



TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

7 Twin Circle Drive, Arlington, MA 02474

To: Board of Selectmen, Arlington, Mass

From: Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

Subject: Traffic Circulation Around Stratton School

Date: 12 July 2010

A Working Group, consisting of parents, members of the TAC, APD and led by Principal Alan Brown, has been incrementally recommending traffic improvements at Stratton School for two years. There are improvements, but there are still significant problems. We believe a larger change is needed, and have broadened our look at the local traffic circulation. The issues we are trying to solve are:

- Heavy congestion at the intersection of Wheeler Lane and Mountain Avenue and along Mountain Avenue, including conflict between walkers and autos where there are no sidewalks.
- Inadequate parking for school staff.
- Inadequate parking for parents of kindergarten children at the school, who then tend to park in the fire lane.

Our suggested solution for these problems is to make Mountain Avenue one way east from Overlook to Dickson, and Pheasant Avenue one way west from Dickson to Overlook. This has advantages as described in the attached report. We suggest that these recommendations be put in place in time for the start of school in September 2010.

Specific Recommendations:

1. Make Mountain Avenue one way traveling east from Overlook to Dickson with signage as per attached Fig. 1.
2. Make Pheasant Avenue one way traveling west from Dickson to Overlook with signage as per attached Fig. 1.
3. Modify parking on Mountain and Pheasant approximately as indicated in Figure 2.

These recommendations have been discussed with Rick Iannelli, Director of Transportation for the schools, and Police Chief Ryan. Both have been supportive.

Respectfully submitted,

Ed Starr - TAC Co-Chair and Alan Brown - Principal Stratton School

Transportation Advisory Committee Members:

Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Jean Clark, Steve Kurland, Officer Corey Rateau, Jeff Maxtutis, Howard Muise, Michael Rademacher, Scott Smith, Edward Starr, Richard Turcotte, and Laura Wiener

Web site; www.arlingtonma.gov/tac

Traffic Circulation Around Stratton School

Current Situation

Stratton School is bounded on the north by Mountain Avenue and on the south by Pheasant Avenue. Pheasant is currently one way traveling east towards Dickson Avenue. Mountain is two-way. Both streets are only wide enough for either two travel lanes and one-side parking or one travel lane and two-side parking. (Width of Mountain - 24' 10", Pheasant - 27'). There is a circle drive into the school from Mountain that is used for drop-off and pick up, and a second designated drop-off area on Pheasant adjacent to the playground. Students enter the school building from the playground to the west of the school, except for kindergarteners that enter at the front of the school. The program for handicapped children is located in east end of the school, and a bus drops the students off in the circle just before school starts.

There is a parking lot for teachers with one-way flow from Mountain with entrance at the west edge of the school. It is also used as a drop-off by some parents. The lot size is inadequate for the number of staff at the school (short about 15), and residents have complained about all day parking on local streets.

Problems

1. There is heavy congestion at the intersection of Wheeler Lane and Mountain Avenue when children are dropped off and picked up. Autos drive south on Wheeler, turn right onto Mountain, then left into either the circle or the parking lot. Many of those exiting the circle or parking lot return to Wheeler to go back. All streets are narrow and turning radii are tight. The most difficult time is during the morning commuter hour, but the afternoon pickup is congested as well.
2. Students walk to school on Wheeler and along the east end of Mountain where there are no sidewalks and narrow streets with congestion.
3. The kindergarten parents often need to take their young children into class, which is just off of the circle. The circle is a fire lane and parking is properly not allowed. The adjacent parking lot is full, and Mountain across from the school is posted "no parking" because of the congestion. There are no legal parking spots for kindergarten parents to park except on the west end of Mountain, or on Dickson where they would become part of the pedestrians walking without sidewalks on Wheeler.
4. At the drop-off on Pheasant Avenue, the current traffic flow is such that the driver is against the curb and the passenger side opens into traffic. Many children get out of the car on the traffic side.

Potential Solutions

Figure 1 illustrates a change in traffic circulation that could substantially reduce these problems. These changes are:

- Make Mountain Avenue one-way from Overlook towards Dickson. This will:
 - o Stop traffic from Wheeler turning right onto Mountain to go to the school.
 - o Provide less congestion for pedestrians walking without sidewalks on Wheeler and Mountain east.
 - o Allow for 1 hour parking on Mountain close to the school to accommodate kindergarten parents and others.
 - o Allow for additional all day parking on Mountain for staff next to the school and opposite the school for residents. (See Fig 2.)
- For reasonable neighborhood circulation, Pheasant Avenue's direction would need to be reversed to be one-way from Dickson to Overlook. This will:
 - o Allow travel west to the school from Dickson instead of Mountain.
 - o Improve the passenger safety for drop-off by the playground.
 - o Allow for additional all day parking on Pheasant for staff next to the school. (See Fig. 2.)

Possible Downsides

The flow of traffic will shift, possibly as shown in Figure 3.

- We expect more morning traffic on Dickson, both east and west, as parents shift from Wheeler to Mountain or Pheasant.
- The outlet of Pheasant to Overlook will have more left turns, but there will be no left turns from Overlook into Pheasant.
- There will be more left turns from Overlook to Mountain, but no left turns coming out of Mountain onto Overlook.
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The most difficult time, as now, will be during the morning commute. Traffic congestion at the close of school is less since pick-up is more distributed in time and there is no commuter traffic.

These impacts appear to be significantly less than the expected safety improvements. The performance will be monitored during the fall to detect unforeseen issues and mitigations recommended as soon as practical.

Implementation

Roll-Out Plan: The goal is to implement this before the start of school in the fall 2010. This will be a noticeable change for residents adjacent to the school, and for some commuters. The change must be communicated to the school community, to the local neighborhood, and to the town. Communication to the local neighborhood and the school community should be accomplished as soon as practical. A public meeting should be planned at the school in late July. Announcements should also be placed in the Advocate.

Temporary signage should signal the forthcoming changes. The police electronic sign could be useful here as well as signs posted at the entrances to Mountain and Pheasant. This should be present at least two weeks before the change over.

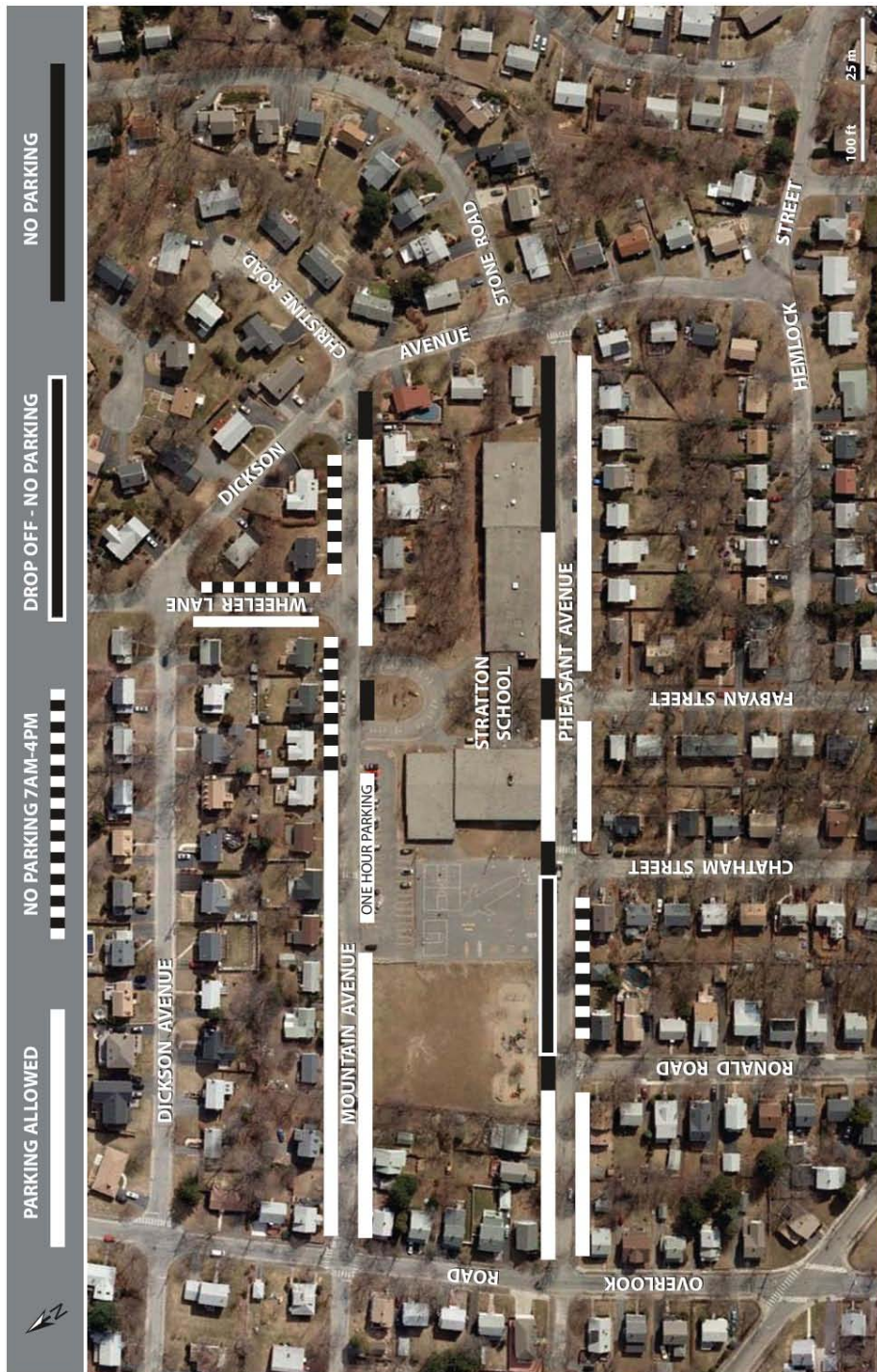
Specific Recommendations

1. Make Mountain Avenue one-way traveling east from Overlook to Dickson by installing the signs indicated in Figure 1 and enumerated in Appendix 1. Remove existing signs.
2. Make Pheasant Avenue one-way traveling west from Dickson to Overlook by installing the signs indicated in Figure 1 and Appendix 1. Remove existing signs.
3. Modify parking on Mountain and Pheasant Avenues as suggested in Figure 2.
4. Install temporary signage informing of the change two weeks before the change.



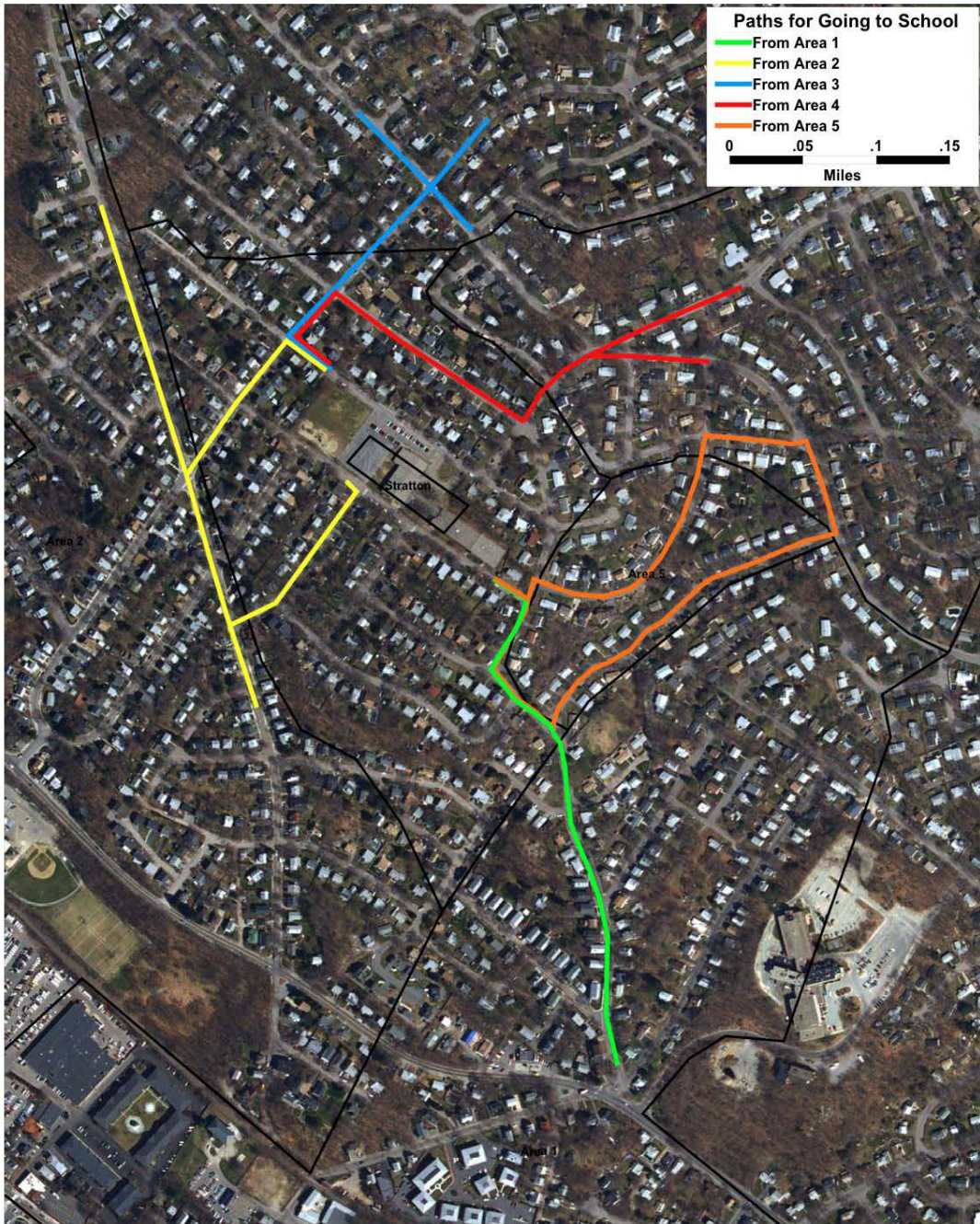
Proposed One-Way Traffic Flow Plan for Stratton School showing Sign Placement

Figure 1: Recommended Traffic Circulation and Signage



Proposed Parking Plan for Stratton School

Figure 2. Recommended Parking around School



Stratton Elementary School - Access Routes

Figure 2. Expected travel paths to Stratton in AM with changes

Appendix One: Signs Needed to Implement Traffic Changes at Locations on Figure 1

- 3 ea "Do Not Enter"
- 13 ea "One Way"
- 5 ea "No Right Turn"
- 4 ea "No Left Turn"
- 3 ea "Stop Signs"