



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Arlington Planning Department, 730 Mass Ave,
Arlington MA, c/o Laura Wiener

June 26, 2014 Arlington Transportation Advisory Committee

Report to the Board of Selectmen: Jason Street Issues and Recommendations

1. INTRODUCTION

On March 15, 2012, an August, 2011 petition [copy attached] signed by a number of Jason Street residents was forwarded by the Board of Selectmen [“Board”] to the Transportation Advisory Committee [“TAC”] for review of the traffic and safety concerns noted in the referenced petition, and recommendations for action.

Specifically, the petition requested that traffic from Spring Street be prohibited from entering the southern portion of Jason Street at that intersection between the weekday hours of 4:00 - 7:00 p.m.

In response, TAC submitted a report to the Board dated April 19, 2012. That report noted that the petition was similar to one submitted on September 24, 2001. TAC’s April Report then described both the opposition to that 2001 request and the steps taken subsequent to that first petition to improve traffic and safety conditions in the area of Spring Street and Jason Street.

TAC’s April response also suggested that closure of Jason Street as requested would create additional traffic and safety issues on neighboring streets. An offer was made to consider other alternatives. Those alternatives are the subject of this Report, as requested by the Board in the spring of 2012.

Transportation Advisory Committee Members:

Wayne Chouinard, John Hurd, Jeff Maxtutis (Vice-Chair), Marjorie Moores, Howard Muise (Co-Chair), Officer Corey Rateau, Jeanette Rebecca, Scott Smith, Richard Turcotte (Co-Chair), Laura Wiener (Secretary)

A Working Group [“WG”] was subsequently formed by TAC, with the following members:

Richard Turcotte, Working Group lead, and current co-Chair of TAC

Jeffrey Maxtutis, then co-Chair of TAC, current Vice-Chair

Howard Muise, then and still co-Chair of TAC

Edward Starr, former TAC Chair, current Emeritus

Steven Byrne, current Chairman of the Board of Selectmen, served as liaison.

Assistance was also provided by other TAC members as needed, most notably Officer Corey Rateau,

Arlington Police, and Town Engineer Wayne Chouinard.

TAC is also grateful for contributions of Adam Kurowski, the Systems Analyst/Director of GIS for the Town of Arlington, who provided a number of maps and related data to assist the WG during the many months of work on this project.

2. OBJECTIVES

- * Develop improvements to better manage traffic so as to improve safety for all modes of transportation
- * Develop equitable alternatives so as not to impose additional burdens on neighboring streets
- * Avoid measures that restrict access and reduce emergency response times
- * Maximize capacity/operations on Pleasant Street and Mass Ave to extent feasible to reduce motivation for using Jason et al for cut-throughs

3. EXISTING CONDITIONS

[NOTE: The Study Area is identified in **Attachment 1**]

- * Four pedestrian crosswalks in area provide access to two School Bus stops, Menotomy Rocks Park, and Spring Street
- * Sidewalks on both sides of Jason Street
- * High peak period traffic volumes and high 85th percentile speeds on narrow, curvy, hilly roadway
- * Lack of traffic control at intersection of Jason and Hillsdale leads to uncertainty about right of way
- * Limited sight-lines at Irving/Jason intersection
- * No significant crashes on upper Jason (5 minor) in last several years
- * Jason Street is 24'-25' in width
- * Posted speeds at both 20 MPH and 25 MPH
- * On-street parking allowed, except near Menotomy Rocks Park
- * Low truck volumes

4. PRIMARY ISSUES & CONCERNS (as noted by Residents)

[NOTE: **Attachment 2** provides a more detailed list of concerns as identified by residents, along with their proposed solutions]

- * High peak period traffic volumes
- * Perceived speeding, especially near Menotomy Rocks Park
- * Excessive truck traffic; not limited to rush hour periods
- * Poor sight lines at south end of Jason
- * GPS units apparently re-routing traffic into neighborhood when Pleasant St is backed up
- * Confusion at traffic "island" in front of Menotomy Rocks Park; who has Right of Way?
- * Stop sign at bottom of Jason & Spring Streets is frequently ignored
- * Poor sign placement/sign condition
- * Weave at Spring Street and Concord Turnpike

5. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

After reviewing available and existing data [prior traffic studies, accident reports, and the improvements noted in TAC's April 19, 2012 Report], along with preliminary site examinations, notice was sent to the residents of Jason Street by the Board, offering a community meeting on December 5, 2012 in the Selectmen's Hearing Room.

The meeting was solicited to obtain additional information, comments, and concerns from the residents. Approximately three dozen citizens attended.

Regular email exchanges have taken place with designated members living within the study area.

As will be noted below, a second community meeting to present (via PowerPoint) the WG's findings was held on March 29, 2014 in the Selectmen's Hearing Room.

6. WORKING GROUP PROCESS

Over the first few months of 2013, the WG reviewed the comments and suggestions from the December 5, 2012 meeting, and formulated a study plan to address the issues raised.

It was agreed that the scope of the WG's efforts should extend beyond Jason Street itself, with the intent of addressing related traffic issues on adjacent streets and to ensure fair treatment of all residents within the study area.

The following list represents the data collected by the WG to determine existing conditions:

- * Traffic Volume Counts on May 8 & 9, 2013 [**Attachments 3 & 4**] at ten locations identified by the WG as best representative of traffic flow and travel conditions affecting the study area

- * Vehicle Speeds [**Attachment 5**]

- * Travel Time Comparison (in the first week of June, 2013) [**Attachment 6**], conducted with the assistance of several residents as passengers to record data. Members of the WG traveled a number of different routes both north and south from the area at/near the Summer Street and Mystic Avenue intersection to the Concord Turnpike frontage road adjacent to Route 2. Those routes were identified by the WG as the primary alternatives for motorists seeking to avoid Pleasant Street at rush hour periods [a.m. & p.m]

- * Informal street measurements and more than 100 photographs were also taken. Several photographs of the Study Area are included as **Attachment 7**

In addition, TAC member and Town Engineer Wayne Chouinard offered new (draft) sketch drawings showing planned crosswalk and curb improvements at the intersection of Brentwood Road and Jason Street. The work described in the DPW plans are currently scheduled for the summer of 2014. DPW requested TAC consideration of its plans so that any work performed would be consistent with TAC's recommendations to the Board.

7. WORKING GROUP DETERMINATIONS

The WG assessed the data gathered, developed suggested improvement measures to bring to both the study-area residents and TAC for review, comments, and a formal vote [held at the TAC meeting on May 14, 2014] on the Recommendations presented in this report.

It was clear that the main source of excess traffic [and the related speed and safety issues] on Jason Street in particular was that street's use as a "cut-through" during both morning and afternoon/evening weekday rush hour for drivers by-passing the heavy traffic on Pleasant Street during those two periods.

* Southbound on Pleasant Street toward Route 2: using Jason Street is 7.5 minutes faster than Pleasant Street at morning rush hour. Comparable travel time in the afternoon rush hour period.

* Northbound on Pleasant Street toward Mass Avenue: using Jason Street is 5 minutes faster than Pleasant Street in afternoon rush hour. Comparable travel time in the morning rush hour period.

* Peak period travel time is 2 to 2.5 times faster on Jason Street versus Route 60

* Jason Street carries a higher share of North-South traffic volume in peak periods than other residential streets between Pleasant Street and Highland Avenue

- South of Irving: 5,700 per day
- South of Woodland: 3,700 per day
- North of Spring: 2,500 per day

* Pleasant Street Daily Volume: 19,300

* Traffic Volumes on Jason are high, particularly when noting its physical characteristics in the section south of Gray Street to Spring Street: a narrow residential street with hills and curves

* Measured 85th percentile speed equaled or exceeded the posted speed in all locations

* North of Spring, daily average speeds equaled or exceeded the speed limit (25 mph NB; 26 mph SB)

* Observations indicate vehicle operating speeds are too fast given roadway geometry and width, coupled with adjacent land use

* Truck volumes represent less than 0.6% of total traffic volume

- Only 2 vehicles with 6 or more axles were recorded during measurement periods

(Large truck use appear to be isolated cases and it is not necessary to treat as a separate issue from speed and volume)

8. RECOMMENDATIONS - Overview

[NOTE: A few days prior to the May 2014 TAC meeting at which the above results and recommendations were to be presented, a Jason Street neighborhood representative forwarded a letter dated May 13, 2014 [Attachment 8] to the TAC Co-Chairs summarizing their position, requests, and comments in response to the March 29 neighborhood meeting.

No specific action was taken by TAC on issues raised in that letter. TAC did inform the neighborhood representatives that it would take the issues under advisement as part of the WG's ongoing efforts to bring the matter to a conclusion, and invited representatives to present at the TAC meeting.

At the May 14, 2014 monthly TAC meeting (and with several representative residents in attendance), the full TAC reviewed the observations and considerations offered by the WG, in combination with the data previously gathered and presented to TAC at its April, 2014 meeting.

After further discussion on May 14, 2014, the full TAC agreed that conditions warrant improvements to safety and further evaluation of longer-term solutions. By unanimous vote, the following Recommendations are presented to the Board.

These are divided into two Phases:

- * **Phase 1: for immediate action** and
- * **Phase 2: additional study required.**

8a. RECOMMENDATIONS - Phase 1

- * DPW to install curb extensions at intersection of Jason Street/Brantwood Road
- * All crosswalks to be painted as soon as possible
 - Jason/Spring
 - Jason/Menotomy Rocks Park (Brantwood)
 - Jason/Woodland
 - Jason/Norfolk
 - Jason/Gray
 - Jason/Irving
- * Install seasonal pedestrian warning bollard at Menotomy Rocks Park crosswalk
- * Add advance crosswalk warning signs on Jason Street:
 - in both directions at Woodland street
 - in both directions at Menotomy Rocks Park crosswalk
 - Northbound on Jason between Gray & Irving

- * Replace faded or damaged signage as needed
- * Provide temporary radar speed trailer on Jason Street NB between Spring Street and Hillsdale Road
- * Install new Yield sign on Hillsdale Road approach to Jason Street intersection near traffic island
- * Install new Intersection Warning Sign (W2-2) on the Jason Street northbound approach to Irving Street with AHEAD Supplemental Warning Plaque (W16-9P)
- * TAC will draft a letter for the Board's consideration, to be sent by the Board to Mass DOT to provide additional signage and pavement markings to improve awareness of weave conditions on Concord Turnpike westbound between Route 2 westbound off-ramp, Spring Street connector, and Route 2 westbound on-ramp
- * **Do not** pursue the following suggestions recommended by residents:
 - Opening Venner Road to 24-hour access from Route 2 Frontage Road
 - Closing access road onto Spring Street from Frontage Road
 - Making Jason Street and Hillsdale Road a one-way pair between Spring Street and Hillsdale Road
 - Remove double yellow center line from Jason Street

8b. RECOMMENDATIONS - Phase 2

- * Consider permanent radar speed signs on Jason Street between Spring Street and Hillsdale Road
- * Consider raised crosswalk option with DPW, emergency services, and ABAC at:
 - Menotomy Rocks Park
 - Woodland Street
- * Discuss roundabout option with DPW and emergency services at Jason Street/Hillsdale Road