

CITY OF NEWTON
BOARD OF ALDERMEN
TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

TUESDAY, AUGUST 9, 2011

Present: Ald. Ciccone, James Danila, Transportation Engineer; David Koses, Transportation Planner and Capt. Howard Mintz, Police Department
Also present: Ald. Fuller and Schnipper

TC29-10 ALDERMEN BAKER, FULLER AND SCHNIPPER requesting installation of pedestrian activated warning light at a crosswalk location to be determined on Beacon Street between Hammond Street and Reservoir Avenue, together with suitable illumination, or other enhancements, to facilitate safe pedestrian crossing while maintaining through traffic flow. (Ward 7) [08/26/10 @ 8:53 AM]

ACTION: **HELD 4-0**

NOTE: Jeanne Levesque, Director Government Relations Boston College joined the Council for discussion. Ms. Levesque said that approximately 60% of the design is complete. She requested that this item be held, pending further design decisions by Boston College's consultants. The proposed signal would be located on Beacon Street near Reservoir Avenue, and paid for by Boston College as it primarily benefits their students. Three options were presented.

First Option – Flashing Yellow Beacon to be located near a wheelchair ramp where the driver would see a pedestrian in the crosswalk. This beacon does not physically enhance the crosswalk. Mr. Danila said he would like to receive higher compliance rates on flashing yellow beacons, they are an improvement over a crosswalk but many complaints are received because vehicles are not stopping, giving pedestrians a false sense of security. This is the least expensive option. Second Option – Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) illuminates a flashing amber strobe light when a pedestrian is in the crosswalk. RFFB enhances the crosswalk more than the flashing yellow beacon. This option does not require drivers to stop. Mr. Danila said this is a very effective device.

Third Option - HAWK Signal remains dark for traffic unless a pedestrian activates the push-button. When a pedestrian presses the button, approaching drivers will see a flashing yellow signal for a few seconds. The flashing yellow is followed by a solid yellow signal, indicating that motorists should reduce speed and be prepared to stop. The yellow signal is followed by a solid red signal, requiring motorists to stop. The solid red signal is followed by double flashing red signals. The signal will then go dark until activated again by a pedestrian. This is the most expensive option mainly due to the installation of the mast arm.

Construction of a 4' x 6' bump out was discussed. Mr. Danila said that the main advantage of a bump out is to allow motorists to better see pedestrians. ADA standards would also be met. Ald. Fuller asked Howard Muise, Senior Project Manager from VHB (Boston College consultant on this project) if pedestrian counts have been complete. Mr. Muise stated that two counts were performed last October, and that vehicle volumes meet necessary warrants for the options

discussed. Ald. Fuller then asked whether nearby homeowners would be bothered by these types of lights and who would make the final decision on an option. Mr. Koses said Traffic Council would discuss the options and is responsible for approving the beacon, subject to the appeal process. Ald. Fuller asked about maintenance and costs. Mr. Danila replied that the DPW would be responsible for ongoing maintenance. Ald. Schnipper asked when Beacon Street was last paved. Mr. Danila said he would inquire with the Engineering Department.

Mr. Danila made the motion to hold as requested. Council members agreed 4-0. Mr. Koses said this item would be discussed in the winter with construction anticipated to begin in 2012.

TC26-11 ALD. RICE, requesting a “Do Not Enter” Sign at the intersection of Beethoven Avenue and Beacon Street on School Days during the hours of 8:30 am to 9:30 am and 2:30 pm to 3:30 pm. (Ward 5) [05/11/11 @ 10:31 AM]
On 7/28/11 APPROVE TRIAL OF THE FOLLOWING: Do Not Enter Beethoven Road from Beacon Street and from Evelyn Road, 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM and 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM, School Days (4-1, Danila opposed).

ACTION: Motion to modify the trial to the following: Do Not Enter, Beethoven Road from Beacon Street and from Evelyn Road, 8:00 AM to 9:00 AM and 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM, School Days, Excluding Buses failed to carry 1-3 (Koses in favor, Ciccone, Danila and Mintz voting opposed). Trial approved on 7/28/11 to move forward.

NOTE: Mr. Koses said the afternoon school bus currently travels on a tight schedule. The bus travels to Zervas School via Beacon Street and Beethoven Road to the school parking lot. At the July Traffic Council meeting, a suggestion was made proposing the school bus to use Beacon Street and turn directly into school parking lot. Mr. Koses said he discussed this with Regina Moody, Transportation Director, who expressed to him she was concerned with this proposal because the bus would be entering the lot at the same time that cars are arriving. Another concern is that the bus would be facing the wrong way on the street making boarding unsafe.

Mr. Koses suggested modifying the original trial to exclude school buses.

Mr. Danila and Ald. Ciccone were concerned that an additional line of text on the signs would be too confusing and too wordy for the driver. Captain Mintz said that enforcement would be an issue. Mr. Koses made the motion to modify the trial to include excluding buses, but his motion failed to carry 1-3, Koses in favor, Ciccone, Danila and Mintz opposed.

TC19-11 PLANNING DEPARTMENT, requesting a discussion related to changes to the TIGER Permit Parking Program and the public way section of Elm Road. (Ward 2) [04/28/11 @ 4:26 PM]

HELD 4-0 on 05/26/11

ACTION: NO ACTION NECESSARY 4-0

NOTE: Mr. Koses suggested and made a motion for no action necessary. Council members agreed 4-0.

HP3-10 DAVID KOSES on behalf of the Jackson Homestead, requesting a handicap parking space on Jackson Road in the vicinity of the Jackson Homestead. (Ward 1) [09/27/10 @ 11:15 AM]
(No position taken by the Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities On 11/08/10, the MCPD Committee voted 7-0-0 to recommend that the request for handicap parking be revisited when the renovations to improve accessibility planned for Jackson Homestead/Newton History Museum have been completed).

ACTION: NO ACTION NECESSARY 4-0

NOTE: Mr. Koses suggested and made a motion for no action necessary. Council members agreed 4-0.

TC33-10 DAVID KOSES on behalf of the Jackson Homestead, requesting changes to reduce commuter parking on the south side of Washington Street, in the proximity of the Jackson Homestead. (Ward 1) [09/27/10 @ 11:15 AM]

ACTION: NO ACTION NECESSARY 4-0

NOTE: Mr. Koses suggested and made a motion for no action necessary. Council members agreed 4-0.

DISCUSSION ITEM:

Creation of a Traffic Council Policy limiting stationary radar devices to areas within a defined distance of school zones.

NOTE: Mr. Koses said that the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) has recommended Traffic Council create different and additional policies to guide them in their decisions, and suggested that Traffic Council create a policy regarding stationary radar devices and their effectiveness. Mr. Koses asked Traffic Council members for their suggestions on how a policy should be drafted and where stationary radar devices should be considered.

Mr. Danila said that stationary radar signs are most effective at the beginning of school speed zones. The Public Works Department opinion is to limit installing stationary radar signs to school zones because the impact of stationary radar signs may last only for a short time. Mr. Koses said that he would draft a policy with Mr. Danila and present it at an upcoming Traffic Council meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

David Koses, Traffic Council Chair