

Friday, Oct. 28, 2022

Mayor's Update

Roadwork Update

Newton's Department of Public Work (DPW) crews and contractors have been repaving a lot of roads across Newton over the spring and summer. With the weather turning colder and roadwork season winding down, here's an update on three major ongoing projects:



Chestnut Street

I know a lot of people have questions about the poor condition of the road and seemingly slow pace of work on the stretch of Chestnut Street from Beacon Street to Commonwealth Avenue.

We understand the frustration, especially as this section contrasts so dramatically with the new, smooth road surface and sidewalks on Chestnut Street between Route 9 and Beacon Street. DPW completed that section of Chestnut Street in June 2021 using an environmentally friendly “cold in-place recycling paving” process. (See more [here](#).)

In the spring, DPW will be fully restoring this section of Chestnut Street, including adding and repairing sidewalks with ramps for accessibility, crosswalks, and then the final paving next summer. DPW is hoping to use the “cold in-place recycling” process again.

Why does this work take so long?

We can't repave until the water and gas pipes are repaired.

In December 2021, the water mains under the street were cleaned and lined and the drains were repaired. From February 2022 through this fall, National Grid replaced the 100-year-old gas mains, work essential to preventing gas leaks.

Needham Street

All of us who drive along Needham Street have noticed (and been inconvenienced by) the construction that began last spring in Newton on the \$31 million state project run by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT).

Over the summer, our DPW crews replaced the water mains under Needham Street from the intersection at Oak and Christina Streets to Winchester Street, and on Winchester from Needham Street to Centre Street.

MassDOT crews then started the repairs and replacement of the bridge over the Charles River at the west end of Needham Street at the border with Needham. This work will be paused for the winter because of the weather conditions.

Traffic signal electrical work will go on this fall and early winter at the intersection of Charlemont Street, as well as additional electrical and drainage work before the project picks up again in earnest next spring.

The MassDOT project spans the entire length of Needham Street and along with replacing the bridge over the Charles River at the border with Needham, it includes:

- Creating exclusive turn lanes, installing all new traffic signal equipment, adding lanes west of interchanges, and realigning the intersection at Needham and Charlemont Streets.
- Adding 5-foot-wide raised bike lanes and shared use paths.
- Adding bus stops.
- Adding continuous sidewalks and designated crosswalks.
- Improving storm water infrastructure.

Learn more about the project at mass.gov/needhamstreet.

MassDOT is scheduled to have the work along Needham Street complete in 2024.

Ward Street and Waverley Avenue

These two roadways have seen a lot of work over the past several years and they are in really tough shape.

National Grid began repairing and replacing underground gas mains in the spring of 2019 and completed their work in the fall of 2021.

Once that work was finished, the Massachusetts Water Resource Authority (MWRA) began replacing the water main under Ward Street from Manet Road to Waverley Avenue as well as replacing all residential water services connected to the water main.

The MWRA is also currently in the process of replacing the water main on Waverley Avenue from Durant Street to Ward Street.

The MWRA expects to complete the bulk of the water main work by the end of this year (weather permitting), and the entire project completed by the spring of 2023.

Once that happens, DPW needs to wait and let the ground settle (which in New England is often 45 to 90 days and sometimes over a winter season with its continuous freezing/thawing) with final paving scheduled for fall 2023.

DPW staff will continue to keep an eye on the conditions of both Ward Street and Waverly Avenue during the MWRA project and will quickly address areas that need immediate repair. If you see something that needs attention, let us know.

Questions?

Contact DPW Coordinator Terry Crowley at tcrowley@newtonma.gov or at 617-796-1006.

Notice a Pothole?

We're approaching pothole season when fluctuating temperatures and precipitation wreak havoc on our roads.

If you see a pothole or something else in the road that needs attention, please report it so we can fix it.

The fastest way to make a report (which can be done anonymously) is to download the Newton MA 311 app on a smart phone. With the app, you can take a photo of the pothole and send in a report right at the spot. (Open the app, press "report a problem," then press "streets," take a photo and follow the prompts.)

Newton's 311 system can also be accessed on a computer through the City's website [here](#). You can call 311 on your telephone by literally dialing 3-1-1 (you can leave a message if calling on weekends or after hours). Please provide a very specific location/address so our crews can find the pothole. Customer Service at 617-796-1000 can also take your report, Monday – Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Going to the Mattresses

Massachusetts is banning mattresses and box springs from trash disposal and requiring they be recycled starting next week on Nov. 1, 2022.

The City has a new mattress and box spring recycling program ready to go for residents to comply with this new regulation from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP).

Residents can drop off mattresses and box springs for recycling at Newton's Resources Recovery Center on Rumford Avenue in Auburndale for a fee of \$35 per piece. Residents can also request curbside collection for a fee of \$50 per piece (soon to be \$60) through the City's 311 system, by using the Recycle Right Newton app, or by calling Newton Customer Service at 617-796-1000.

We've contracted with a mattress recycling company to do the curbside collections in Newton weekly and to pick up those stored in the shipping container at the City's Resource Recovery Center on Rumford Avenue. The company will transport the mattresses and box springs to their mattress recycling facility.

Please know that futon mattresses and fold-out sofa beds are *not* included in the new MassDEP recycling requirement and can still be collected curbside as a bulky item for a fee of \$20.

To place a request for a mattress/box spring recycling or a bulky item pickup, visit the Newton [Make a Payment](#) page at newtonma.gov and scroll to the bottom..

Concerned by this new fee?

Contact state legislators to request that they support an extended producer responsibility law next session that would put the responsibility and cost for recycling these mattresses and box springs back on the manufacturers. Neighboring states of Connecticut and Rhode Island have had this law in place for mattresses and box springs since 2015. Newton has long been a leader in advancing extended producer responsibility. This legislative session I testified in support of this type of policy because it will help Newton and all municipalities, and just last month, MassRecycle honored me as Public Servant of the Year for my leadership in advancing these types of laws on behalf of Newtonians.

Questions? Contact Newton's Sustainable Materials Management staff at recycling@newtonma.gov.

Valuable Metals Make Catalytic Converters Thieves' Target

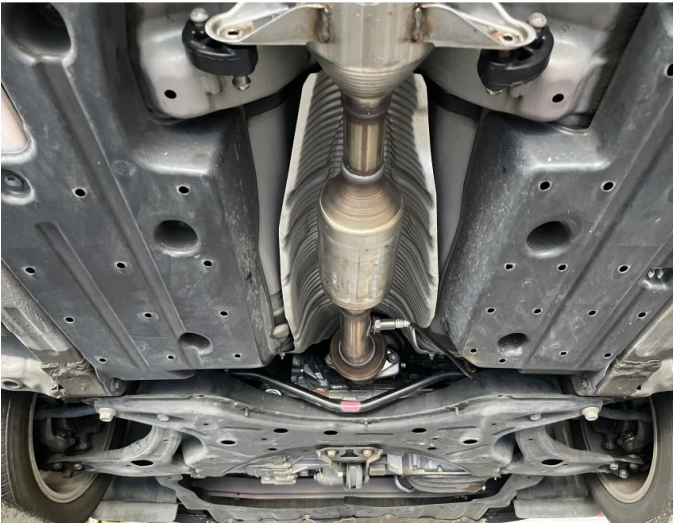
Across the country as well as right here in Newton, thieves with electric saws are shimmying under cars and cutting out catalytic converters. It takes a thief less than three minutes.

Catalytic converters are located between the engine and muffler in cars and trucks to convert pollutant gasses into less harmful exhaust.

Thefts of catalytic converters are rising with the price of the metals used in the devices. The metals include platinum, selling today for approximately \$932 an ounce, palladium selling for \$1,866 an ounce, and rhodium selling for \$14,200 an ounce.

(Photo: A catalytic converter in the middle of the underside of at Toyota Prius. Credit: KPBS)

Thieves can sell the stolen catalytic converters, about the size of a large loaf of bread, to



unscrupulous scrap metal operators and parts dealers, according to Newton Police Lt. Amanda Henrickson.

So far this year, Newton Police know of 66 thefts of catalytic converters, up from 31 reported through the same period in 2021. Nationally, the numbers mirror Newton. Claims to State Farm, the largest car insurer in the United States, show a 109% increase in catalytic

converter theft between July 2021 and July 2022.

Thirteen of the 66 thefts in Newton were reported over the past month since Sept. 27. The thefts are occurring across the city, including West Newton, Nonantum, Newton Corner, Auburndale/Lower Falls, Newtonville, along Route 9, and Newton Centre. (Two of the reports taken were for older thefts that occurred during the summer.) Some cars are particular targets as the location of the catalytic converters in the undercarriage of these vehicles are easier for a thief. Six of the 13 thefts were from Honda CRVs. Toyota Priuses are also high on the list of cars that are being targeted in Newton.

Without a catalytic converter, cars will start but the engine will be as loud as a car without a muffler. But, it's worse. Driving a car without a catalytic converter is illegal.

Most comprehensive physical damage car insurance coverage will pay to replace a stolen catalytic converter which can reach nearly \$2,000 in a Honda CRV.

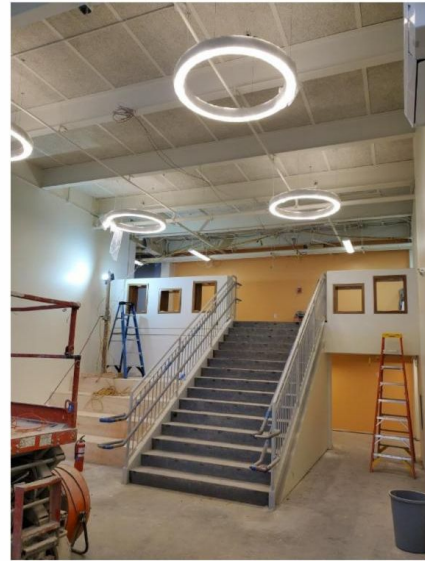
Newton Police recommend several steps we can all take to protect ourselves against these thefts:

- Park in a garage if you have one, or in a well-lit area.
- Park close to a building entrance or the nearest road in public parking lots, making it easier for people to see.
- Consider adding a video surveillance system where you regularly park.
- Adjust the security system on your car, if already installed, to activate from vibration such as what occurs from a thief's saw.
- Have the catalytic converters welded directly to the car's frame to prevent easy theft. Have the car's Vehicle Identification Number number engraved onto the device to prevent easy resale.
- Consider installing a security system designed specifically for catalytic converters.

What's the data on other property crimes in Newton over the first eight months of 2022 compared to 2021?

- Car break-ins are down from 95 to 52
- Motor vehicle thefts are down from 2 to 0
- House break-ins are down from 51 to 25

The new home for the Newton Early Childhood Program (NECP), the City's integrated pre-school at the former Horace Mann Elementary School building on Watertown Street, is heading toward the finish line.



The playground equipment is installed and rubberized surfacing is going in this week. The flooring inside is approximately 70% complete. Landscaping is done, and the exterior of the building is 99% wrapped up. Final paving will be happening in a few weeks. Cubbies are arriving in about 3 weeks, with the rest of the furnishings to follow as the move-in date over the holiday break in December and January fast approaches.

New MBTA Bus Routes: Some Pluses and Some Minuses

The MBTA released new bus routes yesterday, and if implemented as proposed, the new map includes changes to bus routes and stop locations, frequencies, and span of service that impacts Newton as well as the entire region.

Overall, we think the Revised Bus Network Map is better than the MBTA's previous proposal from last spring. Many of the changes we asked for have been implemented, including:

- Route 505 has been added back in the new proposal, similar to how it currently operates.
- Some service was added back to Adams Street and Crafts Street.

- The new bus route, Route 53, has been modified to go to Woodland Station (and not to Riverside Station via Grove Street) which helps riders to Newton-Wellesley Hospital.
- Routes generally will operate on a more consistent schedule, more frequently and/or with longer service hours.

Unfortunately, Newton's Express Bus network is still seriously compromised. The only express services now scheduled to operate are between Boston and Auburndale/West Newton (Route 505) and between Boston and Newton Corner (Routes 501 and 504).

Express Bus service will be discontinued on the Adams/Chapel/California corridor, including Auburndale and Waltham (formerly Route 558); the Crafts/Waltham Street/Waltham corridor (formerly Route 556); the Elm/River/Waltham corridor (formerly Route 553/554). No express bus service is proposed to operate along the Washington Street corridor between West Newton and Newton Corner.

For many residents and employees, we think that these changes will totally change the longstanding convenience of using public transportation to travel between the northern half of Newton and Boston without the need to transfer between vehicles.

We will continue to advocate for and work with the MBTA to restore midday and weekend service on the remaining express routes, particularly on the 504, and to provide more convenient express service between more areas of Newton and Boston, which was popular and well-used.

We will also continue to advocate for:

- The Route 60 extension from Chestnut Hill to Newton Centre.
- Buses routed so that they circle around Newton Corner, to provide service at both stops, especially Route 504 and Route 58.
- Frequencies increased on the new Route 58 on weekdays. This route is proposed to operate from Watertown Square to Newton Corner, continuing along the Washington Street Corridor to West Newton, then continuing along Elm Street and River Street to Waltham, ending at the Waltham Market Basket.

Explore the revised network at mbta.com. Send your feedback to the MBTA [here](#) and please copy David Koses, Newton's Transportation Coordinator, at dkoses@newtonma.gov.

*Interesting
morning with the
Charles River*



Regional Chamber and business leaders from Newton, Needham, Wellesley and Watertown. I enjoyed the panel discussion with stage with, from left, Chamber

President Greg Reibman, Needham Town Manager Kate Fitzpatrick, Wellesley Executive Director Meghan Jop and Watertown City Manager George Proakis.

Accessory Apartments Now Easier to Create

The City Council recently improved our ordinances making it easier for homeowners to create accessory apartments on their property. They approved three targeted amendments and made a minor language clarification.

Accessory apartments, sometimes called in-law apartments, are known officially as accessory dwelling units (ADUs). These small apartments within an owner-occupied home, or sometimes located in a detached structure or even in a former garage, are a useful source of housing, often used by family members.

The City Council updates include:

- Removing the requirement that a home must be at least four years old before an ADU could be added.
- Allowing small detached ADUs by-right when not larger than 900 total square feet, rather than having to get permission from the City Council.
- Relaxing the required side and rear setbacks, but still making these setbacks greater than other accessory buildings such as garages.

Newton first allowed accessory apartments in 1987, and the ordinance has been amended several times since, most recently in 2017. The City Council recently wanted to provide more flexibility for Newton homeowners to have accessory apartments, and proposed amendments have been working their way through the Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) since April 2022. We currently have 106 accessory apartments in Newton.

Find a brief summary of the changes along with the revised ordinance language [here](#). Interested in exploring adding an accessory apartment? Email Anthony Ciccariello at aciccariello@newtonma.gov who can help you learn more.

The new parking lot at the Newton Free Library is nearly complete. All that's left is some pavement markings and landscaping. The solar panels have been up and running since January, supplying about 36% of the Newton Free Library's electricity.



First Draft of Village Center Zoning Districts Maps

City Councilors on the Zoning and Planning Committee (ZAP) along with our Planning staff and the urban design consultant team from Utile have been focused on updating the zoning for our village centers. The zoning goals are:

- Economic vitality
- Housing availability
- Good design
- Sustainable buildings
- Appropriate amounts of parking
- Zoning designed for Newton's varied types and sizes of village centers

Planning staff presented a first draft of the proposed zoning maps, dubbed "Version 1.0," to City Councilors at the Monday night Zoning and Planning Committee. Check it out on the video recording from NewTV [here](#) starting at minute 14:10. The full power point presentation, including all the draft maps, are [here](#).

The ideas of residents, architects and builders have intentionally informed the work. In addition, Councilors on ZAP agreed in June on an overall village zoning framework which included three proposed Village Center zone districts that could be applied in twelve of our village center commercial areas.

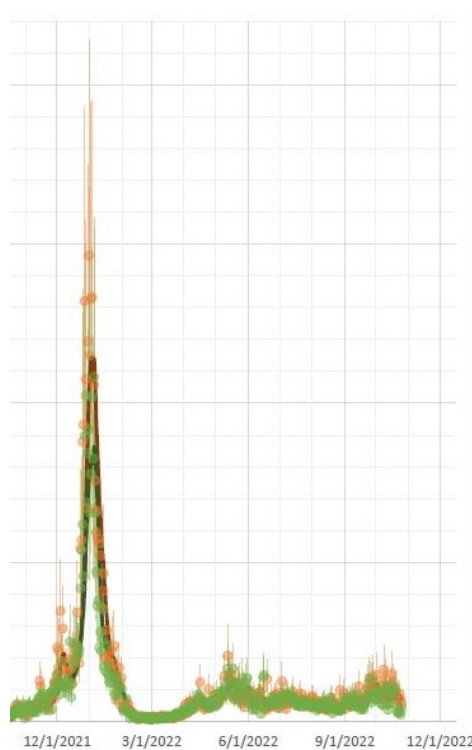
This first draft is intentionally meant to be reviewed and updated. Physical maps of the Version 1.0 zoning will be displayed at City Hall from mid-November through December. Also, bring your ideas and reactions to upcoming information sessions to be held later in November and early December. (We'll get the word

out about dates/times.) Please visit the Zoning Redesign web-page to learn more about Village Center zoning [here](#).

Current COVID-19 Case Data

We had 69 new confirmed cases of COVID - 19 since we last reported the data through Oct. 13, far fewer than the 166 we saw over the previous 15 days. The latest MWRA wastewater data, a reliable predictor of COVID trends, also shows a clear drop in the amount of virus in the Eastern Massachusetts water system.

MWRA Wastewater Tracking from Dec. 1 through Oct. 25, 2022



While this data is trending in the right direction, we have a dreadful reminder that this virus is still among us. We lost another Newtonian to COVID-19 this past month. Our cumulative total number of Newtonians who have died with COVID-19 since the pandemic began is now 209.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released new national COVID data this week.

The cumulative total number of COVID-19 cases in the United States is now 97,063,357, and the number of deaths is 1,065,152. The seven-day average (Oct. 13 to 19) of reported COVID-19 deaths is 321 per day in the United States.

There have been 632,905,664 vaccine doses administered, with 80% or 265.6 million people in the United States having received one or more doses and 68.2% or 226.6 million people having completed the primary series of vaccines.

In Newton, 100% of our residents have received one or more doses and 96% have completed the primary series of vaccines.

COVID-19 Boosters Available Ages 5+

Newton Health and Human Services is partnering with Holtzman Medical Group to offer the updated COVID-19 booster vaccines at 5 community clinics over the next five weeks.

These clinics are open to anyone ages 5+ and will offer Pfizer (ages 5+) and Moderna (ages 6+) boosters. Anyone who has completed a primary vaccine series is eligible to receive this booster at least 2 months after their last COVID-19 vaccine or booster. People who recently had COVID may consider delaying the booster by 3 months from symptom onset or positive test. Learn more about the booster vaccine [here](#).

The clinics will be held at the Newton Free Library (330 Homer Street) in the Druker Auditorium. Clinics are by appointment only. Make an appointment for any of the clinics [here](#).

Monday, Oct. 31, 2:00 C 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday, Nov. 2, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Monday, Nov. 7, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Tuesday, Nov. 22, 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

(Appointments for a clinic on Tuesday, Nov. 29, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. will be added to the Holtzman registration website in mid-November.)

Can't make it to these clinics? Check vaxfinder.mass.gov for locations in and around Newton to get a vaccine. Not sure when your last vaccine or booster was? Click [here](#) to download your vaccine record. Massachusetts also offers in-home vaccinations; find more information [here](#).

65+ Senior Flu Clinic on Tuesday

Newton Health and Human Services is hosting a flu clinic by appointment only for seniors (ages 65+) on Tuesday, Nov. 1, 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Newton Free Library, 330 Homer Street, in the Druker Auditorium. Make an appointment [here](#).

High dose flu vaccines will be available. If you're not sure which vaccine is right for you, find information at newtonma.gov/flu or reach out to your healthcare provider.

In addition, many other places give the flu vaccine in and around Newton. For a list, please visit newtonma.gov/flu or vaccines.gov.

Influenza (flu), a contagious respiratory disease, can lead to serious complications, hospitalization, or even death. Anyone can get the flu and getting

a flu vaccine is the single best way to protect yourself and your family. Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to friends and loved ones.

1 Lion Drive

Newton South High School has a new address – 1 Lion Drive.

Thanks go to Doug McCarthy for suggesting the idea and to the City Council for approving the docket item I submitted changing the name of a portion of Brandeis Road on behalf of the Newton South community with the support of Principal Tamara Stras and the Newton Public Schools administration.



To the neighbors on Brandeis Road: Don't worry–The name change does not affect any of the residences along Brandeis Road but rather includes only the portion of the road that is on Newton South property.

Happy Halloween

The forecast for Monday night, Oct. 31, is looking pretty good. Please leave on porch lights and slow down for all the ghosts and goblins.



Halloween festivities ramp up this Saturday and then wind down next weekend.

Saturday, Oct. 29

The "Countdown to Halloween" begins from noon to 3:00 p.m. with pumpkin decorating and a master carver, live music, cider

making, sweets and more at Coletti-Magni Park, 386-392 Watertown Street in Nonantum. Head back to the park in costumes at 7:00 p.m. for the candlelit Jack-O-Lantern Walk.

Newton's Annual Halloween Window Painting Contest is also on Saturday. Check out the art by students in grades 3 – 8 in store windows across the City.

Saturday, Nov. 5

Bring your carved pumpkins to the annual Pumpkin Smash at City Hall, 1000 Commonwealth Avenue, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Fling, toss and smash pumpkins in all sorts of ways – and then they'll all be composted by [Black Earth Compost](#) (our curbside composting partner).

Don't want outgrown Halloween costumes to haunt you? While you're at City Hall, get a jump on next year by swapping an old costume for another one. Newton's Costume Swap, hosted by the Newton Recycling Committee, runs simultaneously with the Pumpkin Smash from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. at City Hall. Wishing everyone a safe – and spooky - good time.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Learn more about the **Newton Highlands Village Enhancement Project**. Join a virtual meeting on Wednesday, Nov. 2 to hear about the community feedback we've heard to date and share your thoughts on making Newton Highlands even better. We're focusing on the sidewalks and roads, benches, lighting, trees and landscaping plus art & historic markers and stormwater systems. The meeting begins at 6:00 p.m. Learn more about the project and find the zoom meeting link [here](#).



P.P.S. Slots are available for Newton's Community **Document Shredding and Drug Take Back** Day, 8:00 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Nov. 12 at the Newton Resource Recovery Center, 115 Rumford Avenue. Advance sign-up is required. Call Customer Service at 617-796-1000 to make an appointment. The document shredding service is for residential materials only while unused and expired prescription medication will also be collected.

P.P.P.S. Questions about the **Override** proposal? Zoom in on any or all of the three opportunities next week to hear more and get your questions answered.

- Hear from our DPW team at a virtual roundtable discussion about streets and sidewalks at 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Nov. 1. Join the meeting [here](#).
- Chat with Senior Services Director Jayne Colino at a virtual chat on Wednesday morning, Nov. 2 at 9:00 a.m. Join [here](#).
- Hear from Department Heads from the City and Newton Public Schools administrators at a virtual Town Hall at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 3. Join [here](#).



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