

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2006

Present: Candace Havens (Chair), David Koses (Planning), Sgt. Norcross (Police), Christine Samuelson (Aldermanic Representative), Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer)

Aldermen present: Pres. Baker, Johnson, Linsky, Mansfield and Vance

#218-06 Duplicate petition

ACTION: NAN

NOTE: This petition was docketed also as #146-06

#216-05 ALD. LAPPI N requesting a discussion of solutions to the public safety issues related to the intersection of DEDHAM and NAHANTON STREETS. (Ward 8)
HELD 12/15/05

ACTION: NAN (5-0)

NOTE: Clint Schuckel summarized the previous Traffic Council review, noting it included consideration of a several ways to improve this intersection such as by replacing or improving the signal and reconfiguring the intersection. The light is always green for northbound traffic on Dedham Street. There are two signs on southbound Dedham Street that identify a bypass and ask people not to block the intersection. The crash history reflects an average of 2.5 accidents/year and does not justify reconfiguring the intersection. He also felt the existing phasing is optimal. However, the controller cabinet for the signal is 20 years old and could benefit from upgrading to restore vehicle detection on all approaches, adjust timing to avoid queue “spillback,” restore signal coordination with the Brookline/Dedham intersection, and reactivate the sensor at Fire Station #7 (to suspend traffic when they respond to emergencies). He also felt adding a STOP line on the southbound Dedham Street approach would help.

Clint Schuckel recently completed a priority ranking system based on need for improving signals, which he previewed for the Traffic Council and which will be presented the Public Safety and Transportation Committee this year along with rough cost estimates. He said there are 92 traffic signals in the city which have an average life of 20-25 years; 4-5 per year should be upgraded to ensure proper operation.

The Traffic Council discussed improvements such as painting “Keep Clear” on the pavement to maintain an opening for bypass traffic and adding “Yield” signs to establish turning priorities as short-term solutions that could add value now.

Mildred Hutchinson noted that pedestrian access at this intersection is good.

The Traffic Council supported additional signs and street painting while longer term solutions are sought and voted (5-0) to take no action this petition.

#335-05

ALD. JOHNSON requesting a study of the impact of visitors, in cars and bikes, to the Charles River walk-on the neighboring streets of Albemarle Road and Bemis Street and recommendations for relief and safety for residents. Ward 2

ACTION:

HOLD UNTIL JUNE 2006

NOTE:

Ald. Johnson introduced the petition by describing the recent extension of the Charles River walk into Newton. She said bicyclists that speed off the trail onto Albemarle Road are a danger to the neighborhood. She pointed out that Albemarle is a narrow street and when cars park on the street, there is no room to turn around in a car. Sometimes parked cars block driveways. She cited additional problems with dog walkers on the trail. In general, she expressed concerns for the safety of visitors and residents. She suggested encouraging parking on Nevada Street by restricting the use of Albermarle Road to residents only during high demand times.

Ald. Linsky feels that the problems may increase over time, as the bridge over the brook is new and the weather has not been good recently.

Clint Schuckel noted that the weather has been rainy and his observations were made during bad weather and on weekdays, so may not reflect the worst case conditions. During those times, he observed little use of the trail or demand for parking on the neighboring streets. He recommended no action be taken on this item at this time.

Julie Mason, resident of Albemarle Road said that people either back out of the street or turn around in her driveway when they reach the dead end which endangers her children and is disruptive to their enjoyment of the neighborhood. She also has had a hard time getting out of her driveway when cars block it or park directly in front of it. She noted it is busier on the weekends.

Carl Kelly, 16 Albemarle Road said traffic clogs the end of the street. Posts on his property constrain his movements and, if cars park at the end of his driveway, he can't back out. He also noted there have been some break-ins in the neighborhood lately and that cars speed down the street.

David Koses felt the bridge is an attractive amenity and had not observed much activity in the area. Yet, the street is narrow and he felt restricting parking to one side would make it safer. He mentioned that the problems on any one of the adjacent streets would be less if all neighboring streets were to share the load.

Ald. Samuelson recalled a similar situation at Weeks Junior High School and on Blithedale Street in which entrance to the streets was restricted to residents, which might be a possible remedy here. She was interested in considering precedents in other areas.

Candace Havens agreed that backing out of the street was not appropriate and that parking on Nevada would be better. She also had not witnessed much traffic or parked cars on Albemarle or adjacent streets, probably due to bad weather. However, she felt designated parking spaces at the end of Wyoming Street improved the situation on that street. In order to be able to observe the full impact of the problems on weekends and/or in better weather, she supported holding the item.

The Traffic Council voted (3-2) to hold this petition until June 2006.

#99-06

JOHN REICHARD, 63 Monadnock Road, Chestnut Hill requesting that parking be restricted to one hour between 7 am and 1 pm, including Saturdays and Sundays, on both sides of Monadnock Road between Wachusett and Hammondswood Roads. (Ward 7)

ACTION:

APPROVE 60-DAY TRIAL (4-1-1)

NOTE:

Resident John Reichard, said that Boston College students park from May through November on this narrow street. Residents must back out of their driveways carefully. Some students park long-term on the streets and he feels this fails to serve the neighborhood. He had observed that the college previously did not permit students to bring a car to school if they did not obtain a campus parking permit, but enforcement of this policy has lapsed. He described a previous fire emergency on Patriots Day during the Marathon, when a fire truck was unable to enter the street. He considered the street to be a cut-through, although traffic is generally light. He advocated for a restriction to eliminate the possibility that anyone could leave their cars for several days at a time.

Ald. Vance pointed out that the November to April overnight restriction should address overnight parking and the situation may need more enforcement. Ald. Baker concurred that this is a big problem for local residents and urged the Traffic Council to consider a restriction consistent with that on the easterly end of Monadnock, which has been effective in discouraging long-term parkers.

Clint Schuckel said the street is 23.5 feet wide. The street is typically filled on one side. He verified that Boston College now charges for on-campus parking permits. He observed between 15-17 parked cars on three occasions, many with out-of-state- plates and many cars with BC decals on them. He expressed concern that restriction this street would push the problem up the street. He recommended a parking ban for two hours in the morning because it is a solution that is easier to

enforce with limited resources. He doesn't feel the hour time limit is as easily enforced. Sgt. Norcross concurred.

Rona Nigh, 46 Monadnock would not like to see a parking ban during evening hours, since she sees patients until 7:30 at night at times. She preferred a one-hour parking restriction. In addition to the parking issues, parkers leave trash behind and access is also difficult for other large vehicles, such as snow plows and garbage trucks.

Rick Houseman, resident at the corner of Wauchusett and Monadnock supports a restriction on both sides of the street with enforcement, including towing. In answer to a question from Betsy Pfau, 80 Monadnock, Sgt. Norcross said the City will tow cars with five or more unpaid parking violations.

Sgt. Norcross pointed out the 7-9 am restrictions are hard to enforce because the enforcement staff has crossing guard duty during those hours.

David Koses argued for consistency with existing regulations. He also had concerns about leaving one side unrestricted, since cars could then park across from one another and block access.

Candace Havens agreed that a restriction is needed for safety reasons and felt either a time limit restriction or a time of day restriction could be effective deterrents. She asked the Council to consider whether to follow the existing precedent for consistency or to establish new mandates based on policies that best use resources and meet city-wide parking management objectives. She also noted a letter from Ald. Schnipper supporting of restrictions on Monadnock to improve public safety and control student parking in this area.

Ald. Baker felt that the adjacent one-hour restriction has proven itself as effective and urged the Traffic Council to consider a trial to see if it works on this block equally well.

The Traffic Council voted to approve a 60-day trial during on Monadnock Road between Hammondswood and Wauchusett Roads, of one-hour parking from 7 am to 1 pm on the north side and a no parking restriction on the south side; the trial will take place during September and October 2006 (4-1-1; Schuckel opposed, Samuelson abstained).

#120-06

ALD. SAMUELSON seeking parking restrictions on Plymouth Road, Newton Highlands to discourage commuter parking. (Wards 5, 6)

ACTION:

RECOMMEND APPROVAL of "No Parking 9-11 am, Monday - Friday" both sides of Plymouth Road from Woodward Street to Endicott Street

NOTE: Ald. Samuelson said that restrictions on Woodward Street have increased daytime commuter parking on the end of Plymouth nearest Woodward Street.

Clint Schuckel said the street is 24 feet wide and commuter parking is an obvious problem. He observed 10-15 cars on average on the east side between Woodward and Endicott Streets. If the MBTA station is the main activity generator, this area is on the fringes of such a circle which requires a 5-6 minute walk. He didn't observe public safety issues as much as quality of life issues for residents. He recommended "No Parking from 9-11 am on both sides of Plymouth Road.

Candace Havens noted a letter in support of restrictions was received from Margaret Schmidt and Kenneth Danila, 147 Plymouth Road.

Resident Rick Parker agreed with Clint Schuckel's observations, but also felt there are some safety issues for children; cars travel quickly down the street, fire trucks have difficulty navigating past the parked cars. He supports restrictions.

Meg Hollander, 22 Plymouth Road observed that often the road is only one lane wide and that cars must wait for others to pass before traveling down the street. Cars park on the street even when there are spaces available in the MBTA lot. She feels that children are endangered when the parkers turn around in neighbors' driveways.

Mike Masterson, 217 Plymouth Road complained about commuters from other cities and trash left behind.

Ald. Mansfield felt that restricting the street from 9-11 am on both sides doesn't guarantee that people won't park directly across from one another at other times and fails to address the public safety issue.

David Koses said the MBTA is restructuring its fares; it will be cheaper to ride the Green Line and more expensive to park in the lots. This will likely push more cars onto the street for parking.

The Traffic Council voted (4-1) to recommend approval of "No Parking 9-11 am, Monday - Friday" on both sides of Plymouth Road from Woodward Street to Endicott Street.

#121-06 ALD. SAMUELSON requesting seasonal parking restrictions on one side of Beethoven Avenue, Saturdays only, to discourage parking on both sides during game days at playground. (Ward 5)

ACTION: **RECOMMEND "No Parking on Saturdays, May – October" on the east side of Beethoven Avenue from the aqueduct to Puritan Street.**

NOTE: Ald. Samuelson said that parking is a problem in the area during baseball season and restrictions to discourage parking on both sides would make it safer.

Clint Schuckel said this street is an active one; it connects with Beacon Street and Zervas School is nearby. The street is 23.5 feet wide. Parking is not a problem during the week, but is a problem when ball games are played. He recommended no parking on Saturdays from May to October on one side.

Phil Lobell, 50 Roslyn Street, said that there is also parking activity during soccer season and that both spring and fall restrictions are needed. The neighbors present agreed.

Candace Havens suggested that parking be permitted on the side closer to the park so that children would not have to cross the street.

A letter was received from Margaret Schmidt and Kenneth Danila, 147 Plymouth Road in support of restrictions on Beethoven Avenue on Saturday game days.

The Traffic Council voted to recommend “No Parking on Saturdays, May – October” on the east side of Beethoven Avenue from the aqueduct to Puritan Street (5-0).

#387-05 ALD. SAMUELSON requesting creating establishment of alternate “no parking” zones from 9-11 am and 1-3 pm on side streets in the Highlands that intersect Lincoln and Walnut Streets. (Wards 5, 6) **HELD 2/16/06**

ACTION: NAN

NOTE: Ald. Samuelson said that enforcement staff has told her that when they ticket people in the Highlands, the parkers ask for alternatives; she felt enforcement staff could help direct people if good alternatives are provided. She thought that offering ½ day parking on alternating streets may be a good way to share the load in the Highlands and to provide options for people at various times. She hoped that two-hour restrictions around the square could eventually be lifted, for easier enforcement and to free some parking at limited times. She felt the needs of a variety of users are not met by the two-hour restrictions and cited the Hyde Center on Lincoln Street and the Women’s Center on Columbus Road.

Clint Schuckel showed the existing conditions on a map; most streets have two-hour restrictions on one side and no parking allowed on the other. He showed what the streets would look like with alternating time limits and noted that no parking should probably be allowed one side of each street to assure public safety access. He noted that it did not appear that people had discovered the lifting of time restrictions on Lincoln Street and he was concerned that these changes would have a similar result. He did feel it might be easier to enforce than the two-hour restrictions.

Ald. Mansfield thought we need to educate people about alternatives and feels employees shouldn't use the residential streets, other than Lincoln Street which is a main throughway. He doesn't want to overload the narrow, residential streets.

Mildred and Richard Hutchinson observed that people aren't parking on Lincoln Street and that people coming to the Hyde Center could use more parking.

Candace Havens appreciated this creative approach to sharing parking in the square, however was concerned that it might not have the intended effect.

After additional discussion about permit program alternatives, the Traffic Council voted (5-0) to recommend no action on this item.

#191-06 ALD. SAMUELSON requesting installation of a stop sign on Gammons Road at the intersection of Roslyn Road, Waban (Ward 5).

#192-06 ALD. SAMUELSON requesting installation of a stop sign on Ashmont Road at the intersection of Roslyn Road, Waban (Ward 5).

ACTION: NAN (5-0)

NOTE: Ald. Samuelson identified Roslyn Road as the main road to which Gammons Road and Ashmont Road intersect.

Clint Schuckel indicated that the traffic volumes on all these streets are extremely low (0-8 cars per hour at peak times). He observed no pedestrians in the study hour and cited no accidents in the last three years. He did not feel a stop sign was justified.

Chad Dunham, 33 Roslyn, opposed all stop signs.

Andrew O'Brian, 6 Ashmont agreed with Clint's conclusions, although he had seen pedestrians at commuter times. The unintended affect of adding stop signs at Ashmont and Gammons Road might be to encourage the use of Roslyn Road as a cut-through.

Lou Patell, 50 Roslyn Road, also agreed with Clint's summary.

Connie Atkins, 14 Roslyn Road, said 3-5 people attended a meeting about this matter and all have since changed their minds about stops signs; they would prefer to keep things as they are.

Becky Breck, 26 Roslyn Road said Gammons and Roslyn are quiet streets and agrees things are fine now.

David Koses said he generally supports stop signs at "T" intersections, but in this case agrees with the neighborhood consensus; he did not feel stops signs were needed.

The Traffic Council unanimously recommended the Board take no action on either of these requests.

The Traffic Council agreed to meet next on Thursday, June 15 2006.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Candace Havens, Chair
Traffic Council