

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

THURSDAY, JUNE 15, 2006

Present: Candace Havens (Chair) Clint Schuckel (Traffic Engineer) David Koses (Transportation Planner) Ald. Christine Samuelson (Sgt. Norcross (Police) Rosalie Myers (Clerk)

Also Present: Ald. Linsky, Ald. Harney, Dr. Moynihan (Williams School Principal), Dawn Hough (School Safety Officer)

#HP-10      TRANSPORTATION PLANNER requesting relocation of handicap parking space on Union Street from current location adjacent to Starbucks to site at corner of Union Street and Herrick Road. (Install curb cut next to entrance at 93 Union Street and paint new crosswalk. Modify pkg. spaces to make room for new curb cut and crosswalk.)

**ACTION:**      **APPROVED 5-0**

**NOTE:**      David Koses explained this item was held in April as it had not been heard by the Mayor's Committee for Persons with Disabilities. It has since been heard by the Mayor's Committee and it was agreed that this would be an appropriate parking space.

Sgt. Norcross questioned whether there was any concern regarding locating this space at a corner. Mr. Koses said he felt it was a safe location. Mr. Schuckel explained that the Mayor's Committee would like it located on the MBTA side of the street, nearest the accessible ramp to the train platform. Mr. Schuckel noted that this item is similar to a handicapped space approved on Bowen Street which was approved on the construction of accessible curb cuts. In the Traffic Engineer's opinion, it might be appropriate to do the same in this location and moved relocation of the space conditioned upon construction of the accessible ramp on the north side of Union Street. Union Street is one way with a fair amount of traffic but not as busy as Langley Road or Beacon Street would be. There was a motion to approve subject to installation of cross walks and curb cuts. The Council voted 5-0 to recommend approval.

#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 make recommendations for relief and safety for residents. Ward 2  
**HELD ON 05/18/06**

**ACTION:**      **60-DAY TRIAL APPROVED 4-1 (Schuckel opposed)**

**NOTE:**      Ald. Johnson had emailed some pictures of the site in question and the photos were displayed by the Traffic Engineer for the Council. Candace Havens read an

email describing these photos. Mr. Schuckel explained that this item was initiated as a result of the construction of the bike path and bridge over the Charles River. All of the dead-end streets in this neighborhood potentially become access areas and parking areas for people to get to the bike path. The concern is that parking and the access prompted by the new bridge is causing safety congestion and problems. At the last meeting, the focus was on Albemarle Road primarily because that is closest to the bridge and as Ald. Johnson has pointed out; it is one of the narrower streets. There are a number of streets that do abut the bike path and in every case there is no cul-de-sac for turning around.

Some observations by the Traffic Engineer had been done in May. Since that was a rainy month, the Council decided to hold the item to allow further site visits as well as to provide an opportunity for Ald. Johnson and any residents to document and photograph what they were seeing on weekends on during warm weather. Additional site visits were made by the City in June on weekdays and the observations showed minimal parking.

Mr. Schuckel noted that Ald. Johnson's presentation shows a different picture on weekends than what was seen during the week. The proposal to restrict parking on one side is a potential alternative to banning parking on both sides, which, in the Traffic Engineer's opinion, is more burdensome to the neighborhood than the problem being addressed. The Traffic Engineer said that past experience has shown that a "Residents Only" restriction is difficult for the police to enforce because they would have to interview every resident or watch and wait for them to park.

The Traffic Engineer's recommended the Council consider no parking on one side of Albemarle Road north of Nevada Street and he felt a greater restriction is a burden on the neighborhood and impractical to enforce.

Carl Kelley, 16 Albermarle Road, brought a petition signed by four neighbors and a CD with some video that the members of the Council viewed which showed several cars converging at the dead end and maneuvering their way out again. The petition read as follows: "In making our neighborhood safe for the residents of Albemarle Road, pedestrians, bikers that use the Charles River Walkway, we propose limiting the traffic to the northeast side of Albemarle Road from Nevada Street to the dead end. A sign that says **Do Not Enter, Residents Only**. This would limit the cars that park on that narrow stretch of road and also eliminate the dangerous turning around in residents' driveways."

Residents questioned if there were any public parking lots that could be used. Council members replied that there are none in the immediate area.

Kristie Manning and Robert Moruzzi, 28 Albemarle Road, remarked that many people disregard the “Dead End” signs, enter the street anyway, turn around in driveways or back out of the street. Their driveway has been damaged and this has endangered children and pets in the neighborhood.

David Koses agreed with the observations of the Traffic Engineer. He made two more site visits during the month of June and saw only one car that was parked at the very end of Albemarle Road. He noted a handicapped person walking back and that this is the closest access point to the bridge and river. In his opinion, consideration should be given that would allow the parking area at the end of Albemarle Road to be limited to vehicles displaying handicapped permits. Chairperson Havens noted that the usage of handicapped spaces is much less intense.

Sgt. Norcross noted that, although sensitive to the concerns from the neighbors, signage such as “**Do Not Enter - For Residents Only**” would be a very difficult enforcement issue. There would **not** be anyone available to be assigned to monitor vehicles on that street. He concluded by explaining that the officer would actually have to see the non-resident drive past the sign in order to issue a ticket.

Ald. Linsky said the residents would like a trial of a “Do Not Enter” sign. Sgt. Norcross noted that a “Do Not Enter” sign would include neighbors, too. Ald. Samuelson sympathized with the neighbors but pointed out that this is a public street with it is an access to the park. Ald. Samuelson expressed an interest in reducing as much car traffic as possible while allowing convenient handicap access adjacent to the entrance of the park, especially since the trail is currently enjoyed by handicap visitors.

David Koses agreed with Ald. Samuelson in regard to the handicapped location and the need to share the street. He observed on the vast majority of days of the year, there is really no parking problem there at all.

Candace Havens concurred that it would be good to have a handicap spot in close proximity to the walkway. She noted that current discussion is focused on traffic issues while previous discussion concerned the problem of people parking in front of driveways, making access for residents difficult and that both issues are a concern. Ms. Havens observed worse problems on the weekend and felt it might be wise to consider a weekend trial.

Clint Schuckel felt it would be unwise to locate a handicapped spot on Nevada Street (which had been discussed as an alternative location) as the distance to the spot would not have a sidewalk and that could possibly cause difficulty. If the Mayor’s Committee for People with Disabilities favors that location, he might support it but feels more information is needed. He also would like to know more

about the Cheesecake Brook project and whether it includes a bicycle path. He noted from the ordinances that Minot Place, Blithedale and Kimball Terrace have the following language: “No vehicle of any description except those of property owners whose access is (*street name*) and service vehicles shall go upon (*street name*) between 7:45 am and 4:00 pm on any day when the public schools of the City are in session.” Technically, any visitor to this portion of Albemarle Road would have to park on Nevada Street.

Ald. Linsky reiterated that this was a traffic issue and also felt the Mayor’s Committee on People with Disabilities should be consulted on recommendations for handicap access.

Mr. Schuckel stated he is opposed to the concept of “Residents Only” signage is because Sgt. Norcross had clearly stated that the police have to abide by certain rules and regulations and a ticket cannot be given to the owner of a car unless the violation is witnessed and is difficult to enforce.

The Council voted to approve a trial of No Parking on the west side of Albemarle Road (portion of Albemarle Road east of Cheesecake Brook) from Nevada Street to opposite the last driveway. (4-1, Schuckel opposed). Note: Schuckel felt the trial would not be informative and supported approval of the motion without a trial and further study by Traffic Council.

#389-05 ALD. SANGIOLO, HARNEY requesting the creation of a blue zone in front of the Williams School on Grove Street where current bus drop-off zone exists.

**HELD 03/16-06 FOR 60-DAY TRIAL**

**ACTION:** **APPROVED 4-1 (Samuelson opposed)**

**NOTE:** Ald. Harney and Principal of the Williams School, Dr. Christine Moynihan were present for this discussion. Dr. Moynihan said they were only able to implement the newly revised suggestions for the last two weeks. Signs were put up for No Left Turn into the cutout. For the afternoon pickup, cars were not allowed in the blue zone until after the buses had arrived and departed. Dr. Moynihan said it works fine when the buses are there in a timely manner and has requested that parents delay their arrival time. The major concern is that bus arrivals are inconsistent. In her opinion it has been working well in the morning and would like to see it work in the same manner in the afternoon. Ald. Harney felt it was a huge improvement and commended the parents for supporting the changes.

Officer Hough felt a big issue was cars backing up on Grove Street in the blue zone. She saw cars parked and parents and children run across the street and noted this was a completely unsafe activity. However, on some mornings there

were no problems at all. There was confusion when staff members were not available to be outside to assist.

Clint Schuckel indicated that he feels that there are things that can be tweaked but he does see an improvement. In his opinion, the presence of teachers and parent volunteers outside is probably more effective than the tickets.

David Koses also felt the overall situation has improved. He made observations on three different days and noted that on one Friday, it did not work very well when the buses stayed in the blue zone for an extended period of time and caused a good deal of running around. On his Monday visit, it worked beautifully. On a rainy day, it worked reasonably well. He suggested that the school adopt a practice where cars were not permitted to enter the cutout in the afternoons until after the school bell rings, in hopes that this would keep cars out of the cutout until the bus arrives on most days.

Candace Havens observed a big improvement to traffic flow and supports a policy that gives priority use to bus riders while balancing it with public safety concerns. She suggested parents pick up their children after 3:00 pm and encourage them to walk a block or two from school to a designated spot if they insist on driving them. Ald. Harney suggested that people should be told that they can park further down Myrtle Road down to Lasell Village.

Ald. Samuelson said that when the children are dismissed and are walking and crossing the street, they should be able to get through the school yard and get across the crosswalk with the crossing guards; the buses should get in and out and the cars should not be there. In her view, they are creating an unsafe situation. The idea that there is a bus cutout and the children who are walking and crossing the street as well as those getting on the bus should be able to get away from the school before all those parent cars picking up their individual kids even show up on Grove Street. She doesn't feel the situation is any safer because the cars are queuing on Grove Street, in the blue zone, while they are waiting to get into the bus cutout because they are still coming before their children are out of school. The children who are riding the bus have been called out of school five minutes early and then stand and wait until their bus comes in. The children who ride the bus, in her opinion, should be given special treatment and have first priority. The children who are being picked up by their parents should either have a plan to meet their parents somewhere away from the school yard or should be released to the sidewalk; there should not be any parent car in any blue zone anywhere until their child is there. This would mean that they should not arrive until 5 or 10 minutes after 3:00 pm because the children have to get out of class, get their coats, etc. Possibly they should meet them somewhere else. Ald. Samuelson strongly stated that she could never be in favor of this. She felt it would be very difficult for Dr. Moynihan to supervise this daily and felt priority should be given

to the buses. She reiterated that cars should not be around the school until the buses and the children who are walking have left. Presently she feels there are situations that are endangering everyone. Ald. Samuelson concluded by saying that more leadership from the Superintendent of Schools as well as the Mayor would help to make this a safer situation.

Dr. Moynihan believes the situation is presently safer than it was. She said she wants to ensure the safety of children picked up by parents which is why she believes it is much safer for blue zone children in the cutout as well. She said there is no question that it does work better with someone out there. If she cannot be out there, she does have back-up by teachers. It is not within their contract and they are doing this out of commitment to public safety. There is a written schedule that is working.

Ald. Samuelson said she does not think it is unsafe for children to be on the sidewalk anywhere in front of the school. She felt that part of this problem is that parents fear their children are not safe either walking in the neighborhood or walking to the playground alone. She feels it is a mistake to cater to that opinion. The Newton School Department policy states that children can walk to and from school because it is safe regardless where they are in the school yard.

Dr. Moynihan felt that children were not safe when cars pull out from the blue zone. She does not want the children walking and standing alone and getting into cars without adult supervision when other cars jockey into position and pull out from that zone.

Sgt. Norcross felt that things were not 100% better, but there had been improvement.

Clint Schuckel made a motion that the cutout, currently used as a bus stop, be changed to a blue zone; add a No Left Turn restriction from northbound Grove Street into the cutout, and a No Left Turn from the cutout to northbound Grove Street. His motion included a recommendation that this operational plan be formalized through an agreement between the police and the school. The School Traffic Safety Committee and others involved will decide what the document will include between now and the first day of school in the fall.

The Council voted to recommend approval as amended 4-1 (Samuelson against).

#389-05(2) ALD. SANGIOLO, HARNEY requesting the creation of bus drop off zone where current blue zone exists on Grove Street.(Ward 4)

HELD 03/16-06 FOR 60-DAY TRIAL

**ACTION:** **DENIED 5-0**

#389-05(3) ALD. SANGIOLO, HARNEY requesting No Left Turn Monday-Friday during school hours from new blue zone. (Ward 4)  
HELD 03/16-06 FOR 60-DAY TRIAL

**ACTION:** **APPROVED AS AMENDED 4-0-1 (Samuelson)**

#101-06 ALD. JOHN STEWART, 23 Pierrepont Road, Newton Lower Falls recommending the installation of parking meters, on Beacon Street (Woodward to MBTA Bridge), Windsor Road (Kinmonth to Beacon), and Wyman Street (Woodward to #77)  
(Ward 5)

**ACTION:** **APPROVE AS AMENDED 4-1 (Samuelson)**

**NOTE:** Former alderman, John Stewart was not present to introduce the petition. In a letter to the Board of Aldermen, he asked that the Board approve installation of parking meters in Waban Square since other villages are metered and added that meters revenues could support other street-related improvements in the City.

Clint Schuckel presented occupancy study results that showed short-term parking in Waban Square is in high demand and occupancy of spaces is generally between 60-100%, with overspill on Windsor Road and Wyman Street (which have two-hour time limits). There are no designated long-term parking spaces in the vicinity besides the MBTA lot. He reviewed the location of existing time limits in the square and recommended metering of short-term spaces adjacent to commercial businesses; this would require about 75 meters at roughly \$300 per meter or a total cost of \$20,000 - \$25,000. The short-term rate is \$.50 an hour and the cost of installation would be recouped by the revenue generated in 6 to 9 months, based on the revenue per space generated in other parts of the City.

In fairness to the other villages of Newton, the Traffic Council agreed it is appropriate to meter the square and that meters are easier to enforce than time limits without meters. Metering the spaces also would discourage misuse by long-term parkers and assure availability of convenient parking for customers. The members also agreed that the one- and two-hour time restrictions in the area in the areas proposed seem appropriate, given the nature of the existing businesses and their need for relatively high turnover. They also felt it would be an easier transition for current users if time limits do not change when meters are installed.

The remainder of the discussion focused on implementation of changes and balancing the needs of customers with employees. There was concern that the overflow parking on the residential portion of Wyman Street near the commercial area could worsen with installation of meters and the Council felt that additional long-term parking should be provided for local employees. The Council discussed ways to ensure that such parking will be available to employees and not taken by commuters. The group discussed a variety of options including permit lots for employees and felt that use of the library lot could give employees an

alternative to parking in the short-term spaces that better serve customers. Clint Schuckel noted the cost of improvements to the library lot would be an appropriate expenditure of parking meter revenue.

Ald. Samuelson recommended implementation in two phases, with the first phase to meter in front of businesses south of Beacon Street along with repaving/restriping of the library lot to accommodate about 10 employees. The commercial area on the north side of Beacon Street would occur later and employees of businesses on the north side of Beacon could park in the lot behind the buildings off Windsor Road and along portions of Beacon Street, if necessary.

A motion to implement metering in 2 phases along with additional long-term parking in the library lot, failed (2-3, Koses, Schuckel, Havens opposed), since the majority of the Council felt it might create more problems within the village if some streets are metered and some are not. The Traffic Council voted to recommend metering the streets proposed by Ald. Stewart with current time restrictions to remain; it further recommended that ten (10) parking spaces in the library lot be made available for employee use. (4-1, Samuelson opposed). Note: Samuelson stated her support of the proposal, but preferred the 2-phase approach described above.

#132-06 TRAFFIC ENGINEER & TRANSPORTATION PLANNER requesting consideration of long term meters on Washington Street, south side, at following locations: between Lowell Avenue and Walnut Street; and From Harvard Street to a point 500' easterly.

**ACTION:** **APPROVE AS AMENDED BETWEEN LOWELL AVENUE AND WASHINGTON STREET 4-1 (Samuelson)**  
**APPROVE AS AMENDED BETWEEN HARVARD AND WALNUT STREETS 5-0**

**NOTE:** Clint Schuckel described the existing conditions on the south side of Washington Street between Lowell and Harvard Streets. From Lowell to Walnut, he noted there are 32 one-hour parking spaces that are underutilized (30% occupancy at peak) while nearby long-term meters, both metered and un-metered, are filled. He also observed 2-6 postal trucks parked at meters in the vicinity of the post office. The Commuter Rail station can be accessed via Walnut Street or Harvard Street and he recommended more long-term parking near these entrances in order to improve utilization of existing spaces. He suggested keeping some short-term parking spaces for local business use and placing them nearest the intersections to encourage people to cross at the signals rather than jaywalk across Washington Street. From Harvard Street easterly to the flower shop, the curb is currently being utilized for long-term parking in about 20 unmeted spaces. He recommended metering these spaces.



Post Office Manager, Paul Malvone said that 6-7 postal vehicles usually park in metered spaces on Washington Street in the morning and again later in the afternoon; they load their trucks next to the post office. He expressed interest in working with the City to address parking allocations. He favored parking spaces as close as possible to the post office for his staff's benefit. In response to a question by Sgt. Norcross, Paul Malvone said the post office vehicles could be relocated during snow emergencies. Clint Schuckel noted that the Law Department determined that it would be legal to designate some public parking spaces for post office use.

The Traffic Council favored designating more long-term parking and discussed the appropriate allocations. The members hoped to discourage jaywalking across Washington Street and debated where to leave some short-term spaces for businesses to reduce jaywalking. Some felt it would be best to place short-term spaces nearest the intersections in hopes that people would cross at the light.

Ald. Samuelson expressed concerns about placing short-term spaces so far from the post office because she feared they would not be well-used or discourage jaywalking. She also disliked so many time restrictions on one block.

Between Lowell and Walnut Streets on the southerly side of Washington Street, the Traffic Council voted to recommend the 32 parking spaces be allocated as follows (from west to east): Four 2-hour spaces; eight 12-hour spaces; 6 spaces for post office vehicles (directly across from Newtonville post office); ten 12-hour spaces; four 2-hour spaces (4-1, Samuelson opposed).

For 500 feet east of Harvard Street on the southerly side of Washington Street, the Traffic Council voted to recommend 12-hour meters, Monday to Saturday and paving of the space between the curb and fence to provide a sidewalk to connect to adjacent pedestrian ways. (5-0).

#### Discussion items:

The Traffic Council briefly discussed its meeting schedule. Some members liked holding Traffic Council meetings when other meetings are taking place in City Hall because it makes it easier for Board members to participate in discussions of items of interest to them. Most agreed that Monday nights work well. There was general interest in having some flexibility for meeting dates, including day meetings occasionally.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Candace Havens, Chair  
Traffic Council