

Thursday, May 5, 2022

## Mayor's Update



### Two Roundabouts Coming to Newton

Many of us who have driven in Massachusetts very likely know the white knuckle feeling of zipping around an old traffic rotary, trying to get in the correct lane to make a turn while other cars speed in and out. (Picture the Fresh Pond Rotary in Cambridge where Routes 16, 2 and 3 collide.)

Those rotaries built before 1950 are really large and cars move really fast. That design, thankfully, is no longer used.

The new, smaller versions are roundabouts (not rotaries) and the first one in Massachusetts was constructed in Barnstable.

Now more than 4,600 roundabouts have been built across the country, with roughly 60 modern roundabouts in Massachusetts. We're in the planning and design stages right here in Newton for our first two roundabouts.

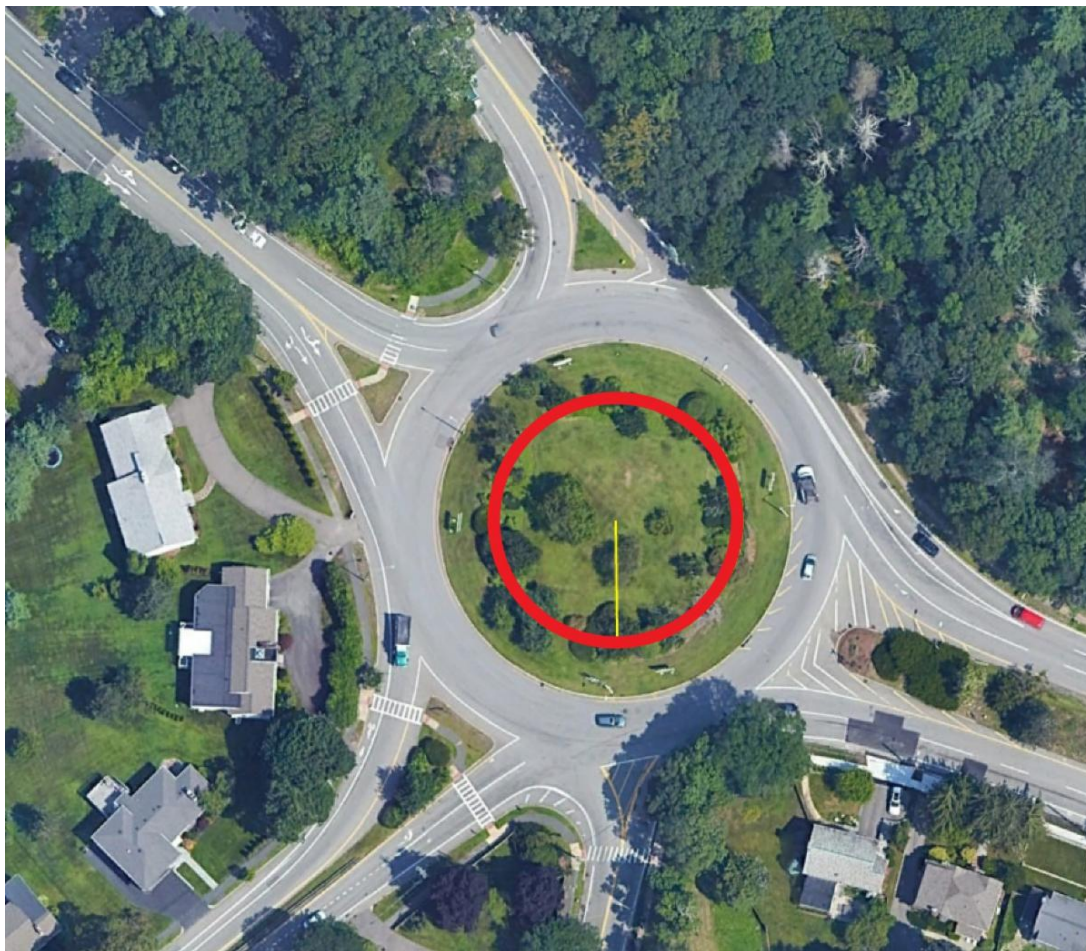
One new roundabout will be at Commonwealth Avenue and Auburn Street in Auburndale at the west intersection near the border with Weston. This roundabout is part of the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) project that includes replacing the structurally obsolete bridge on Comm Ave/Route 30 over the Charles River. Construction is expected to begin next summer.

The other will be at the Grove Street offramp of I-95 South and Quinobequin Road. MassDOT also has jurisdiction over this roundabout as it is an interstate offramp. Final plans are still being designed for this roundabout.

These new modern roundabouts are much smaller than older designs.

For example, most of us in Newton have likely driven around the rotary at Hammond Pond Parkway, Hammond Street, Newton Street/West Roxbury Parkway and Lagrange Street in Brookline near the border with Newton. This is an example of an older, bigger design.

The Hammond Pond Parkway roundabout has a diameter of approximately 280 feet. The roundabouts in Newton will be half the size, between 120 and 140 feet in diameter. Ours would easily fit completely within the center island of the Brookline roundabout. The circle on the map below roughly shows the size of the Newton roundabouts (from the outer side of the road) in comparison to the Hammond Pond Parkway roundabout.



The smaller size takes up less land. Importantly, it is purposefully designed with tighter turning angles which means cars must slow down to about 20 miles per hour to enter and exit, much slower and safer than the larger rotaries where drivers can take the turns moving faster.

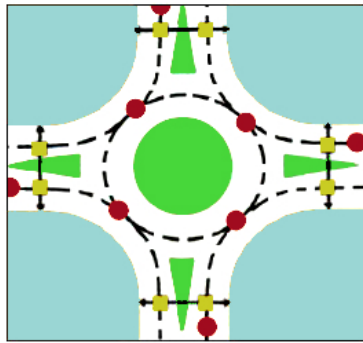
Another key aspect of roundabouts is that while cars move slowly, the traffic moves better than with traditional traffic lights at intersections. As roundabouts decrease traffic jams and increase safety, MassDOT's policy is now to consider a roundabout at every intersection where traffic signals need to be replaced.

Why are roundabouts so much safer than intersections?

The most severe types of crashes that occur at intersections, right angle "T-bone" side impact collisions and head-on collisions, are unlikely in a roundabout where drivers are forced by the turn angle to slow down and move in the same direction. When crashes do occur at roundabouts, they are typically much less severe due to the slow speeds of all vehicles.

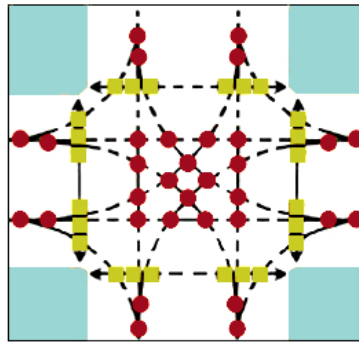
In addition, look at the diagram below to see how roundabouts have significantly fewer conflict points where a crash may occur compared to an intersection.

## Roundabout



● 8 Vehicle conflicts  
 ■ 8 Pedestrian conflicts

## Intersection



● 32 Vehicle conflicts  
 ■ 24 Pedestrian conflicts

How does a pedestrian or cyclist cross safely at a roundabout?

The new roundabouts in Newton will have a sidewalk with a landscape strip to separate people driving from people walking. This design also helps guide pedestrians to the designated crosswalks at the four roads leading into the roundabout. The crosswalks at roundabouts are generally very safe, because each crosswalk is split with an island between the entry and exit lanes. This allows pedestrians to cross one stream of traffic at a time. On some roundabouts, the crosswalks are also enhanced with either Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) or Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons (a.k.a., “HAWK” signals). (The proposed roundabout at Commonwealth Avenue and Auburn Street includes Pedestrian Hybrid Beacons at all crosswalks.)

For cyclists, roundabout designs often include dedicated bicycle ramps on approaches and departures. These bicycle ramps allow riders to circulate around the roundabout on a wider shared-use path at the sidewalk level. Experienced cyclists may choose to stay within the roadway and travel within the roundabout. (The proposed roundabout at Comm Ave and Auburn Street has a bike path on one side with crosswalks to get to it.)

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### May is Mental Health Awareness Month

One in six young people aged 6-17 experience a mental health condition each year according to the National Alliance on Mental Health.

Here in Newton, we recognize many young people are suffering with depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues exacerbated by the pandemic and social stressors. This week I proclaimed it Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week in Newton marking our continued commitment and support for our more vulnerable community members and their families.

During this month of Mental Health Awareness, the City of Newton Health & Human Services Department is hosting a series of programs with Riverside Community Care, Samaritans, Families for Depression Awareness, and The Resilience Project. These programs will provide information on mental health and mental illness, how to

respond and support family, friends, and neighbors experiencing a mental health crisis, and how to connect directly with local mental health agencies.

To register for this program and learn more about resources available, visit our webpage at [newtonma.gov/mentalhealthresources](https://newtonma.gov/mentalhealthresources).

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### **COVID-19 Current Cases**

We had 266 confirmed new cases of COVID-19 in Newton over the past seven days from April 28 to May 4, 13 more than last week's 253 new cases over the previous seven days.

As of Tuesday, May 3, Newton-Wellesley Hospital is caring for seven (7) patients who are hospitalized with COVID-19, one of whom is being cared for in the ICU. Over the past week, NWH reports that the number of patients hospitalized with COVID-19 ranged from four (4) to 11 per day which represents a slight improvement over the previous seven days.

Over the two-week State tracking period from April 17 to 30, the incidence rate and positivity rate both continued to creep up. The positivity rate in Newton is now 5.4% positive of the 9,311 tests performed on Newton residents, compared to 4.7% of 9,888 tests last week, and the incidence rate is now 35.8 cases per 100,000 population, compared to 33.7 last week.

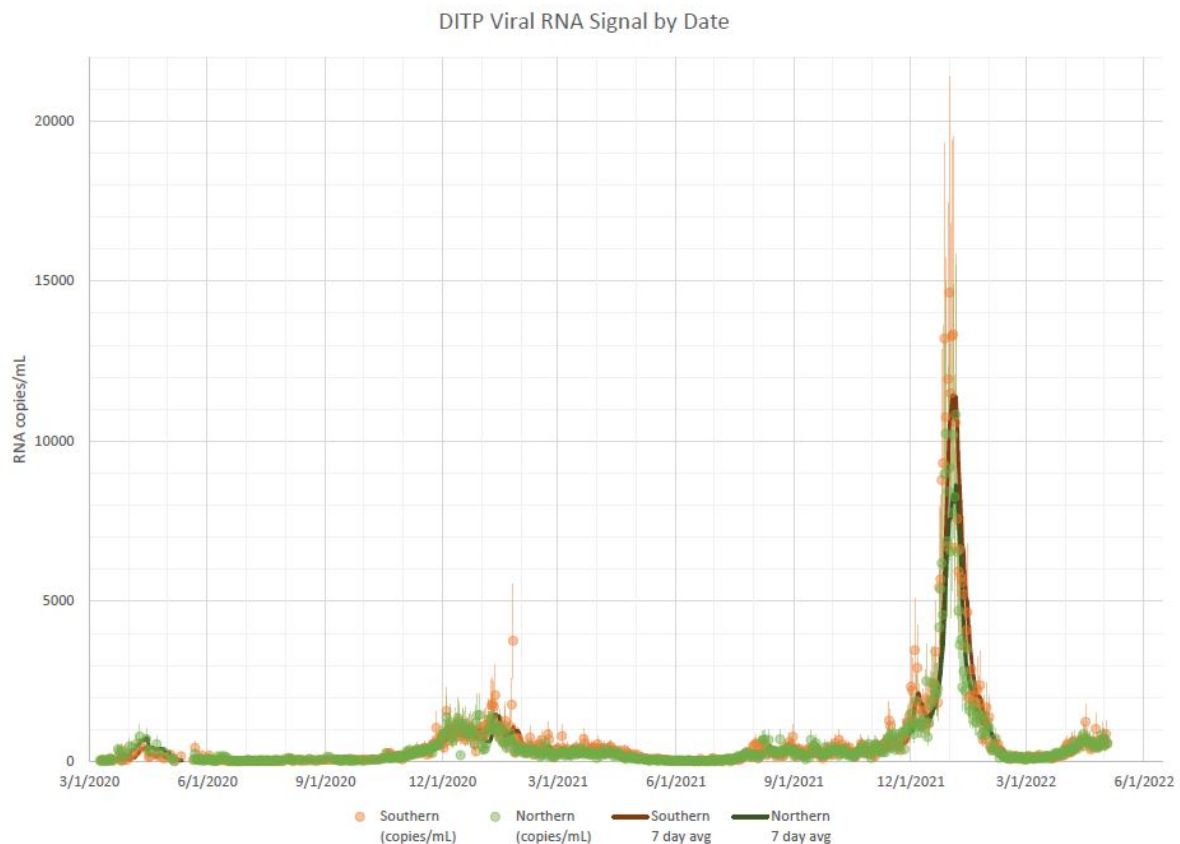
Remember, this case data is only directionally correct as it does not capture all the positive cases found with at-home rapid antigen tests.

The latest MWRA wastewater tracking data from Tuesday, May 3 shows a slight curve up after a slight curve down last week. Click here to see all the [data](#).

### Wastewater COVID-19 DATA



## Biobot Data - samples submitted through 05/03/2022



The best news again this week is that we had no one in Newton die with COVID-19 even as our country passed the dreadful one million mark. The cumulative total of lives lost in Newton since our first COVID-19 related death was reported in April 2020 is 201 people.

### Newton Public Schools Case Data

The Newton Public Schools had 192 cases among students and 28 among staff in the week from April 28 to May 4. Find more information on Newton's Health and Human Services Data page [here](#).

### **Improving Sidewalks and Curb Ramps**

For the past two years, Public Works Department employee Mike Jasset has been cataloguing the condition of Newton's 414 miles of sidewalks and approximately 5,100 accessible pedestrian curb ramps.

*(Photo: DPW employee Mike Jasset)*

He recorded the condition and material type of each sidewalk and ramp (concrete or asphalt) and the location of any maintenance needed. With ramps, he also noted whether there is a detectable warning panel, i.e., the yellow pad, and their condition.



This work is another step in our prioritization plan that we will continually update to guide maintenance and rehabilitation decisions.

### Condition of Newton's Sidewalks and Pedestrian Curb Ramps

This inventory found that the vast majority of the City's sidewalks are in excellent to fair condition with minimal cracks, divots and other minor distress causing little to no impediment. But, other sidewalks (approximately 20%) are in poor condition with distresses and obstructions and require replacement and/or significant repairs.

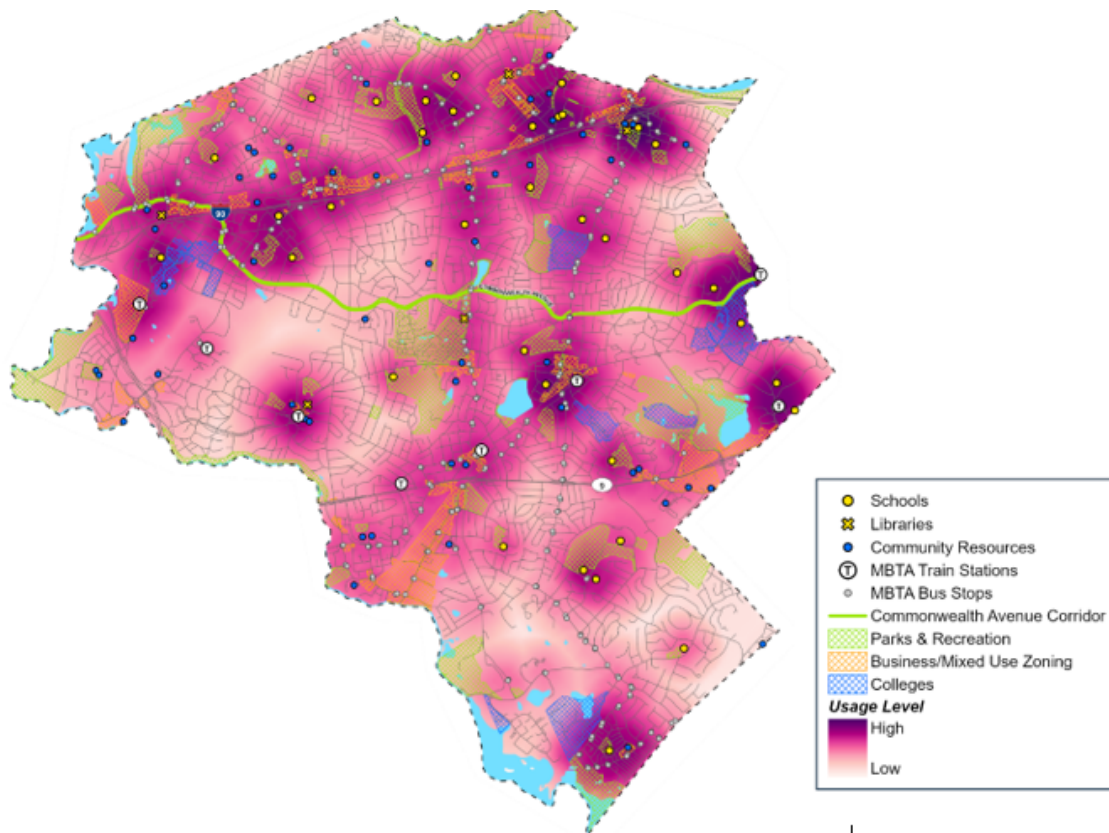
Similarly, the inventory also found that the vast majority of the City's curb ramps are in good condition but identified those in poor condition (approximately 15%) that need replacement or significant repairs.

### Pedestrian Usage

We combined the condition inventory with an inventory of pedestrian use. Together, they help us prioritize the maintenance and rehabilitation.

We identified walking destinations (e.g., near schools, village centers, parks and playgrounds, public transportation stops, community sites such as the Library and Senior Center).

Each location is given a buffer zone around it and a priority ranking related to the overall network (e.g., schools were weighted higher than parks and playgrounds). A GIS analysis of the buffers was then done to create an overlay map identifying where pedestrian use is the highest. This usage analysis can be seen in the map below. The maroon and red colors indicate the highest used sidewalks and curb ramps citywide.



The sidewalk inventory is part of our \$95 million citywide Transportation Network Improvement Program. Over the past four and a half years, 62.3 miles of Newton's 300 miles of roadway has been repaved or repaired and over the past two years, six miles of bike lanes have been added along Parker Road, Cypress, Beacon and Crafts Streets. (Find a list of our summer road projects [here](#).)

DPW is also continuing to make repairs on sidewalk issues reported through the City's 311 system, and to replace sidewalks and ramps along roads that are being repaved. For example, sidewalks and curb ramps along both sides of Chestnut Street from Route 9 to Beacon Street were replaced when the street was repaved last summer. (The existing sidewalks on Chestnut from Beacon Street to Commonwealth Avenue will be replaced when that portion of the road is repaved in the coming months.) Since 2018, more than 31 miles of major sidewalk construction has been completed.

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*Celebrating the incredible resilience, creativity and determination displayed by small businesses in Newton and across Massachusetts at the Small Business Administration (SBA) Massachusetts Awards Breakfast. Let's continue to shop local and support our Newton shops and*



restaurants as they continue to recover from the long pandemic. Interested in dining in or getting take-out from one Newton restaurants? Find what you're craving in the [Newton Food Guide](#) published in *The Heights*, Boston College's student newspaper.

(With, from left, Secretary of Housing and Economic Development Mike Kennealy, SBA Massachusetts District

Director Robert Nelson, SCORE District Director Paul Waldeck, U.S. Rep. Jake Auchincloss, Chief of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion for the City of Boston Segun Idowu, and SBA New England Regional Administrator Mike Vlacich.)

## Real ID

Do you have your Real ID? One year from now on May 3, 2023, our standard Massachusetts Drivers Licenses or identification card will no longer be accepted as a valid ID to get on domestic flights or into certain federal buildings.

<p><b>REAL ID</b> Massachusetts Driver's License/ID Card</p>  <p>Indicator on card is a star to designate that it is a federally compliant card</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✗ CANNOT be processed online – must make a reservation to visit an RMV Service Center or AAA members can visit a AAA branch if not a first-time applicant</li> <li>✓ Proof of U.S. citizenship or lawful presence required</li> <li>✓ Is a valid driver's license or identification card</li> <li>✓ Is valid for up to 5 years or length of stay in the U.S.</li> <li>✓ CAN be used to board a plane in the U.S. or enter federal buildings after May 3, 2023</li> <li>✓ Is an acceptable form of identification for federal purposes</li> </ul>	<p><b>Standard</b> Massachusetts Driver's License/ID Card</p>  <p>Indicator on card is NOT FOR FEDERAL ID to designate that it is NOT a federally compliant card</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ CAN potentially be processed online</li> <li>✓ Proof of U.S. citizenship or lawful presence required</li> <li>✓ Is a valid driver's license or identification card</li> <li>✓ Is valid for up to 5 years or length of stay in the U.S.</li> <li>✗ CANNOT be used to board a plane in the U.S. or enter federal buildings after May 3, 2023</li> <li>✗ Is an unacceptable form of identification for federal purposes</li> </ul>
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So far more than 2.3 million Real IDs have been issued in Massachusetts, but that's only about 41% of those eligible.

To change your standard license or identification card to a Real ID, you'll need to make an appointment to go in person to the RMV (the closest office to Newton is in Watertown) or if you're a member visit a AAA branch. You'll need two forms of Massachusetts residency,

one showing proof of a full Social Security Number, and proof of "lawful presence in the U.S." such as a passport or birth certificate.

Watch the video [here](#) to learn more about required identification and/or find more information at [mass.gov/RealID](https://mass.gov/RealID).



## Appreciating Teachers

During Teacher Appreciation Week, let's say a heartfelt "thank you" to the professionals who have been there for our children, online and in classrooms, during two challenging years. One way to say thanks is to consider a contribution to the Newton Schools Foundation *Honor Thy Teacher* campaign. Learn more [here](#).

Wishing all the Moms on Sunday a day filled with joy.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Take a self-guided **Newton Upper Falls walk** through 10,000 years of history this Saturday, May 7. Arrive at either the corner of Oak and Chestnut Streets or at the Echo Bridge Antique Mall at Elliot and Chestnut Streets between 1:00 and 2:00 p.m. and a volunteer guide will give you a map of the route. A neighborhood volunteer will be at each stop to talk about its history. As an added bonus, stop by a Pop-Up Market (11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.) in the parking lot at Dunn Gaherins, 344 Elliot St.

## Upper Falls



P.P.S. **Newton Community Farm's annual Seedling Sale** is in-person at the Farm (303 Nahanton St.) on Saturday, May 14 and Sunday, May 15, from noon to 5:00 p.m. Close to 100 different plant varieties will be available from more than 27,000 seedlings grown right at the farm. Vermont Compost Company soil and soil amendments will also be on sale. Click [here](#) for more information.

P.P.P.S. The **Pan Mass Challenge Kids ride** is at Newton's Wells Office Park on Sunday, May 22, from 8:00 to 11:30 a.m. Bicyclists from age 5 to 15 can ride to raise money for cancer treatment and research at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. Find more info and register to ride [here](#).



P.P.P.P.S. Get your **application to be a lifeguard** at Gath Pool or Crystal Lake this summer. Interested? Find out more at [newtonma.gov/lifeguard](http://newtonma.gov/lifeguard) or email City of Newton Aquatics Director, Sean Nickerson at



[snickerson@newtonma.gov](mailto:snickerson@newtonma.gov) to learn more about the job and to set up a Zoom interview. (Photo: Gath Pool Summer of 2021 Lifeguards from left, Connor MacKenzie, Michael Claflin and Willy Hodgson.)

P.P.P.P.P.S. **Newton Taiwan Day** festivities kick-off at 11:00 a.m. this Saturday, May 7, with a Dragon Dance starting at Lincoln and Walnut Streets in Newton Highlands and continuing to the Hyde Center at 90 Lincoln St. The fun continues at the Hyde Community Center Playground until 4:00 p.m. with craft projects for kids and cultural activities for adults sponsored by the Culture Center of Taipei Economic Culture Office in Boston and the Hyde Community Center.



P.P.P.P.P.S. Congratulations to **Newton's Boston Globe All-Scholastic Winter Athletes**: Newton North Basketball players junior Abigail Wright and senior Florian Kuechen; Boys Indoor Track Athlete of the Year Max Klein, a senior at Newton North, Indoor Track athletes from Newton North, junior Tyler Tubman and sophomore Skye Petrie-Cameron, and the

4x200 and 4x400 teams, and from Newton South, junior Amelia Everett; Newton South Swimmer senior Nicola Hensch; and Nordic Skiers, sophomore Ian Brenner and freshman Levin Brenner from Newton South and from Newton North, junior Clara Lake and sophomore Lillie Salgado.

Congratulations also go to Newton North Girls Indoor Track Coach of the Year Joe Tranchita and Newton North Boys Indoor Track Coach of the Year Shawn Wallace.

We're also proud of our own Nicole Freedman, Newton Director of Transportation Planning, who is the Weston Boys Nordic Coach of the Year.

(Photo: Boys Indoor Track Athlete of the Year Max Klein. Photo credit: Boston Globe)



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