

**Town of Arlington  
Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

Minutes of 01/24/2006, 7:15 PM, Town Hall Annex 2nd Floor Conference Room

Members present: Joe Cahill, Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Jeff Maxtutis, Lt. Jim McHugh, John Sanchez, Scott Smith (by phone), Ed Starr, Laura Weiner

Associates: Howard Muisse

1. Administration

The minutes of 12/13/05 were approved unanimously. Ed Starr reviewed the TAC project list, rotation list, list of Board of Selectmen requests, outstanding actions and memos from the Board of Selectmen's Office regarding voted actions on Highland Avenue, Quincy Street and George Street.

2. DPW Plans

John Sanchez conducted a PowerPoint presentation of the Department of Public Works' Pavement Management Plan, as presented to the Town's Capital Planning Committee in 2005. The presentation documented the amount and condition of Arlington's roadways, the amount of State and Local funding for roadways, a strategy for roadway improvements and a proposal for increased funding. John reported that the Capital Planning Committee, while unwilling to support the full funding increase proposed, had expressed its intention to increase the funding for roadways at a more modest level. John reported that the Town's 3-year contract for road work had locked in lower prices, but was now expired.

3. Identifying Future Projects for TIP

John Sanchez presented the idea of identifying future transportation projects for Arlington and submitting them for federal funding via the Transportation Improvement Plan managed by the Metropolitan Planning Organization. Although few of the potential projects would actually get funded, those that do could take an enormous financial burden from the Town. John mentioned that Chapter 90 funds could be used to evaluate and develop the projects to the funding stage. It was stressed that the process would take many years, but was well worth the investment. Ed Starr proposed that TAC members bring suggestions of projects for the TIP to the February meeting for discussion, with the intention of moving towards a short list of projects for further evaluation.

4. East Arlington Parking Recommendations

Scott Smith reported that at their January 9th meeting, the Selectmen were grateful for the survey work done by the TAC, but were unwilling to move ahead with a pilot program of parking changes without further validation from the neighborhood. Scott briefed the Committee on an approach to the commuter parking problem whereby roads falling within a half-mile radius of Alewife Station could be posted as 2-hour parking. Scott stated that Diane Mahon and George Laite are organizing an East Arlington Good Neighbor Committee meeting in February to address the next steps in the process. Scott indicated that the Selectmen and the neighborhood residents would be driving the project as it moves forward.

5. Safe Transport to Schools

Scott Smith reported that there had been two meetings of the ad hoc group Safe Transport to Schools, formed late last year to make proposals to improve the safety of children getting to and from school. The meetings followed a preliminary meeting with Ed Starr, John Sanchez, a Town Buildings employee and Sue Sheffler. The group was organized by School Committee members and is composed of representatives of the Arlington Police, School Committee, Public Schools, Parents and the TAC. Scott reported that recent discussions centered on remote drop-off areas for the Ottoson Middle School and criteria for deployment of Traffic Supervisors. The group will meet again on February 3rd and plans to report to the School Committee in February.

## 6. Lockeland / Mass Ave Update

Joe Cahill presented a summary of two options for locating the lane drop (from 2 to 1) on Mass Ave in the vicinity of Lockeland Ave. The first option drops the lane at the existing location between Lockeland and Highland, while making modifications to allow more space for the transition. The second option shifts the lane drop east of the existing location, utilizing a left turn lane at the Lockeland signal. Joe discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the options and made a preliminary recommendation to adopt the second option, shifting the lane drop east (in front of the High School). A Synchro model analysis of the options is planned. Jeff Maxtutis has volunteered to assist with the analysis for presentation at the February meeting. TAC members suggested looking into reducing crossing distances on Mass Ave to reduce the pedestrian signal time and investigating the condition of the loop detectors at the Lockeland intersection.

## 7. Mass Ave Corridor Update

John Sanchez reported that the Mass Ave Corridor project had been approved by Mass Highway, but that the request for the language change allowing engineering services to be included in the project had not yet been acted upon by Representative Markey's office.

## 8. Dallin School / George Street Update

At their January 9th meeting, the Board of Selectmen voted to approve the TAC's recommendation to pursue taking the George Street Private Way as a Public Way and install a sidewalk for students to walk to and from the Dallin School. Jeff Maxtutis reported that the new Dallin School had opened and that the traffic and parking situation was generally working well. Jeff pointed out that there was a problem with parents parking at the George Street kindergarten entrance for prolonged periods while dropping off their children. Lt. McHugh offered to investigate whether NO PARKING signs had previously been approved for this block and to assist with enforcement if the signs are posted. John Sanchez offered to post signs as quickly as possible contingent on verification of their approval. Jeff also observed that the area at the end of George Street was being used as a parking area.

## 9. Downing Square Progress

Elisabeth Carr-Jones presented an overview of the data collection from the Downing Square trial. The overview documented general observations and conditions at the morning, afternoon and evening rush periods. Several unresolved issues were identified:

- implications of one-way options on Westminster & Bow (more study needed)
- Bow Street traffic without Summer St construction (volume & turning counts needed)
- pedestrian island / turn lane between Lowell and Bow (surveying/drawings needed)
- lane lines & ped signal timing at Mass / Park intersection (measurements needed)
- parking configuration for Park Ave business lot (surveying/drawings needed).

Geoff Edgers, a citizen member of the Downing Square Working Group, added that the trial slowed traffic through the Square and on Park Avenue Extension, and that extending the TAC's investigations to include the roadways intersecting at the Square would be valuable.

## 10. Stowcroft Road Discussion

Howard Muise presented his preliminary findings on the block of Stowcroft Road between Columbia Road and Ridge Street. The Board of Selectmen referred a request from a resident to close the Stowcroft Road during school drop-off and pick-up times. Howard reported that the primary concern is the lack of sidewalks on a street in such close proximity to the Bishop Elementary School. Several alternative options were discussed:

- installing sidewalk and curbs
- posting the block as one-way during school drop-off and pick-up times
- using temporary devices (cones or bollards) to separate pedestrians and motorists
- plowing a wider section of road to allow more room for pedestrians in winter

It was noted that this section of Stowcroft Road is a Private Way, limiting the Town's options for improvements and enforcement. Howard stated that he would continue his investigation by conducting traffic and pedestrian counts during the morning and afternoon peak traffic times.

#### 11. Russell Street Update

Elisabeth Carr-Jones reported that she had met with Steve Makowka, a representative of the Russell Street neighborhood. The on-site meeting revealed that the Court Street sidewalk is in, but impassable due to bushes growing through fencing. Lt. McHugh and John Sanchez agreed to notify the property owner abutting the Court Street sidewalk of the Town regulation to keep sidewalks clear. Elisabeth also reported that the Winslow / Russell Terrace intersection is improved, but still not ideal for pedestrians. Yet, the intersection offers limited opportunities for correction. The Committee determined that no further action is indicated at the intersection unless it is demonstrated that a persistent problem exists. Elisabeth presented plans for staggered parking on Russell Street. John Sanchez agreed to submit the plans to the Town Engineer for review prior to further discussion with residents.

#### 12. Crosswalk Management Discussion

Ed Starr announced that Howard Muise had agreed to lead the TAC's Crosswalk Working Group. Howard will be working with current members Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Paolo Marinelli and Scott Smith. John Sanchez reported that this year's list of crosswalks for conversion to thermoplastic would be needed in March, and reminded the Committee that a significant portion of the 2007 thermoplastic budget would go toward widening the new Summer Street crosswalks to the Town's standard. Elisabeth agreed to prepare a package of the Working Group's activities to date for Howard.

#### 13. MPO Open House

Elisabeth Carr-Jones and Scott Smith reported that they had attended the Boston Region Metropolitan Planning Organization's Open House on January 17th. Elisabeth presented a summary of the MPO's service area, composition, work products, priorities for highway project selection, project funding and scheduling. Scott reported that the Central Transportation Planning Staff's work was also relevant to the TAC's activities, and that the CTPS was planning a license plate survey around Alewife Station.

#### 14. Town Departments

Laura Weiner presented e-mails from Patricia Domigan of VHB describing the two phases of the Mass Ave Corridor project. Phase 1, reconstructing Mass Ave from Pond Street to the Cambridge City line, has been approved by Mass Highway. Phase 2, improving Mass Ave from Mill Street to Pond Street, has not yet been approved.

Lt. Jim McHugh reported that the Police had been addressing several snow issues related to the schools and that he had met with Diane Mahon and Jack Hurd with regard to Forest Street. Jim reported that the Board of Selectmen would likely refer Forest Street to the TAC for recommendations. John Sanchez reported that the Forest Street construction drawings were 75% complete, and that the Summer Street reconstruction delays may affect the scheduling of the work. John suggested that the Forest Street design be reviewed at the next TAC meeting; Ed Starr agreed.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 PM.

#### **Handouts:**

Agenda packet with agenda, December minutes, project list, rotation list, list of Board of Selectmen requests, outstanding actions and memos from the Board of Selectmen's Office regarding voted actions on Highland Avenue, Quincy Street and George Street - from Ed Starr

Lockeland / Mass Ave. Lane Drop summary - from Joe Cahill

Downing Square Data Collection overview, Russell Street parking plans, Boston Region MPO Open House summary - from Elisabeth Carr-Jones

Stowcroft Road / Bishop Elementary School preliminary findings - from Howard Muise

Mass Ave Corridor project description e-mails from VHB - from Laura Weiner