



Transportation Advisory Committee

Date: January 13, 2021.

Time: 7:00 PM – 9:00 PM.

Location: Conducted via Remote Participation (Zoom).

Minutes.

1. Administration.

Members in Attendance: Dan Amstutz, Michael Barry, Bill Copithorne (for Wayne Chouinard), Lenard Diggins, Ray Jones, Melissa Laube, Jeff Maxtutis, Howard Muise, Tycho Nightingale, Corey Rateau, Scott Smith, Laura Swan, and Shoji Takahashi.

Members Missing: Wayne Chouinard.

Members of Public in Attendance: Linda Epstein, Christa Kelleher, Alison Piasecki, and Thomas Proctor.

The Chair read the script for remotely conducted meetings, referred the members to the agenda attachment entitled "Governor Charles Baker's 3/12/2020 Executive Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law," announced that the meeting was being recorded and reviewed the meeting ground rules.

The minutes of the December 9, 2020 meeting were approved on a roll call vote.

Howard Muise noted that correspondence was received after the agenda was posted from Jennifer Griffith regarding Thorndike Place. Her comments were discussed at the meeting.

2. Public Comments.

There were no public comments.

3. Town Issues/Activities.

A. Bill Copithorne provided an update from the Department of Public Works (DPW):

The Lake Street/Minuteman Bikeway signal has been running for its 30-day calibration period, and DPW is scheduling the final signal inspection.

Laura Swan noted that parents of Hardy students expressed confusion on the signal phasing of the traffic light at Brooks Ave and Lake Street, in particular related to yellow arrow signal.

Bill Copithorne responded that the traffic light is supposed to provide Hardy School traffic (Brooks Road westbound) an advanced left turn indication. DPW has reviewed the signal phasing at different times and has requested the contractor check the programming multiple times. Scott Smith commented that overall the Lake Street and Bikeway intersection is working pretty well: drivers generally are not blocking the crosswalk. However, at the peak morning time (~8:05am as Hardy School opens), he observed northbound (toward Mass Ave) motorists running the red light or blocking the crosswalk. It appeared that automotive traffic was backing up and coordination between the Bikeway and Brooks Ave lights was not working. These traffic lights are remote access (the first and second ones in Arlington); DPW will have the contractor confirm the programming.

The Town continues to see automobiles trying to turn onto the Bikeway. Bill Copithorne hypothesized that drivers might be turning in response to GPS Navigation systems saying "turn left" near the Bikeway (meaning at Margaret St.) causing confusion. Corey Rateau requested that the DPW sign shop make and install "No Turns Except Bicycles" signs to inform drivers on both approaches. In addition, a temporary bollard will be placed in the middle of the Bikeway to discourage automobiles from turning onto it.

Sunnyside Ave. sidewalks on the east side are now complete. Contractor will return in the spring to finish missing curbing and ADA-compliance updates on the west side. Bump out was installed between Michael and Marrigan Streets to preserve healthy trees at that location. Neighbors had expressed concern about the loss of parking; DPW has not received any complaints at this time.

Roadwork planning for 2021 is ongoing.

B. Dan Amstutz provided an update from the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD).

MBTA's Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB) has responded to criticisms of its "Forging Ahead" service cuts and is restoring certain cuts such as ferry service to Hull and Hingham. However, services cuts to buses, in particular, likely will happen resulting in decreased frequency, combined routes, and suspended service.

Routes 62 and 76 already have been combined; Routes 78 and 84 soon will be combined. Routes 79 and 80 will be suspended for an indefinite

period. These changes although “temporary” might be on a more permanent basis.

The Federal Government COVID-19 relief bill passed recently will provide between \$250 million and \$300 million to the MBTA, yet most of the funding will go to capital funding instead of restoring service. This is a controversial decision, particularly for communities that are concerned about service cuts. The State Legislature passed a transportation bond bill that is waiting for the Governor’s signature. As Scott Smith pointed out, several items would directly impact Arlington:

- \$7 million Mass Ave (between Pond Lane and Bartlett Avenue)
- \$8 million Russell Common Parking
- \$75,000 Lowell Street by Arlington Reservoir
- \$5 million Minuteman Bikeway
- \$300,000 BRT pilot on Broadway (Arlington and Somerville)

In addition, funding was included for a study to extend the Redline to Arlington. Len Diggins noted that it was requested by Sean Garballey.

The Connect Arlington Plan is continuing. The consultant is receiving comments and packaging them to address them efficiently. This process will be complete at the end of February.

The Town will be submitting the League of American Bicyclists “Bike Friendly Community” Application due February 10. Arlington received extensions due to COVID-19 and changes in the application.

C. Corey Rateau provided an update from the Police Department (APD).

APD received a request for parking exemption on Sunnyside Ave. APD is also working on crash investigations (not involving pedestrians or cyclists).

APD received an annual traffic grant “Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over”. This grant permits equipment to-be obtained, and APD will be acquiring a portable speed sign with directional capability.

TAC purchased 400 pedestrian flags, which were picked up and presently are being stored in Corey Rateau’s office. Invoice/payment for pedestrian flags will be confirmed.

The Town has now had a few weeks of Pay-By-Phone for area parking. There have been some equipment glitches, which were rectified by adjusting settings. The system is running well on the enforcement side.

Due to Verizon 3G phaseout, single-space meters will need to be upgraded. The contractor will be providing an estimate for upgrade cost.

4. Update: Thorndike Place: TIA Review.

Howard Muise explained that the Thorndike Place TIA review was conducted by the Executive Committee and submitted through the DPCD. Unfortunately, there was no time to bring the report to the TAC for comment before submission as TAC received the request just after the December meeting, and the report was due quickly. (The ZBA has a time limit on deliberations.)

The ZBA meeting for the TIA was held yesterday (January 12, 2021) to review the Thorndike Place application. Vanasse & Associates (VAI) presented for the developer; BETA Group (BETA) presented as the Town peer-review contractor. Howard Muise and Jeff Maxtutis attended.

Jeff Maxtutis added that he agreed with the BETA review overall and made additional comments.

- The development includes a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program, and the applicant should consider subsidized T passes for its residents.
- The development includes 1.3 parking spaces/unit, which is too high for transit-oriented development (TOD). The trend is towards 1.0 space/unit: MAPC Study, which includes Arlington, suggests a lower ratio. The ZBA also questioned the number of parking spaces/unit.
- It is not clear that the Vehicle Mode Share of Vox on Two should be applied to this development.
- The level-of-service (LOS) improvement on Lake Street is not believable. VAI has said that it will reexamine the LOS analysis. Relatedly, the queue length on Lake Street from Route 2 to the Minuteman Bikeway should be quantified.
- Quantify traffic volume on the side streets by the development as this is a quality of life issue for the neighborhood. Importantly, review the turn restrictions, which are incorrectly noted in the TIA.
- Consider relocating the Bluebikes Station to better serve the residents and neighborhood.
- Impact of construction on the local roads should be identified. A management plan should be created to minimize impacts on the neighborhood.
- A post-occupancy traffic study should be conducted to ascertain the necessity of traffic calming for mitigating traffic impacts from the development, if necessary.

Howard Muise added that access to Thorndike Place will be via Littlejohn Street directly from Lake Street. There are turn restrictions on neighborhood streets in that area, which are not accounted for in VAI's calculations. Forcing Thorndike Place residents to drive to Burch Street would increase traffic impact on the neighborhood. He noted that residents of Littlejohn Street were in attendance and commenting at the ZBA Meeting. VAI will address these traffic movements.

Dan Amstutz informed that DPCD had comments on the site plan. In particular, the planned bike room is designed for 144 spaces, yet the sizing was not specified. There is a question as to whether the space conforms to Town guidelines. Also, the development plans include four-foot sidewalks, whereas the Town guidelines specify five-foot sidewalks.

5. Update: Mass Ave at Appleton St.

DPW received draft recommendations from Green Consulting, which it will be reviewing in the next few days. Initial concepts include a short-term plan and long-term solution. Bump outs are being proposed. One challenge is slowing left-turning traffic. DPW is aiming to share the proposal with the TAC at the next meeting. Shared Streets bollards might be used to test designs.

Dan Amstutz added that there are development pressures on the area, such as 1165R Massachusetts Ave. We should consider examining the entire corridor from Forest Street to Lowell Street. There is a MassWorks Infrastructure Grant due in the fall that might be useful.

Dan Amstutz inquired whether the design review committee will be reviewing the proposal and the next steps including a timeline on improvements.

Linda Epstein voiced support for Dan Amstutz's comments. She added that she is on the Design Review Committee and has not received any information.

Thomas Proctor, whose brother, Charles Proctor, was killed at the intersection in May 2020, inquired about the cause for the delay with the Design Review Committee. Dan Amstutz responded that Committee members have been selected, although he did not know if they were approved by the Select Board.

Bill Copithorne and Dan Amstutz will investigate and provide additional information.

6. Update: Chestnut St. Traffic Calming

At the last meeting, the TAC discussed possible changes for short-term and long-term solutions. Dan Amstutz noted that, to make a more transparent process, the Town will proceed with public outreach to share the ideas with the community (outside of TAC). There are many stakeholders in the area: Armstrong Ambulance, Massachusetts Dept of Children and Families, Saint Agnes Parish, Arlington Catholic High School, and numerous businesses. The plan is to send a mailing to the abutters and convene a public meeting to receive their feedback.

Laura Swan mentioned that cross sections of Chestnut Street have been presented. She requested that proposed new lane configurations be included on a map. Dan Amstutz responded that it would be good for communicating with abutters.

Melissa Laube asked whether the ideas presented were a final recommendation. Howard Muise responded that they were not final and TAC will engage with the community before proposing options and making formal recommendations.

7. Update: Thompson School Traffic Calming

Laura Swan has been in contact with Judy Crocker, the Safe Routes to School Coordinator for our region. Judy Crocker will have a report and recommendations to present to Thompson School at the end of January or February. There has been correspondence with other people in the community regarding crosswalks, stripping, and roadway markings. Catherine Farrell (EALS) had provided photos of loading and drop off zones near Thompson School.

Christa Kelleher, of Medford Street and Town Meeting Member from Precinct 5, spoke of her concern for safety in the area. She emphasized that safety issues have been percolating for a number of years among residents: Precinct 5 hosted a meeting with Asst. Town Manager James Feeney. They discussed, for example, navigation apps rerouting traffic off of Mystic Valley Parkway and onto River Street towards Thompson School. This has been exacerbated by construction vehicles. Particularly concerning intersections are (1) Exeter Street and Park Street where there are no crosswalks and many children; and (2) Park Street, Coral Street, and Mystic Valley Parkway, where children might be riding bicycles or skateboards.

Dan Amstutz inquired about the scope of the Safe Routes to School assessment and the size of the area that sends students to Thompson. Laura responded that Safe Routes to School is assessing arrival and dismissal only and is not conducting a walk audit at this time. She and Christa Kelleher informed the committee that the Thompson School area is far reaching, ranging from Webcowet Rd, where crossing Route 60 is

problematic, to areas just north of Spy Pond.

8. Update: Washington Street Issues

Melissa Laube will be leading a working group for Washington Street. She will be joined by Tycho Nightingale, Scott Smith, and Shoji Takahashi.

9. Update: Bates Road at Mass Ave

Bill Copithorne formally visited the intersection four times to observe traffic movements. At those times, he never observed a left-turning motorist stuck. Westbound traffic would clear the intersection, permitting eastbound traffic to turn left. Corey Rateau requested clarification on observed queuing. Bill Copithorne responded that he did observe a few automobiles queuing for the left turn. The westbound traffic would clear the intersection and then the left-turning queue would make their movement. He expressed no concerns on vehicle movements.

Howard Muise added that the TAC can revisit this issue when traffic returns to pre-COVID levels. Corey Rateau concurred, added that it is difficult to make determinations during COVID. Dan Amstutz added that there is a functional design report from the Mass Ave Project (2010), which he will send to Howard Muise and Bill Copithorne. Notably, the left turn at Bates Road was not identified as problematic in the report.

Scott Smith asked if the traffic signal is actuated by detection. Bill Copithorne responded that is actuated by detection and there is rush-hour coordination with the traffic signal at Linwood Street/Foster Street. DPW has had complaints on Marion Road about automobiles not being detected. DPW will review and check with the contractor.

10. Discussion: Mass Ave Crosswalks at Water St., Town Hall, and Academy St.

The Executive Committee identified Mass Ave crosswalks in Arlington Center as a TAC-initiated project. Howard Muise explained that the Town included these crosswalks in its "Phase 2" Mass Ave planning project from Franklin Street to Mill Street.

Jeff Maxtutis reported that the members visited the site today to conduct observations looking towards short-term and long-term improvements. The crosswalks are at Academy Street, Town Hall, and Water Street/Peg Spengler Way (Robbins Library).

In the short term, the working group discussed adding (1) signage, such as pedestrian crosswalk signs or rectangular rapid flash beacons

(RRFB) and (2) pavement markings such as crosshatches. Flex posts might be useful to add in the no parking zones.

In the longer term, raised crosswalks, bump outs, and extending the median at Water Street were discussed. The working group will consider design methods to prevent left turns out of the library parking lot and from Water Street.

The group spent most of the time at Peg Spengler Way (Robbins Library). Presently, pedestrians face a multilane crossing without refuge. There is an opportunity to reduce crossing length and improve visibility of pedestrians by adding a bump out.

Dan Amstutz added that there is visibility problem at the Town Hall crosswalk. The group discussed removing one parking spot on the northside of Mass Ave. prior to the crosswalk. Amstutz will follow-up with Ali Carter about removing the parking. Corey Rateau agrees with removing the parking spots to enhance pedestrian visibility.

11. Discussion: Park Ave at Appleton St

Howard Muise provided a short background discussion on assessing the need for a traffic signal at the intersection of Park Ave and Appleton Street. Traffic volumes were obtained pre-pandemic, and analysis showed that the intersection meets the requirements for a signal. At this time, an analysis is required to examine the effects of a traffic signal at this location on traffic moving through the Park Ave. corridor. TAC is inquiring with DPW on the availability of funds for this analysis.

Bill Copithorne mentioned that DPW will have its budget adjusted this coming year.

Dan Amstutz added that recently there was a motor vehicle crash at Park Ave and Appleton Street, and nearby residents are interested in safety measures.

12. Discussion: Mystic River to Minuteman Bikeway

Dan Amstutz provided an overview of a "Visionary Project" to connect the Mystic River Path with a route through Buzzell Field Park to the Minuteman Bikeway. The connection will create a bikeway loop around East Arlington and Arlington Center. Presently, the Mystic River Path between River Street and the Medford Street rotary is rocky and rooted. The path is steep as it approaches the roadways, in particular Medford Street.

The Town is applying for a Mass Trails Grant, due February 1, to pay for a study to examine the potential scope, construction phasing, and

funding (such as CPA funds, Mass Trail Funding, other) for this trail-link project.

Over the years the Town has received many complaints regarding the Arlington and Medford rotaries at either end of the Medford St. bridge across the river. In 2013, an oil-tanker truck overturned, spilling thousands of gallons of oil. Also, the Town Manager had contacted DCR years ago about pedestrian safety, notably the absence of crosswalks. Scott Smith agreed about the need for fixing the rotaries at the Arlington/Medford line, particularly as it relates to pedestrian crossing. He noted that the loop around Mystic River is popular among pedestrians, runners, and cyclists.

Dan Amstutz added that the Medford rotary is on the Arlington complete streets plan. The Town is in discussion with Medford regarding the Medford-side rotary as part of potential improvement plans. In addition to discussions with Medford, the Town is communicating with Arlington Environmental, the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA), and the Solomon Foundation. DCR has a non-public trail study in progress. Laura Swan added that the DCR website mentions a loop from the rotary to lower Mystic as "in progress" as part of the "Clippership Connector". She also thinks that a bike path would be welcomed by the community.

Bill Copithorne informed that MyRWA is a strong proponent of access to the river. MyRWA and DCR would like a link throughout the whole Mystic River Reservation. He asked how DCR land ownership would impact funding and what related permits would be required for the project.

Mike Barry concurs that the project is a great idea; the community will appreciate it. He suggests prioritizing the route near Buzzell Field because of the narrow roadways.

Dan Amstutz requested a letter of support for the grant from the TAC, and Howard Muise agreed to provide one.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm.