

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2010

Present: Jim Danila (Transportation Engineer), Sgt. James Norcross (Newton Police Department), David Koses (Transportation Planner) and Jerome Grafe (Citizen Representative)

Absent: Ald. Ciccone

Also Present: Ald. Linsky

TC25-10      DAVID KOSES requesting reconsideration of the pedestrian beacon, previously approved for installation at the intersection of Harvard and Washington Streets. (Ward 2) [06/25/10 @ 3:24 PM]

**ACTION:**      **NO ACTION NECESSARY 4-0**

**NOTE:**      Mr. Danila provided council members with the history of this item. He said in April 2008 Traffic Council recommended approval of a memo to the Mayor's office to request funding from parking meter receipts for a Pedestrian Warning Beacon at Washington and Harvard Streets and three other locations. These locations were also approved by the Public Facilities Committee, Finance Committee and the Board of Aldermen in the fall 2008. Therefore, an appropriation of \$100,000 was approved to install five pedestrian beacons in the City. Mr. Koses said he is concerned regarding a pedestrian beacon at this location. The Carroll School for the Blind expressing similar concerns also contacted him.

Mr. Danila said currently, four locations in the City use the existing warning beacons. All use push-button detection and standard amber warning beacons. The proposed beacon will have two mast arms, microwave detection and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB). The RRFB study was performed in St. Petersburg, Florida and proved the following:

- Signage and markings: 0-8% compliance.
- Side-mounted standard beacons: 11% compliance.
- Overhead standard beacons: 16% compliance. Two national studies: 31-50% compliance.
- RRFB: 82% compliance. "We always were able to induce a safe gap to cross the roadway stopping oncoming traffic in both directions during the operational cycle."
- Similar results were found in Miami, FL; Washington, DC; Mundelein, IL and Los Cruces, NM.

Two Pedestrian Crossing Alternatives:

Full Traffic Signal (green-yellow-red) *must* meet MUTCD warrants. In June, the Department of Public Works received a memo from the City's Law Department informing them that the City has no authority to establish stop signs or any other traffic control device unless they conform to the requirements of the MUTCD.

Hybrid Pedestrian Signal *should* meet MUTCD warrants, *should* be placed at least 100' from intersections, *should* be considered if gaps in traffic are not adequate to permit pedestrians to cross, or if the speed for vehicles approaching on the major street is too high to permit pedestrians to cross. The guidelines require at least twenty crossing pedestrians per hour. Mr. Danila said his recent traffic counts proved eighteen pedestrians per hour.

Mr. Danila opened the discussion for public comment.

Heather Platt, Carroll Center for the Blind, said she is concerned about pedestrian beacons being installed where there are high traffic volumes and wide streets because pedestrian beacons give a false sense of security to cross a street. She would prefer a hybrid pedestrian signal be installed, believing it is the safest option. She asked that audible tones never be installed where pedestrian beacons are installed.

There was some discussion regarding MBTA bus stops near traffic signals. It was suggested, they be moved to the far side of intersections.

Ald. Linsky asked if the pedestrian beacon proves it cannot work at this location due to a false sense of security, feedback, etc. could it be easily converted to become a hybrid pedestrian signal. Mr. Danila answered yes, if it met the warrants because the mast arms would already be installed. Ald. Linsky said that perhaps he would docket an item allowing residents the opportunity to provide feedback or perhaps Traffic Council could docket a discussion item allowing the same. Mr. Danila said the pedestrian beacon could be operable in late November 2010.

Mr. Grafe said he would also like a bump out on the north side of Washington Street, directed patrols and data on the effectiveness with the installation of this pedestrian beacon.

Sgt. Norcross made the motion for no action necessary. Council members agreed 4-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Danila, Traffic Council Chair

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## Traffic Council

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City Hall  
Room 202  
Thursday, September 16, 2010  
4:00 p.m.

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## TC25-10

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Requesting reconsideration of the  
pedestrian beacon, previously approved  
for installation at the intersection of  
Harvard and Washington Streets  
(Ward 2)

## History

- TC29-08:
  - 4/17/08: Traffic Council recommends approval of a memo to the Mayor's office to request funding from parking meter receipts for Pedestrian Warning Beacon at Washington/Harvard and three other locations.
- #319-08:
  - 9/3/08: Approved by Public Facilities Committee.
  - 9/22/08: Approved by Finance Committee.
  - 10/6/08: Approved by Board of Aldermen.

## Existing Warning Beacons

- Locations:
  - Langley Road/Langley Path
  - Waverly Avenue/Franklin Street (mast arm)
  - Waverly Avenue/Arlington Street
  - Crafts Street/Linwood Avenue
- All use push-button detection.
- All use standard amber warning beacons.

## Proposed Beacon

- 2 Mast Arms
- Microwave Detection
- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB)



## RRFB Study

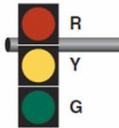
- St. Petersburg, Florida
  - Many multi-lane roads.
  - <2% motorist yielding compliance rate city-wide.
  - 14,000-20,000 vpd
  - Average Speeds > 45 mph
- Tested 100 locations with just signage + new pavement markings.
- Upgraded 19 locations with signage + RRFBs.
  - 3 were upgraded first to standard beacons.
- 228 Crossing Studies performed.
  - 15,960 total crossings.

## RRFB Study Results

- Just signage + markings: 0-8% compliance.
- Side-mounted standard beacons: 11% compliance.
- Overhead standard beacons: 16% compliance.
  - 2 national studies: 31-50% compliance.
- RRFB: 82% compliance.
  - We always were able to induce a safe gap to cross the roadway stopping oncoming traffic in both directions during the operational cycle.+
- Similar results found in Miami, FL, Washington, DC, Mundelein, IL, and Los Cruces, NM.

## Pedestrian Crossing Alternatives

- Full Traffic Signal (green-yellow-red).
  - Must meet MUTCD warrants.
- 6/2/10 Memo from Law Dept. to DPW:
  - The City has no authority to establish stop signs or any other traffic control device unless they conform to the requirements of the MUTCD.



# Pedestrian Crossing Alternatives

- Hybrid Pedestrian Signal
  - Should meet MUTCD warrants.
  - Should be placed at least 100qfrom intersections.
  - Should be considered if gaps in traffic are not adequate to permit pedestrians to cross, or if the speed for vehicles approaching on the major street is too high to permit pedestrians to cross.
  - Guidelines: at least 20 crossing pedestrians per hour

