-0, Ald. Fuller not voting.

Respectfully submitted,

Allan Ciccone, Jr. Chairman

Public Safety & Transportation Committee

City Hall
 Room 202
 Wednesday, October 17, 2012
 7:45 p.m.

#269-12

ALD. JOHNSON, requesting a discussion regarding plans for proposed bike lanes within Newton. [08/27/12 @ 9:18 AM]

Background

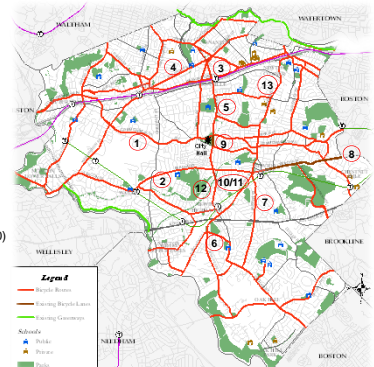
- Board of Aldermen adopt policy on bicycles/pedestrians (1994)
- City recognizes bicycles as integral part of transportation mix thru comprehensive plan (2007)
- Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)
- Transportation Advisory Group (TAG)
- Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC)
- Bicycle Network Plan Developed

Bicycle Network Plan

- PREFERRED ROUTES**
- 1 Commonwealth Ave. (Bike Ln)
 - 2 Beacon Street
 - 3 Washington Street
 - 4 Watertown Street
 - 5 Walnut Street (North of Comm. Ave.)
 - 6 Centre/Winchester/Needham
 - 7 Parker Street

- COMPLETED**
- 8 Beacon – Newton Ctr to Boston
 - 9 Walnut – Homer to Comm. Ave (2010)
 - 10 Langley – Centre to Beacon
 - 11 Union Street – Centre to Beacon

- FALL 2012 (Bike Lanes)**
- 12 Walnut – Forest to Homer
 - 13 Centre – Comm. Ave. to Newton Cnr.



Process

Challenges

- Vehicle Volume/Speed
- Sight Distance
- Available Roadway/Bridge Width
- On-Street Parking
- Intersections/Side Streets
- Lighting
- Budget/Cost

Approach

- Educate public (website, TAG, BAC, cycling events, public participation, user feedback)
- Appropriate design
- Attitude adjustment/enforcement
- Easier routes help build more difficult routes
- Patience/common sense/engineering/get it right

Design Standards

- Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)
- National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO)
- Guide for the development of bicycle facilities (AASHTO)
- Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT)

Markings & Signs



Bike Lane Symbols



Bike Lane Sharrows



Typical Signs

Typical Applications



Bike Lane with Parking



Right Turn Lane

Shared Right Turn Only Lanes with Through Marking Symbols
 An exclusive right-of-way is provided to provide separate through bicycle lane or at least a lane that has a low volume of right turning vehicle movements, a shared right turn only bicycle through lane may be provided. For this treatment, a 2-foot buffer zone with full lane markings is provided on the left side of the right turn only lane as shown in Figure 5.26. While a separate through bicycle lane is provided, it is preferred that design teams maintain proper bicycle operating position when maintaining straight through the intersection. It is preferable to provide a wide right turn lane to allow safe clearing of the lane.

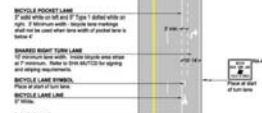


Figure 5.26: Examples of Shared Right Turn Lane with Separate Protected Lanes

Shared Bike Lane with Vehicle Turn Lane

Separation Alternatives



Bike Lane with Mountable Curb



Combined Bike Lane & Walkway



Bike Lane with Raised Separation



Separate Raised Cycle Track (Schematic)

Separation Alternatives



Bike Lane with Island Separation



Separate Cycle Track

#297-12

DAVID KOSES, Traffic Council Chair, requesting review and discussion of Traffic Council Policy #2, requests for Residential Handicap Parking Spaces. [09/24/12 @ 10:53 AM]

#298-12

DAVID KOSES, Traffic Council Chair, requesting review and discussion of Traffic Council Policy #3, Prioritization of On-Street Parking and Bicycle lanes. [09/24/12 @ 10:53 AM]

#296-12

DAVID KOSES, Traffic Council Chair, requesting review and discussion of Traffic Council Policy #1, On-Street Parking Guidance. [09/24/12 @ 10:53 AM]

Traffic Council Policy 2: Residential Handicap Parking Spaces

Date Adopted: December 9, 2008

As defined by City ordinance, it is the purpose of the Traffic Council to take action on requests for site-specific changes to parking and traffic regulations. The Traffic Council aims to be fair and consistent in its decisions when similar situations present themselves and, over time, its actions have evolved into some implicit policies. The most frequently observed policies relating to requests for on-street handicap parking spaces are listed below and are to be used as guidelines for the future. Members of Traffic Council hope that this information offers guidance to the public, Board members, and staff as it affects projects or proposals they may consider.

1. HANDICAP PARKING PLACARD

In order to apply for a handicap parking space on a residential street, a household member must have a vehicle with a handicap placard assigned to a resident at that address.

2. GARAGES AND DRIVEWAYS

For residences with garages or driveways, the applicant should be able to demonstrate that entry or exit from a vehicle within the garage or driveway is unavailable or infeasible. For example, the applicant may show that their driveway is too heavily used by others, or is too steep or narrow to allow for entry or exit.

3. ACCESSIBLE ROUTES OF TRAVEL

For residences with garages or driveways, the applicant should be able to demonstrate that an on-street parking space provides for an easier route of travel to access their home. For example, the applicant may show that an on-street parking space is closer to the main living area of their home, avoids stairs or other barriers, or otherwise creates an easier path of travel.

4. COMPETITION FOR ON-STREET PARKING SPACES

It is not in the City's interest to establish and maintain handicap parking spaces in areas with little or no competition for on-street parking. The applicant should be able to demonstrate that they are unable to access the on-street parking space nearest their home on more than an infrequent basis, due to competition for that space.

The process for handling requests for handicap parking spaces in a residential neighborhood is as follows:

- The applicant fills out a Traffic Council Petition form, available in the Clerk's Office.
- The Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities (MCPD), which is composed of persons with disabilities and City staff, reviews the request and forwards a recommendation to the Traffic Council.
- The Traffic Council reviews the request, and considers the recommendation of the MCPD, (1) through (4) above, and any other relevant additional information provided by the applicant or other members of the public. The Traffic Council is composed of staff from the Planning Department, Public Works Department, Police Department, as well as an Alderman and Citizen Representative.
- Traffic Council is authorized to take final action regarding the issuance and removal of handicap parking spaces. There is currently no appeals process.

Other important information:

- All approved handicap parking spaces on public streets in Newton are available to the general public, and must be shared by all vehicles displaying valid handicap placards, on a first-come first-served basis.
- The City of Newton is not legally required to provide an on-street parking space for a person with a disability.
- Handicap parking spaces do not override other existing parking restrictions or citywide policies, are not valid during established times when no parking is allowed on the street, and do not override Newton's winter overnight parking prohibition.
- Section 19-178 of the Revised Ordinances of Newton Massachusetts provides additional detail regarding handicap parking.

Traffic Council Policy 3: Prioritization of On-Street Parking and Bicycle lanes

Date Adopted: XXXXXXXXXXXX XX, 20XX

As defined by City ordinance, it is the purpose of the Traffic Council to take action on requests for site-specific changes to parking and traffic regulations. The Traffic Council aims to be fair and consistent in its decisions when similar situations present themselves and, over time, its actions have evolved into some implicit policies. Members of Traffic Council hope that this information offers guidance to the public, Board members, and staff as it affects projects or proposals they may consider.

BACKGROUND

The *Newton Comprehensive Plan*, adopted by the Newton Board of Aldermen on November 19, 2007, called for reducing reliance on auto driving and supporting a full range of travel modes, including walking, cycling, carpooling and taking transit. The Plan specified that “bicycles are considered an integral part of the transportation mode mix, and the design of the streets and sidewalks includes appropriate facilities for them.”

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), in their *Transportation Advisory Committee Recommendations to Mayor Setti D. Warren November 17, 2011*, subsequently endorsed by the Mayor, calls for the City to adopt a Complete Streets Policy, where all users, not just motorists, must be taken into consideration in the design and redesign of our street network. The TAC recommended that the Department of Public Works, Traffic Council, and the Board of Aldermen support a greatly expanded bicycle infrastructure, with at least 20 miles of bicycle lanes or other specific roadway accommodations to be implemented by 2015. The policy statement, shown below, is intended to act as a reference in those cases where street width does not allow both parking and bicycle lanes.

POLICY STATEMENT

The City of Newton is committed to a Complete Streets Policy, with the goal of improving safety for all users while addressing the needs of all users. Motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians and abutters shall be taken into consideration in the design and redesign of our street network. The City of Newton is also committed to building a bicycle network. Therefore, when considering the removal of on-street parking to construct bicycle lanes, Traffic Council members shall consider factors such as the Newton Bicycle Network Plan, connectivity between key destinations, alternative parking locations, in addition to street widths, volume, safety and other concerns. Each member of Traffic Council shall determine his or her final vote only after careful consideration of the aforementioned Citywide goals and all relevant and site-specific information provided by residents, elected officials and other interested parties.

Traffic Council Policy 1: On-Street Parking Guidance

Date Adopted: April 1, 2008

As defined by City ordinance, it is the purpose of the Traffic Council to take action on requests for site-specific changes to parking and traffic regulations. The Traffic Council aims to be fair and consistent in its decisions when similar situations present themselves and, over time, its actions have evolved into some implicit policies. The most frequently observed policies relating to on-street parking are listed below and are intended to put such practices in print to be used as guidelines for the future. Members of Traffic Council hope that this information offers guidance to the public, Board members, and staff as it affects projects or proposals they may consider.

1. SAFE ACCESS for EMERGENCY VEHICLES

On-street parking must allow adequate space for fire engines and other emergency vehicles to navigate. To support this requirement, it shall be the general practice of Traffic Council to limit parking to one side on those streets with a width of less than 24 feet, unless the demand for on-street parking is consistently low. Unless there are extenuating circumstances, the restricted side shall be the side of the street where fire hydrants are located.

2. INSTITUTIONS

While it is desirable for the City to require institutions such as Newton-Wellesley Hospital, Boston College and Lasell College to provide adequate parking for all of their demand on their own site, nonprofit institutions are protected by the Dover Act, which often allows exceptions to local standards and may create parking spillover onto adjacent streets, including residential streets. The Traffic Council supports collaborative efforts to solve problems and address mutual concerns between the City and such institutions. However, when institutional parking adversely impacts nearby neighborhoods, it shall be the general practice of Traffic Council to establish parking restrictions to allow for adequate use of the street by residents as well as their visitors and contractors. The Traffic Council's general practice has been to employ the least restrictive means available to limit spillover, since residents must also abide by whatever restrictions are placed on the streets in front of their homes.

3. PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Many areas of Newton are fortunate to be located within easy walking distance of MBTA rail and bus service. The City encourages the use of public transportation for all the environmental, social, economic, political and other benefits it can provide. The MBTA provides parking at several Green Line stations. Commuter rail users may park at public parking lots and at long-term metered spaces on the streets in Auburndale, West Newton, and Newtonville. Limited long-term parking is available for Express Bus commuters. Given the availability of long-term parking options, it shall be the general practice of Traffic Council to attempt to protect streets nearest Green Line and Commuter Rail stations from overuse by commuters in search of free all-day parking. In the process, the Traffic Council shall strive to balance the parking needs of residents and their visitors while ensuring safe access for emergency vehicles (see #1 above) while also providing Express Bus commuters with some ability to park on public streets near express bus stops in Newton.

4. SCHOOLS

The Traffic Council shall strive to balance the convenience of parents, residents, and teachers; to maximize safety around schools; and to encourage non-motorized transportation to/from our schools. All of our schools are located in residential neighborhoods and are close enough to most residences so that most elementary school students can walk to school. While the Traffic Council endorses efforts to encourage walking to school, it also recognizes that some children must be driven and shall attempt to provide drop-off and pick-up areas in safe and convenient locations for those who cannot walk to school. Priority locations shall be given to public transportation because it is a more environmentally friendly alternative, however some limited parking around our schools is often necessary for parents who need to enter the school building. On-site parking for teachers is provided at most sites, but is generally inadequate to provide parking for all staff who must drive to school. It shall be the general practice of Traffic Council to ensure adequate (but not unlimited) parking for school staff.

5. OTHER PUBLIC BUILDINGS and PARKS

Parks, City Hall, libraries and other public buildings provide a benefit to all Newton residents, and it shall be the general practice of Traffic Council to help ensure that these facilities are available to all residents. To support this policy, Traffic Council shall ensure that adequate parking is available to access public facilities. However, Traffic Council will strive to strike a balance, which will also provide reasonable opportunity for residents and their contractors and visitors to park near their homes.

6. VILLAGE CENTERS and OTHER AREAS with DEMAND for ON-STREET PARKING, INCLUDING AREAS ABUTTING DOVER-PROTECTED USES

One of the objectives of the City's *Comprehensive Plan* is to foster thriving village centers, with successful businesses in Newton. It is also true that successful businesses exist throughout the City – some without adequate off-street parking that sometimes impacts nearby residential streets. City zoning and land use requirements strive to regulate on-site parking for businesses. In order to contain village center parking and maintain the neighborhood character of nearby street, the Traffic Council shall regulate the number of vehicles permitted to park on nearby residential streets. In doing so, the Traffic Council shall strive to balance the need for some employee and visitor parking, as long as residents and their contractors and visitors have reasonable opportunity for on street parking near their homes.

7. RESIDENT-ONLY PARKING

Through various actions over the years, the Board of Aldermen has supported decisions that favor sharing of our City streets. Simply put, the streets belong to everybody. As such, the Traffic Council generally does not support exclusive resident-only parking on public streets except when all other measures to share parking have failed to provide residents with reasonable use or access to their homes. Additionally, resident-only parking during the daytime hours when many residents are at work elsewhere, has the effect of clearing the streets so nobody can park there, even when the residents wouldn't need to, thus eliminating parking unnecessarily.

8. PERMIT PROGRAMS

Over the years, various permit programs have been discussed. Some remain promising. Parking Benefit Districts are hybrids of resident-only parking programs, but provide a limited number of passes to non-residents of the street to park in front of specific homes during weekdays, thus allowing for better use of these limited resources. Parking passes that would allow passholders to park in metered and/or nonmetered spaces throughout the City have been discussed as a means to free people from having to carry coins, and/or to ensure that parking spaces will be available in various parts of the City. Such options are not yet developed for use, but show promise as future tools for addressing parking problems.

9. PARKING METERS IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS

It has been the practice of the Traffic Council *not* to place parking meters in front of homes in residential districts. Where residences are located in nonresidential zones, the Traffic Council shall consider: whether available parking closest to the activity center has been maximized; the availability of on-site parking for nearby residential uses; how proposed metered curbside parking spaces would best be used; proximity to public transportation; whether parking demand is created by nonresident commuters; and whether metering will further the City's parking and housing goals. In its deliberations about managing parking in such an area, the Traffic Council shall consider whether paid parking by permit or non-metered arrangement will encourage the optimal parking behavior in areas where homes abut commercial areas, thus allowing for good parking management but eliminating unsightly meters.