



MEMO

TO: James McGonagle, DPW Commissioner, Jason Sobel, Transportation Director
CC: Jonathan Yeo, COO
DATE: June 22, 2022
FROM: Andreae Downs, Chair, PS&T, Alison Leary, Chair, PF
RE: Traffic Calming Evaluation & Prioritization Follow up (#70-22 discussion of June 8)

Dear Commissioner McGonagle and Director Sobel:

The Public Safety & Transportation Committee appreciates your participation in our discussion of the item referenced above. Traffic calming is among the top concerns residents report to councilors in our neighborhoods.

It is particularly helpful to have metrics and data to help guide decision-making, and we applaud this approach and the inclusion of multiple voices in the final designs to avoid unintended conflicts or safety issues.

We also applaud the department's willingness to experiment with new techniques, such as speed cushions, and quick-build trials, such as the chicane on Lowell Avenue near Newton North HS. Trying new approaches and tweaking them in response to new information is, we believe, key to getting the final designs right.

Our suggestions below are meant to be helpful and to move our traffic calming efforts forward using data and observations:

- It is critical to assess Newton's traffic calming infrastructure **post-construction**. Anecdotal reports indicate, for instance, that after rush hours, Allen Avenue in Waban still experiences significant speeding. We have heard similar complaints about Pearl Street's interventions. Assessment will aid the department in determining whether in future more- (or less-) aggressive designs should be tried, and whether money was well-spent.
- When our constituents hear about or see roadwork in progress, they don't distinguish between repair, utility work, mill-and-overlay, or traffic calming. Their frustration is understandable when longstanding safety or accessibility issues remain unaddressed when the crews and the trucks finally leave the site. It also seems that greater efficiency and lower total costs could be achieved in some projects by completing safety and accessibility upgrades even if they go beyond what is required in the short term. To address these issues, we **request that estimates for these additional safety and accessibility upgrades be made available to us**.
- The **metrics** used for prioritization of projects do not yet include school bus stops and heavily-used school crossings that are further from school grounds. We request that these be added to your assessment formula.
- Finally, we hope and anticipate that the upcoming **Bicyclist and Pedestrian Plan** will provide additional guidance to inform the traffic calming evaluation process.

Thank you, and please reach out to me on behalf of the committee if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Andrae Downs
Chair
Public Safety & Transportation Committee