

Special Speed Regulations - TAC Discussion

- Request from Town Manager / Select Board to TAC
- Prior TAC activities
- Scope of working group
- Detailed assessment
- Recommendations

Town Manager / Select Board Request

TAC Referral - Special Speed Regulations

Jim Feeney <jfeeney@town.arlington.ma.us>

Tue, Jan 23, 2024 at 11:03 AM

To: "laura.swan.tac@gmail.com" <laura.swan.tac@gmail.com>

Cc: John Alessi <jalessi@town.arlington.ma.us>, Eric Helmuth <ehelmuth@town.arlington.ma.us>

Good morning Laura,

I hope you are well. If at all possible, I was hoping TAC would be able to prioritize taking up the attached matter at its upcoming February meeting.

In brief, Arlington has a number of regulatory speed limits that exceed the statutory speed limit in various parts of Town. Instead of approaching this matter in a piece-meal fashion per this specific request for Broadway, as well as last night's request for Park Ave., it seemed prudent to consider the merits of this measure as a whole. TAC previously made a recommendation to the Select Board about the town-wide speed limit. Attached is a compilation of the materials I have gathered.

Two recent issues prompted this request:

- A request was made by the Broadway Neighbors Coalition to remove the 30 MPH speed limit signs on Broadway and Warren streets
- The presentation to the SB regarding Park St requested lowering Speed Limits there

This prompted a larger discussion regarding all of the Special Speed Regulations in Arlington and resulted in this request to Tac.

Prior TAC Activities

- In 2017 TAC sponsored a working group to address the adoption of a town-wide 25 MPH Speed Limit (prior was 30 MPH)
- The working group recommended:
 - Adoption of the 25 MPH Speed Limit
 - Posting of “Thickly Settled Speed Limit 25 Townwide Unless Otherwise Posted” signs at main roadways entering Arlington
- This was approved by the Select Board and is in place today
- Also identified by the working group were two groups of streets that did not fall under the new limit:
 - Roads under State jurisdiction: Route 2 and Mystic Valley Parkway
 - Roads (or parts of roads) that were under Special Speed Regulations (details to follow)

Scope of Working Group

- There are 10 Special Speed Regulations (SSRs) in force in Arlington
- Those SSRs cover the 26 streets as shown to the right
- Those 26 streets are broken further into 96 street segments within the SSRs
- For purposes of assessment, discussion, and recommendations the street segments were broken out into the following groupings:
 - > 25 mph – 31 street segments
 - 25 mph – 49 street segments
 - 20 mph – 16 street segments

Street

Appleton St
Bow St
Broadway
Dow Ave
Eastern Ave / Spring St
Forest St
Gardner St
Gray St
Hamlet St
Highland Ave
Jason St
Lake St
Medford St
Mountain St (Stratton School Zone)
North Union St (Thompson School Zone)
Oak Hill Drive
Park Ave / Park Ave Extension
Paul Revere Rd
Pheasant Ave (Stratton School Zone)
Ridge St
River St
Rt 2 - Frontage Road
Rt 2A - Summer St
Rt 3 - Mystic St
Rt 60 - Pleasant St / Chestnut St / Medford St
Wachusett Ave

Detailed Assessment: > 25 mph Street Segments

- The working group adopted the following axiom when addressing this group:
 - “Is there any reason the Speed Limit should be higher than the Townwide Speed Limit of 25 mph?”
- For every street segment, the answer was “No, it should not be higher.”
 - The exception to the above was Rt 2 – Frontage Road which is a MassDOT-owned street
 - Arlington is not able to rescind SSRs on a MassDOT-owned streets
 - Rt 2 – Frontage Road is therefore out of scope for the working group
- The recommendation from the working group is to rescind all remaining street segments > 25 mph
- The additional recommendation is to start this process using Broadway and Park Ave to work out the process to rescind before starting on the remaining street segments

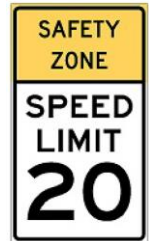
Detailed Assessment: 25 mph Street Segments

- The SSRs were created in the 1970s
- As such, a number of street segments were given a regulatory speed limit of 25 mph which was lower than the 30 mph Thickly Settled Speed Limit
- In working group discussions, the issues of appropriate signage and number of signs were raised
 - With the adoption of the Townwide 25 mph Speed Limit, signs went up at the entrances to Arlington
 - The only other locations that have signage are the segments covered by SSRs
 - The 2021 MassDOT Procedures for Speed Zoning, allow Arlington to post (MA-W13-4):
 - Arlington does not currently have an established approach for either the number or location of additional signage indicating the Townwide limit
- This discussion is not directly tied to the Town Manager / SB request, as such, the recommendation from the working group is to continue this discussion and make a separate recommendation on appropriate numbers and locations of signs in Arlington



Detailed Assessment: 20 mph Street Segments

- A number of street segments were also given a regulatory speed limit of 20 mph
- Most of those represent School Zones which have Statutory signs in place and as such the 20 mph street segments are no longer needed
- There are a few other street segments that are not a part of a School Zone
- In working group discussions, the approach of using Safety Zones with Statutory 20 mph Speed Limits was raised to address these segments
 - Arlington currently only has one Safety Zone on Herbert Rd next to Magnolia Park
 - Both Cambridge and Somerville have gone “all in” on Safety Zones, effectively using them to reduce their speed limit to 20 on almost every street
 - Lexington center is a Safety Zone
 - Arlington does not currently have an established approach for using safety Zones
- This discussion is not directly tied to the Town Manager / SB request, as such, the recommendation from the working group is to continue this discussion and make a separate recommendation on appropriate use and locations for Safety Zones for Arlington



Recommendations

- To stay on alignment with MassDOT rules on rescinding SSRs, Arlington cannot rescind a specific segment within a street
- To rescind the higher speed limits, the entire street must be rescinded
- The table below shows the working group recommendation by street:

Recommendations by Street		
Rescind 12 streets / 54 segments	Out of Scope 1 street / 7 segments	Defer 13 streets / 35 segments 20 mph and 25mph
Broadway	Rt 2 - Frontage Road	Appleton St
Gray St		Bow St
Lake St		Dow Ave
Mountain St (Stratton School Zone)		Eastern Ave / Spring St
North Union St (Thompson School Zone)		Forest St
Park Ave / Park Ave Extension		Gardner St
Pheasant Ave (Stratton School Zone)		Hamlet St
River St		Highland Ave
Rt 2A - Summer St		Jason St
Rt 3 - Mystic St		Medford St
Rt 60 - Pleasant St / Chestnut St / Medford St		Oak Hill Drive
Wachusett Ave		Paul Revere Rd
		Ridge St

- The working group also recommends continuing the group to establish a townwide approach for both the 25 mph signage and use of Safety Zones.