

From: Howard Muisse <hmuise@verizon.net>
To: "DAmstutz@town.arlington.ma.us" <DAmstutz@town.arlington.ma.us>
Date: 06/10/2020 02:06 PM
Subject: Fwd: Chestnut Street crossing issues

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Could you add this to the calendar notes?

Howard

Howard Muisse, Chair
Arlington Transportation Advisory Committee

-----Original Message-----

From: Brian Ristuccia <brian@ristuccia.com>
To: Paul Schlichtman <paul@schlichtman.org>; hmuise@verizon.net; Jo Anne Preston <ja-preston@comcast.net>
Sent: Wed, Jun 10, 2020 10:55 am
Subject: Re: Fwd: Chestnut Street crossing issues

Paul and Jo Anne: congratulations to both of you on your recent (re)election, and thank you both for your advocacy on this topic.

Paul, thank you for getting my words into the public record. Howard, please consider this message my endorsement and signature on the written testimony below.

Finally, for those on TAC: If you didn't read this thread when it was first posted on Twitter or Facebook, you can find it at <https://twitter.com/brianr2600/status/1213174341963329537> - in addition to the narrative which Paul quotes below, the thread includes links to news about the crash, photos and annotated maps of the area, and a video showing a man waiting to cross at Chestnut Place as car after car zooms by.

On June 9, 2020 7:38:22 PM EDT, Paul Schlichtman <paul@schlichtman.org> wrote:

To the Arlington Transportation Committee::

Please accept this written testimony as public comment, and please include it in the record of the meeting of Wednesday, June 10, 2020.

I have been shown the attached concept for pedestrian safety for Chestnut Street, prepared by the Town Engineer. I am writing to tell you why I think Option 2 is absolutely unacceptable, and to urge you to seek a more comprehensive solution for pedestrians seeking to cross Chestnut Street.

Option 1 provides improvements for the intersection of Chestnut Street and Chestnut Terrace. The diagram states that Option 1 is not preferred, as it is too close to a signalized intersection.

The problem with that argument is that crossing at the signalized intersection is difficult and dangerous. It is difficult because it takes three light cycles to cross Chestnut Street (Cross from curb to first island. Cross from first island to second island. Cross from second island to curb.)

Making matters worse, any effort to cross from the northeast corner involves traversing a roadway that operates more like a freeway on-ramp than an element of a signalized intersection. When drivers approach to make the right from Chestnut when the light is red, you can watch their eyes track to Mystic Street traffic for an opportunity to merge, and they often fail to stop.

For this reason, I avoid crossing at this signalized intersection. I go out of my way to cross at Chestnut Terrace instead.

Eliminating that crosswalk would be a horrible inconvenience when I am trying to walk toward Mystic Street and Massachusetts Avenue.

I notice many other people walking from Mystic Street who choose to avoid crossing at Mystic and Chestnut, and choose to cross at Chestnut Terrace.

There is certainly a need for improving pedestrian safety on Chestnut Street. Removing the crosswalk is a step backwards.

I also wish to add the observations of Brian Ristuccia, who posted these words on the Arlington MA Safe Streets Facebook page. He makes some very important observations of the problems that extend to the two adjacent crossings, particularly the crossing at the corner of Chestnut Street and Mystic Street. For the reasons described by Mr. Ristuccia, I urge the TAC to develop a comprehensive plan to systemically improve pedestrian safety at all three crossings.:

Chestnut Street and Chestnut Terrace, the site of Tuesday's fatal crash, is a known sore spot for people walking. Neighbors complain about difficulty crossing the street due to automobile drivers who are unwilling or unable to follow the rules of the road.

Even when rush hour traffic volume makes it impossible for car drivers to speed through without yielding, drivers stuck in traffic congestion will creep forward towards the intersections, blocking the crosswalks with their cars, trucks, and SUVs.

There is also a persistent problem with drivers who park in the daylight space surrounding the crosswalks, or even directly on top of them, reducing visibility for people walking who want to cross the street.

Alternatives to the uncontrolled crosswalk at Chestnut Terrace include a traffic signal at the intersection with Mystic Street, and a bucket of orange flags at the intersection with Medford Street.

For those who say our victim might have been safer had she crossed at the light, take a closer look at that intersection, which involves a terrifying 3-stage, multi-beg-button crossing traversing the end of Chestnut street and two separate slip lanes.

Located just inside the Arlington Center HSIP Pedestrian Crash Cluster, where dozens of people have been injured by automobile drivers in the past decade, this intersection has persistent box blocking and red light running by drivers.

At the busy intersection with Medford Street, car drivers often proceed around the corner at potentially lethal speeds when not slowed by congestion. A bucket of orange flags serves as a stand-in for more effective safety measures.

Of course, flags are an embarrassingly flimsy intervention for a crosswalk in a school zone, proximate to a high injury crash cluster, elderly residences and attractions, and elevated motor traffic speeds and volumes.

I am tremendously frustrated that as a town we have collectively allowed the conditions which force our most vulnerable residents, workers, and students to choose between personal safety and their right to travel between home, work, church, and school.

This entire area needs big changes. We can, and we should fix these problems. There's no need to wait until the next person is maimed, crippled, or killed. We must do better. Faster. Sooner.

At minimum, the slip lanes need to-be removed (turn onto Chestnut St; and turn onto Mystic). Would help immensely with simplifying signal stages for better pedestrian safety. Also consider entrance to Russell Parking Lot; merge of Medford St+Chestnut St.

That's Russel Common, an area originally covenanted to the town for use as "a public walk or common" but subsequently paved over. Who would have thought conditions could be so hostile for people walking in an area where we literally paved the town common to put up a parking lot?

In 1866, the town voted to accept the lot of land donated by the late Hon. James Russell for a public walk or common, on the conditions named by the donor in his will devising the same. It was named Russell Park in 1867

Paul Schlichtman
Secretary, Arlington School Committee & Town Meeting Member, Precinct 9
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"We must develop and maintain the capacity to forgive. He who is devoid of the power to forgive is devoid of the power to love. There is some good in the worst of us and some evil in the best of us. When we discover this, we are less prone to hate our enemies." - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Baseball Progress Monitoring:
<http://www.schlichtman.com/baseball.html>