

Review of Massachusetts Avenue/Appleton Street Area Parking Study

By Jeff Maxtutis and Melissa Laube, TAC members

Date: March 23, 2023

The Arlington Select Board requested that the Arlington Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) conduct a review of Mass Ave/Appleton Area Parking Study that was performed by the Arlington Department of Planning and Community Development, March 10, 2022. The TAC was requested to review the technical elements of the study for consistency with parking industry standards and methodology. A small working group was formed consisting of TAC members with experience in conducting parking studies and surveys. Comments are noted in **Bold** font below.

Study Area and Methodology

The study area for the parking study is shown below.

Mass Ave/Appleton Parking Supply Review



Map created by Daniel Amstutz, Department of Planning and Community Development, September 2021

The study area contains 136 on-street parking spacing consisting of the following roadway segments and spaces:

- Mass Ave from Fessenden Road to Richardson Ave (97)
- Forest Street from Mass Ave to Peirce St (7)
- Appleton St from Mass Ave to Acton St (14)
- Appleton Place from Mass Ave to Burton St (7)
- Burton St from Appleton Place to Mass Ave (11)

Parking occupancy and turnover surveys were conducted in mid-October on the following days and times:

- Thursday October 7: 8 AM – 6 PM
- Tuesday October 12: 12 PM – 4 PM
- Wednesday October 13: 10 AM – 12 PM
- Thursday October 14: 8:30 AM – 10:30 AM
- Saturday October 16: 9 AM – 12 PM
- Tuesday October 19: 1 PM – 2 PM

Weekday surveys were conducted on at least two separate days for all survey periods except between 4:00 and 6:00 PM which was collected on one day. The Saturday survey were collected on one day. Parking occupancy and vehicle turnover was recorded for every parking space once per hour during the survey period. **No parking data was collected for Sunday morning when St. Athanasius Church typically holds service (pre-pandemic) or at other times during the evening when there may be activities at the church.**

The parking survey methodology, data collection, and analysis was conducted according to industry guidance documented by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) report “How to do a Parking Study”. This report is generally consistent with other industry guidance documents. **The parking surveys and analysis results were generally conducted accordingly to standard industry practice.**

The study reported that the parking surveys were conducted when while Arlington Public Schools were in session; traffic volumes had rebounded in the fall from people returning to work and conducting business as usual; and COVID-19 infections were at a low point at the time of data collection, and the Omicron surge was still several weeks away. **The report did not note if businesses in the study area were operating at normal Pre-COVID-19 business hours, operating at reduced hours, closed as a result of COVID-19, or vacant. If some businesses were closed or operating at shorter than normal business hours during October 2021, the parking surveys may have recorded lower than normal parking occupancy in the study area.**

The report states that parking occupancy at 85 -90 % is the ideal situation for on-street spaces and that “if utilization is shown to be less than 85-90%, the parking supply is considered to be under capacity or under-utilized.” **It is noted that parking utilization rates vary by time period and may be under capacity (85%) for some periods and over 90% for other periods.**

The Conclusion of the report notes that average parking utilization on Mass Avenue (97 spaces) is 42% with a high of 56.3%. **While these figures are correct, reporting just the averages in the Conclusion may**

be misleading. The following are examples of segments of Mass Ave that had utilization rates significantly higher than the average at specific times:

- **North Side of Mass Ave between Forest Street and Appleton Street**
 - **Thursday, October 7, 2021- occupancy rate of 88.9% at 11 AM, over 60% at 2 PM, and over 50% at Noon and 1 PM**
 - **Saturday, October 16, 2021 - occupancy rate 77.8% on at 11 AM.**
- **North Side of Mass Ave between Lowell Street and Richardson Street**
 - **Thursday, October 7, 2021 – occupancy rate over 90% at 11 AM and over 80% at 10 AM and Noon**
 - **At least 70% occupancy for 15 hours out of 22 survey hours**
- **South Side of Mass Ave between Dunkin Donuts and Appleton Street**
 - **Occupancy did not exceed 33% during any survey period**
- **South Side of Mass Ave between Appleton Place and Burton Street**
 - **Thursday, October 7, 2021 – occupancy 60% at 11 AM and Noon and 50% at 10 AM**

The Conclusion further states that “ In summary, this study shows there is sufficient on-street parking supply in this area, and any further repurposing of on-street parking spaces would be possible to facilitate safety and accessibility improvements for pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, and transit users.” **We agree that, based on the report findings, there is currently sufficient on-street parking supply in the area overall to accommodate demand. However, it should be noted that while there appears to be enough additional parking capacity to accommodate the overall demand if some spaces are repurposed or removed, there may be an impact on motorist’s accessibility to some land uses. The location of specific on-street spaces in relation to individual businesses is an important factor affecting the demand for or need for those specific parking spaces. In addition, changing business conditions and planned redevelopment in the area have the potential to increase the overall demand for parking.**