

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, JANUARY 21, 2010

Present: Jim Danila (Transportation Engineer), Danielle Delaney (Clerk), David Koses (Transportation Planner), Jim Norcross (Police), Jerome Grafe (Resident Member) and Jay Harney (Alderman)

Also present: Ald. Fuller, Ciccone and Linsky

TC27-09      CHARLES MUELLER, 22 Chestnut Hill Road, Chestnut Hill requesting (1) First 50 yards on Gate House Road southwards from Beacon Street “No Parking” (2) Chestnut Hill Terrace “1 hour parking from 8:00 am to 5:30 pm excluding Sundays and Holidays” and “No Parking from 5:30 pm to 10:00 pm”. (Ward 7)  
**HELD 5-0 on 10/22/09 for a 60-day trial**

**ACTION:**      *Approve as Amended (5-0). Tow-away zone on Gate House Road, both sides, from Beacon Street to Chestnut Hill Terrace. No parking on Chestnut Hill Terrace, north side, entire length. No parking from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. on Chestnut Hill Terrace, south side, entire length.*

**NOTE:**      Mr. Mueller, 22 Chestnut Hill Road, said the trial has greatly improved the parking conditions on Gate House Road and Chestnut Hill Terrace. He thanked Traffic Council for their effort on these new parking restrictions and he believes the neighbors are overall very pleased with the reduction of parking in their neighborhood.

Mr. Danila reviewed with Council members the parking regulations prior to the trial. He said prior to the trial parked vehicles caused problems for trash pickup and drivers entering and exiting their driveway because Gate House Road is 23' wide. Mr. Danila said on his site visits, he noted that spaces were 85% to 100% occupied. Most of the cars had out of state plates, assumed to be Boston College students. He said prior to the Traffic Council meeting held on October 22, 2009 Chief Cummings put a parking ban on Chestnut Hill Terrace from 8:00am to 11:00 am and 8:00 pm to 10:00 pm. On October 22, 2009, Traffic Council voted on a 60-day trial of no parking, Chestnut Hill Terrace, north side, and all days. No parking, Chestnut Hill Terrace, south side, 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., all days. No parking, Gate House Road, both sides, between Chestnut Hill Terrace and Beacon Street, all days.

Nancy Mueller, 22 Chestnut Hill Road, said it is unanimous the Gate House Road parking issues have been resolved because of law enforcement and cars being ticketed, it took approximately ten days for Boston College students to realize the parking restriction. She asked that the trial become permanent on Gate House Road. Karin Alper, Chestnut Hill Terrace feels the new parking restrictions have resolved their parking issues. She believes some neighbors were first concerned about guests being ticketed. Ald. Fueller said she is grateful of the trial on Gate House Road and is hopeful it will be made permanent.

Mr. Koses asked if tow zones are too threatening or would they would benefit this area. Mr. Danila said there was a discussion regarding tow zones to be installed in this area. Boston College football parking signs becomes a cost to the City because Public Works Department places stickers each year on the signs indicating a tow zone. Mr. Danila said if the City were to make no parking zones to no parking/tow zones it would allow the City to remove the Boston College parking signs and would be beneficial to the City on cost savings.

Ms. Mueller said she recalls a time when no parking signs were to be installed on Gate House Road and if the signs were ignored then no parking/tow zones would be installed. She said the current signs are working. Mr. Mueller said the consequences and expenses would be a lot stronger if tow zones are installed.

Sgt. Norcross suggested only Gate House Road be considered for no parking/tow zone signs.

Mr. Danila made the motion to make the trial permanent as amended. The motion passed 5-0.

TC35-09      ALD. CICCONE AND LENNON on behalf of Steven Groleau, 45 Jefferson Street, Newton requesting a thorough discussion regarding parking restrictions and potential one-way traffic flow for Jefferson Street, Newton Corner. (Ward 1)  
**HELD 5-0 on 11/19/09 for a 60-day trial**

**ACTION:**      *Hold (5-0). Continue 60-day trial established on 11/19/09 for Tow-away zones established by the Engineering Division to allow access in and out of residents' driveways. Add an additional Tow-away zone between the driveways of 58 and 62 Jefferson Street.*

**NOTE:**      Mr. Koses said a resident expressed their desire to make this area resident parking only. Traffic Council has been advised in order for a resident parking program to be approved it would have to be docketed by a resident of the street and 50% or more of the residents would have to sign the petition.

Mr. Danila reviewed with Council members the parking restrictions prior to the trial. He said currently on the east side of the street there is a one-hour parking limit from 7 am to 10 pm Monday through Saturday. The west side of Jefferson Street has a permanent no parking area. Mr. Danila said Jefferson Street is only 18 ½' wide. During his twenty-five site visits the average occupancy was six to ten vehicles, the original capacity prior to November's Traffic Council meeting was seventeen spaces. Because of adding trial tow zones, two spaces have been eliminated allowing room for residents to enter and exit their driveways. Signs have also been added between driveways indicating no parking zones.

Alison Hayes, 58 Jefferson Street, said Jefferson Street never had parking issues until the Café' opened. She feels the trial has not helped, perhaps only discouraging a few drivers. Tow zone signs have been ignored; drivers are still parking in marked no parking zones and it is still difficult to enter and exit her driveway. Mr. Groleau, 45 Jefferson Street, agreed parking was never an issue until the Café' opened and now he can not enter or exit his driveway. He said the trial has allowed a tow zone across the street from his driveway but if there is snow, he still can not enter into his driveway. He asked that no cars be allowed to park in the space after the tow zone. Mrs. Millburne, 19 Jefferson Street, said she is not directly affected by the parking

situation. She said she would be interested in making Jefferson Street a one-way.

Mr. Danila said he is not in favor of changing the regulations to make Jefferson Street a one-way. The TPR currently states Jefferson Street is a one-way street from Centre to Williams Streets and one section of Jefferson Street is a two-way street. He recommends to amend the TPR to match what is currently posted on Jefferson Street. Mr. Koses said residents now travel the wrong way on the part of the street that is one-way. If residents are caught they can be ticketed and if there is an accident, they could be found at fault. Mr. Danila said he can not support two-way traffic with parking on one side of the street that is only 18 1/2' wide.

Ald. Ciccone made two suggestions to the Council. 1) in the location where the no parking signs exist could they be changed to read a tow zone and 2) try tow zone signs for a 60-day trial. If this does not work then perhaps residents could petition for a resident parking program. Mr. Koses and Sgt. Norcross agreed changing the signs to a tow zone perhaps would provide some relief. Mr. Grafe suggested tow zones be enforced. Ald. Harney asked if anyone has been towed from the street.

Sgt. Norcross made the motion to hold this item in order to continue the trial, replacing no parking zones with tow zones and the extension of extending the existing trial. The motion passed 5-0.

TC37 -09      DEBORAH MENDOLSOHN, 20 Elizabeth Circle, West Newton, requesting a discussion regarding pedestrian safety at the intersection of Commonwealth Avenue and Exeter Street. (Ward 3)

**ACTION:**      *No Action Necessary (4-1, Grafe). DPW will add additional warning signage and will repaint the crosswalk in the spring.*

**NOTE:**      Al Mendolsohn, 20 Elizabeth Circle, said his wife docketed this item because it is very difficult to cross Commonwealth Avenue walking to the Pierce School. He said drivers speed, it is an unsafe crossing and is becoming impossible to walk the children to school. He said neighbors have received different suggestions to avoid crossing Commonwealth Avenue. One suggestion made was to allow the children to ride to school on the bus but they feel it is an unreasonable request since the school is a very short distance away. He made the following suggestions to Traffic Council members for their consideration: 1) crossing guard, 2) blinking light, 3) permanent notification sign or 4) flashing sign.

Mr. Danila said the crosswalk is faded at this time. The stopping site distance is adequate and meets the guidelines for seeing a pedestrian in the crosswalk. If drivers are not yielding it is not because they do not have enough time to stop, he assumes they are not paying attention. Mr. Danila said data received from the Registry of Motor Vehicles and the Newton Police Department in the past five years shows there has been no pedestrian accidents at this location.

A resident of Exeter Street agreed with Mr. Mendolsohn feeling this location is a tragedy waiting to happen. Drivers speed and do not notice the crosswalk. She understands in the past there was a crossing guard at this location and said something has to be done. Another resident said she is afraid to cause an accident by using the crosswalk. Jeff Herman, Exeter Street is

concerned about the safety of the children and adults on this stretch of Commonwealth Avenue. He said that in the past it was originally suggested to install a traffic signal at this location. He asked if law enforcement was cut back on Commonwealth Avenue. Sgt. Norcross assured him it has not. He said the Police Department continues to do directed patrols in this area on a regular basis a few times per week and the Police Department pays a lot of attention to this area. Sgt. Norcross said he can not promise the neighbors but will schedule directed patrols when children are on their way to school.

A resident asked what is City's policy and how do they determine what is necessary at crosswalk locations. Mr. Danila said the City has guidelines that are based on a combination of both pedestrian crossing and vehicle traffic volumes. Measures to go beyond a crosswalk Traffic Council who does not have any set guidelines would decide where a flashing warning beacon would be installed at crosswalks. Mr. Koses said five pedestrian warning lights have been approved in the City where there are high volumes of pedestrian traffic. These warning lights were part of a pilot program and each cost approximately \$30,000 to \$40,000.

A resident asked if signs could be placed before crosswalks to bring drivers attention they were approaching one. Mr. Danila said the federal guideline states that signs should be placed at the crosswalk. He said the Department Public Works would re-paint the crosswalk in the spring and add supplemental signage of a down arrow to warning signs to show it is at a crosswalk.

Sgt. Norcross said it is Chief Cummings decision where a crossing guard is placed. Ald. Harney agreed this is an ongoing problem on Commonwealth Avenue. He suggested the neighborhood contact Safe Routes to School Committee, Ward 3 Aldermen and the School Committee requesting a crossing guard at this location. Sgt. Norcross said the Police Department routinely reviews crossing guard locations and frowns upon parents using the flag system because of public safety.

Mr. Grafe suggested a few options. Pavement deflection, mid point island, bumping out the intersection some sort of physical solution Traffic Council could consider and perhaps approve. He asked Mr. Danila for the average speed on the road and pedestrian counts in the area. He understood a school zone is not appropriate at this location. He asked if residents can place and remove orange cans. Mr. Danila said residents could not place or remove the orange cans due to liability issues in the City and it is against City ordinance. Mr. Danila said it is department policy to remove the orange cans prior to the first snowfall and they are not placed back until the spring. Mr. Grafe said he would favor a letter from Traffic Council or the Safe Routes to School Committee to the Police Department requesting a crossing guard.

Mr. Danila made the motion for no action necessary. The Council voted in favor 4-1, Grafe opposed.

TC36-09      ALD. JOHNSON, ALBRIGHT AND LINSKY seeking a discussion with the Traffic Council regarding the speeding issues in the Cabot Street Corridor.  
(Wards 1 and 2)

**ACTION:**      *No Action Necessary (5-0).*

**NOTE:** Ald. Linsky said there are a few areas near the Cabot Elementary School where speeding is a problem. One area of concern is heading west bound towards the school where there is a blind spot and drivers tend to pickup speed from the grade in the street. The second area of concern is heading west bound past the school towards Walnut intersecting with Harvard Streets at the 4-way stop sign. He said there has been numerous accidents in the area when vehicles proceed through the stop sign.

Ald. Linsky said residents have asked for additional stop signs to be installed on Cabot Street. He said he has asked the Traffic Engineer if streets could be painted indicating they are approaching a stop sign. The Traffic Engineer said they typically do not do this. Ald. Linsky asked if there was perhaps a simple and inexpensive resolution to this problem to enhance the 4-way stop sign.

Mr. Danila said traffic data showed Cabot Street is classified as a collector road, speed limits vary from 20 mph to 30 mph. Traveling west of Langdon Street there are approximately 3,900 vehicles per day, the mean speed 27 mph, 85% speed is 33 mph. Over the past five years crash data in this area was average statewide for similar road types. He said some of the reasons crashes are occurring at the 4-way stop sign is because the stop sign is unexpected. This area does not meet the state warrants for a 4-way stop sign. In the future, the City will not install 4-way stop signs unless they are warranted. Stop signs do not help; in fact, they increase speeds, they do not increase safety and have high operating costs causing higher pollution.

Thomas Chin, 171 Cabot Street, said he could always remember Cabot Street having speeding problems. He recognizes the various speed limits but thought at one time Cabot Street was posted 20 mph. He has made several observations and asked if police with radar could be stationed in the area to help enforce speeding drivers, which he feels would help drivers slow down. He said the other problem is the lack of the visible centerline. The centerline has worn off and he would like to have it repainted. Mr. Danila said the centerline has not been repainted because of the volumes on the street falling below the guidelines.

A resident asked if Cabot Street could be made a 20 mph zone between Centre and Harvard Streets with the strong stretch of visibility drivers tend to speed. Mr. Koses said the City would have to apply to the state for this request. Mr. Danila said the state would be more apt to raise the speed.

Sgt. Norcross said the Police Department monitors the speed of vehicles in this location and will continue to do. The Police Department has issued eighty speeding tickets this year.

Sgt. Norcross made the motion for no action necessary. The Council voted in favor 5-0.

TC43-09 ALD. LINSKY requesting additional school zones around the Cabot Elementary School. (Ward 2)

**ACTION:** *Denial (5-0). DPW will add a crosswalk across Bridges Avenue at Cabot Street and repaint the mid-block crosswalk on Parkview Avenue in the spring.*

**NOTE:** Ald. Linsky said the City created a one-way route around the Cabot School. He feels this has been successful and asked if more markings could be made to signalize it is a one-way route.

Ald. Linsky, Traffic Engineer and the Cabot School Principal made a site visit to this area. It was suggested to create the Cabot Elementary School a school zone because there is significant pedestrian traffic. Children have to cross Bridges Avenue to get to school.

Mr. Danila said the state has minimum requirements for the establishment of school zones that the City must meet. School zones can only be in area that meets the following criteria: School property abuts the street, school children must have direct access to the street from school property, zone must contain marked crosswalks and the school must involve one or more grades below Grade 9. The state also has minimum requirements when a school zone is not warranted which meet the following criteria: when children are not required to cross the street on foot within the proposed zone area and sidewalks are provided, where abutting school property is fenced and where the crosswalk has been signalized except in the case where investigation shows that there is no conflict between the signal indication and the school zone speed limit sign. Mr. Danila said because there is no crosswalk on Bridges Avenue, it is not eligible to be part of a school zone. Data collected on Parkview Avenue shows it is classified as a local road, contains a marked crosswalk, approximately 630 vehicles travel on Parkview Avenue per day, speed limit is 30 mph, average speed is 18 mph and 85% speed is only 30 mph.

Ald. Linsky said the crosswalk was to be repainted before school opening of September 2009.

Marian Burke, 61 Bridges Avenue, said she has noticed a significant difference in the traffic flow since it has been created a one-way route. She said it continues to be a problem with vehicles coming from Bridges Avenue to Parkview Avenue to drop children off. The vehicles stop early and cars do not pull to the first spot. She asked if anything could be done to make drivers pull up to the first spot. Mr. Koses suggested that she contact the Safe Routes to School Committee. She has also observed people driving the wrong way on Bridges Avenue. Ald. Linsky said he has asked the Traffic Engineer to make the sign more visible.

Mr. Koses made the motion for denial. The Council voted in favor 5-0.

TC38-09 JANET WERTHEIMER, 11 Manitoba Road, Waban requesting a discussion regarding parking restrictions on Manitoba Road. (Ward 5)

**ACTION:** *Hold (5-0). Establish a 60-day trial. No parking from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. on Manitoba Road, west side.*

**NOTE:** Ms. Wertheimer, 11 Manitoba Road, said Manitoba Road is very close to Angier Elementary School and the Waban T stop. She said the goal of this item is not to inhibit school teachers from parking on Manitoba Road but the street is being parked up end to end even during the summer months. It appears commuters are parking there. Ms. Wertheimer is requesting a one hour restriction be implemented allowing school employees to park during school hours but it would inhibit commuters. She asked that a no parking sign be installed from the fire hydrant to the corner.

Mr. Danila said there is no parking on the east side and there are various restrictions on surrounding roads. Manitoba Road is 24' wide.

Mr. Danila asked Sgt. Norcross if a parking restriction from 3:30 pm to 4:30 pm could be enforced. Sgt. Norcross said it would be difficult to enforce and would not be the ideal time because the Traffic Control Officers are at their school crossing posts during this time.

Alberta Richmond, 8 Manitoba Road, said she agrees with Ms. Wertheimer that a no parking sign should be installed from the fire hydrant to the corner. She asked if permit parking is available or no day parking available. Mr. Koses said the City does not have a permit parking program available other than the Tiger Permit at Newton North High School. Steve Richmond, 8 Manitoba Road, also agrees with Ms. Wertheimer that some restrictions are necessary on Manitoba Road. He said he recalls when the signs were first installed they would limit to a 2-hour parking because cars can not pass parked vehicles.

Mr. Danila said he will revisit the site and he is administratively allowed to post a sign no parking 50' from Beacon Street.

Mr. Danila said that at the end of the trial the discrepancy in the TPR would have to be fixed to match what is posted. Currently the TPR discrepancy is that the signs posted read 'No Parking on School Days.' TPR-176 states prohibited, all days, east side, entire length. Mr. Koses said the No Parking on School Days is an usual sign because it can not be assumed every motorist knows what days are school days. A resident said it has had an effect. Sgt. Norcross said if the No Parking on School Days sign and the TPR were the same, it could be enforced. Mr. Koses asked if a motorist who may not know what days could challenge it are school days. Sgt. Norcross answered he believes so.

Mr. Danila asked the residents if they would prefer to have no parking permanently on the east side of Manitoba Road. Two residents said yes, they would prefer this because if you have parking on both sides of the street at anytime of the day you would not be able to enter or exit the street. Mr. Danila asked if cars are parking there on no school days. A resident answered no, she said on non school days there is no one on the street. .

Sgt. Norcross recommended a 60-day trial from 3:30 to 4:30 pm on the west side of Manitoba Road, Monday through Friday. The Council voted in favor 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Danila, Traffic Council Chair