

CITY OF NEWTON

BOARD OF ALDERMEN

TRAFFIC COUNCIL REPORT

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8, 2010

Present: Jim Danila (Transportation Engineer), Danielle Delaney (Clerk), David Koses (Transportation Planner), Jim Norcross (Police) and Allan Ciccone, Jr. (Alderman)
Also present: Ald. Sangiolo

TC40-09 ALD. HARNEY, SANGIOLO AND GENTILE requesting school zone designation for the Lexington Street side of the Burr School playground.

ACTION: **Approve (3-1, with Danila opposed and Grafe not present). This decision is subject to appeal through the end of the business day, January 28, 2010.**

NOTE: Mr. Danila said that the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) has a set of minimal warrants that must be met in order to establish school zones. The warrants are the following: The school property has to abut the public right of way within the limits of the proposed zone area, school children must have a direct access to the street from the school property, the zone must contain a marked crosswalk and the school must include one or more grades below grade nine. Mr. Danila said that this location meets all four of the criteria.

MassDOT also has a set of warrants for where school zones should not be established. The warrants are the following: when the children are not required to cross a street within the zone area, where the abutting property fence has no gate access, where the crosswalk has been signalized except in the case where an investigation shows that there is no conflict between the signal indication and the school speed sign limit. He believes the intent is to allow school zones with a flashing yellow light that is not located close enough to the traffic signal there could be some confusion for drivers who may see a green signal and a flashing yellow and would not know how to proceed.

Mr. Danila provided some traffic data on Lexington Street. Lexington Street serves nearly 16,000 vehicles per day, the posted speed limit is 30mph, the mean speeds is approximately 33 mph with the 85 percentile speed at 39 mph. He said there was a student and vehicle accident in September 2009 due to driver distraction while a crossing guard was present at this location. He stated it is the opinion of the Traffic Department that notification of a school zone was present would not have prevented this accident. The traffic signal is located within safe stopping distances even at speed limits higher than the recorded 85% percentile speeds and driver distraction will always be a problem.

Mr. Koses opened the discussion to members of the public who were present.
Public Comment:

A parent and member of the Safe Routes Task Force Committee read a statement asking that this location becomes a designated school zone and that it is necessary to make it safer.

Nancy Caufield, shared photos with Council members. She asked about the intended use of a set of green posts that had been installed near this location. She is concerned with vehicles speeding and believes if a warning signal was installed, drivers would be made aware they were approaching a school.

The parent of the student involved in the September accident asked that this location be made safer.

The crossing guard agreed. She said that drivers speed up and even proceed through the red light at the crosswalk. She said that before crossing children, she makes certain all vehicles have stopped. She feels that a school zone is necessary to make this location safer.

Cindy Bencal, Principal of the Burr School supports all testimony provided and is hopeful the City will make this location safer for all.

Sgt. Norcross asked if there was a down side in establishing this location as a school zone with flashing lights and feels that flashing lights would bring the attention to the drivers. Mr. Danila said that there was no down side, only the cost. The school zone flasher is usually connected to a meter and pole. The current poles installed would have to have conduit returning to the traffic signal control. He is unsure if the same power can be used. Mr. Koses said there are schools in the City that do not have flashing yellow lights, only simple school zone signage, due to the cost. Ald. Sangiolo said that a school zone should be in place since this location meets the state criteria. Ald. Sangiolo believes the conduit is already installed at this location to install flashing signals

Mr. Koses said that, if approved, the Department of Public Works would decide which type of school zone this would be (flashing signals or simple signs). Mr. Danila said if approved, the Federal standards for a school zone will be put into place.

Sgt. Norcross moved approval of the school zone on Lexington Street. The Council voted in favor 3-1, with Danila opposed.

#384-09 Reverse previous Traffic Council vote taken on item #384-09 so to deny the installation of a full traffic signal at the intersection of Walnut Street and Trowbridge Avenue before the opening of the new Newton North High School.

ACTION: **Deny installation of the full traffic signal (2-0-1, with Ciccone abstaining, and with Norcross and Grafe not present).**

NOTE: Mr. Koses said that Traffic Council had previously voted to approve the traffic signal. The Board of Aldermen have now instructed Traffic Council to vote to deny installation of the full traffic signal.

Mr. Danila said that, for the record, the Public Works Department supports approval of the full traffic signal at Walnut and Trowbridge. Mr. Koses also said that, for the record, the Planning Department supports the full traffic signal at Walnut and Trowbridge. Ald. Ciccone said that he also supports a traffic signal over a pedestrian light at this location. Mr. Koses moved denial of the installation of the full traffic signal. The Council voted in favor 2-0-1, Ald. Ciccone abstaining, Sgt. Norcross not voting.

#385-09 Reverse previous Traffic Council vote taken on item #385-09 so to approval mid-block pedestrian activated crossing signal (between Trowbridge Avenue and Clyde Street), create a delta island at the opening of the NNHS ceremonial drive, and add right turn in and right turn out only turn restrictions at the ceremonial entrance.

ACTION: With a vote of (2-1-1, with Norcross opposed, Ciccone abstaining and Grafe not present), the following changes are approved: Change TPR-87, Left turns prohibited, to add Walnut Street northbound onto Newton North High School Ceremonial Drive; Change TPR-88, Right turns only, to add Newton North High School Ceremonial Drive onto Walnut Street; Add a new section to the TPR to prohibit a through movement from Trowbridge Avenue to the High School Driveway and from the High School Driveway onto Trowbridge Avenue; Change TPR-145, traffic control signage locations, to add Walnut Street, approximately 100 feet north of Trowbridge Avenue.

NOTE: Mr. Koses said that Traffic Council had previously voted to deny the mid-block pedestrian activated crossing signal, the creation of a delta island at the opening of the NNHS Ceremonial Drive and the addition of right turn in and right turn out turn restrictions at the ceremonial entrance. Now the Board of Aldermen have instructed Traffic Council to change their vote.

Mr. Koses was unsure when the turning restrictions should take effect, and suggested that it be left to the discretion of the Public Works Department, but no later than the first day of the 2010-2011 school year.

Mr. Danila said that the following changes would have to be made in the TPR:

- Change TPR-87, Left turns prohibited, to add Walnut Street northbound onto Newton North High School Ceremonial Drive.
- Change TPR-88, Right turns only, to add Newton North High School Ceremonial Drive onto Walnut Street.
- Add a new section to the TPR to prohibit a through movement from Trowbridge Avenue to the High School Driveway and from the High School Driveway onto Trowbridge Avenue.
- Change TPR-145, traffic control signage locations, to add Walnut Street, approximately 100 feet north of Trowbridge Avenue.

Mr. Danila said there is currently no section of the TPR for "no through movements", and suggested that a new section should be added for "no through movements".

Mr. Koses moved approval on the mid-block pedestrian activated crossing signal (between

Trowbridge Avenue and Clyde Street), creation of a flush delta island at the opening of the NNHS Ceremonial Drive, and the addition of right turn in and right turn out turn restrictions at the ceremonial entrance. The Council voted in favor 2-1-1, with Sgt. Norcross opposed, Ald. Ciccone abstaining, Graffe not present.

TC44-09 ALD. SCHNIPPER ON BEHALF OF PUBLIC FACILITIES requesting a review of the pattern on Walnut Street for September 2010 and determine whether turn restrictions are appropriate at the intersection of Trowbridge Avenue and Walnut Street. (Ward 2)

ACTION: **No Action Necessary (4-0).**

NOTE: Without discussion, Mr. Danila moved No Action Necessary. The Council voted in favor 4-0.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Guidelines related to how to issue/manage resident and visitor permits available for non-residential properties located on a resident-restricted street; factors for consideration when deciding whether to approve a petition for resident restricted parking; and resident permit parking on Saturdays.

NOTE: Mr. Koses said that he added this discussion item to the agenda after Traffic Council heard a petition from residents of Cheswick Road to allow residents to park on Cheswick Road, a street that is not 100% residential.

Mr. Koses said that the west side of Cheswick Road has no parking 8:00 a.m. -10:00 a.m. all days; plus a 1-hour parking limit 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., except on weekends and holidays. There is no parking 9:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m. all days on the east side. With so many restrictions, it is very inconvenient for residents, who are unable to park on their street. However, if Traffic Council were to loosen the restrictions, more students from Lasell College would park on Cheswick Road. At a recent meeting, Cheswick Road residents primarily complained about overnight and weekend guests parking on Cheswick Road. Mr. Koses indicated that City Ordinance states that resident parking shall not be in effect: "...on legal holidays, on Sundays from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., on Saturdays or on religious holidays on streets abutting any house of worship during hours of religious services at such house of worship, or during municipal or Newton Public Schools or Newton Community Schools events or functions in areas affected by said events or functions."

Mr. Koses said that the Law Department agrees that this portion of the ordinance is not clear regarding to whether people can park on a street with a resident-only restriction on Saturdays. The Police Department has interpreted the ordinance in a way such that they do not enforce Saturday resident restricted parking. Ald. Ciccone said that the ordinance needs to be rewritten to give these residents relief. Mr. Danila asked whether if the ordinance were to be changed, would the Police Department be available to enforce it. Sgt. Norcross replied in the affirmative, and added that he feels that drivers see the resident-only parking signs and assume that it is in effect for seven days a week, not realizing that Saturday is excluded. Traffic Council members

noted that it would be up to the Board of Aldermen to decide whether to modify the language of the ordinance.

Mr. Koses also brought up the issue of what Traffic Council should consider when determining whether a street should receive resident-only parking. Sec. 19-201 of the ordinance states that Traffic Council, in reviewing petitions for resident-only parking, shall consider the following criteria: a) vehicular circulation and safety; b) pedestrian safety; c) lack of convenient off-street parking for residents of the area of the proposed restriction; d) level of demand for on-street parking by nonresidents of the area of the proposed restriction, including analysis of probable displacement of nonresidential parking to adjacent residential areas if the proposed restrictions should be implemented; and e) extent to which existing and/or alternative parking regulations are ineffective to deal with parking problems in the area of the proposed restriction. Mr. Koses asked other Traffic Council members whether Traffic Council should also consider the lack of convenient off-street parking due to posted parking restrictions. Mr. Danila suggested that streets should be evaluated on a case by case basis. The ordinance does not prohibit Traffic Council from considering the inconvenience caused by very restrictive parking regulations as a factor when approving or denying a request for resident permit parking.

Mr. Koses also noted that there are guidelines associated with the ordinance change that allow Traffic Council to consider resident-only parking on streets that are not 100% residential. These guidelines give flexibility to Traffic Council to determine how many stickers and visitor permits to give to the non-residential uses on the resident-restricted street. Sgt. Norcross suggested that visitor permits and restrictions should be defined in the ordinance, and not left for Traffic Council to decide. Mr. Danila and Ald. Ciccone agreed. Mr. Koses disagreed, and said that Traffic Council should have the flexibility to determine the best solution in each case that comes before us. Mr. Koses added that the Board of Aldermen discussed this point in detail, and decided to leave the decision up to Traffic Council. Sgt. Norcross asked for an item to be docketed for the Public Safety & Transportation Committee that would spell out the number of permits that Traffic Council could grant, to ensure that a business would not receive so many permits that it would overtake a street. Mr. Danila suggested business owners are given the number of permits their store frontage allows.

Ald. Sangiolo recommended that Traffic Council draft concrete guidelines on how Traffic Council will proceed for their review, and perhaps ask the Board of Aldermen for their approval. Mr. Danila agreed to draft language that would specify the number of permits available to non-residential properties based on street frontage.

Council members also reviewed the Traffic Council Policy 3: Resident-Only Parking Guidelines, drafted by Mr. Koses. Mr. Koses said he drafted this policy as a means to help petitioners to understand why Traffic Council is reluctant to add additional streets to the resident-only parking program. Sgt. Norcross, Ald. Ciccone and Mr. Danila all agreed that the policy is not necessary, and petitioners should follow the ordinance. Traffic Council Policy 3 will not be approved at this time.

DISCUSSION ITEM

Effectiveness and process for approving and installing permanent "Your Speed Is" Speed Signs.

NOTE: Mr. Koses said that he would like to discuss this item prior to residents from Derby Street and Cabot Street coming into a Traffic Council meeting as they are likely to request stationary radar signs for these streets. Mr. Danila said that stationary radar signs are not in the TPR, and that the Department Public Works would decide when and where these signs would be installed, if funds are available.

Mr. Danila presented Council members with a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Danila said the approximate cost for the installation of these signs is \$10,000 - \$18,000 each which would be solar or hard wired. The signs can also be set at a maximum speed. He provided information from two studies including criteria. Data was collected at the beginning of school year, immediately after and four months after school started so those motorists could observe how quickly they were traveling. The results indicated that stationary radar signs are effective at the beginning of school speed zones. The signs are effective when they are enforced and where there is one lane of traffic in each direction. In the study community, stationary radar speed signs were initially used on areas where the street could not be modified. The drawbacks include the fact that that some residents do not like stationary radar signs in front of their homes because they light up, and the cost of maintenance, vandalism and installation. In the study community, signs are not being installed any longer because the maintenance upkeep is too great. Mr. Danila said if these signs were installed in Newton, the City may not be able to maintain them.

Mr. Danila said that the City performed a recent study on Derby Street, and the 85th percentile speed showed 9 mph above the speed limit. He said that if the City were to consider installing these speed signs, they first should be installed in or near school zones or on streets where the City cannot make physical modifications.

Sgt. Norcross said that over the years he observed that when the Police Department uses their speed trailers and boxes, people don't intentionally speed. They just don't pay attention.

Mr. Koses proposed that an item be docketed for discussion at a Public Safety & Transportation Committee to determine whether a stationary radar sign program would be supported by the Board of Aldermen. The Council agreed to move forward with a discussion at PS&T.

TC50-09 JAMES DANILA, Transportation Engineer, on behalf of the Department of Public Works, requesting modifications to the Traffic and Parking Regulations to match the final design documents for Commonwealth Avenue. [12/09/09 @ 2:37 PM]

ACTION: With a vote (3-0, with Ciccone not voting and Grafe not present), subject to appeal through the end of the business day, January 28, 2010, the following changes are approved:

- The following changes will be made to TPR-96, No turn on red, at the following

locations: Commonwealth Avenue, westbound at Grant Avenue (add); Grant Avenue, northbound at Commonwealth Avenue (add); Grant Avenue, southbound at Commonwealth Avenue (add); Grant Avenue, southbound at Carriage Road (add); Commonwealth Avenue, eastbound at Wachusett Road (delete); Commonwealth Avenue, westbound at Hammond Street (add); Hammond Street, northbound at Commonwealth Avenue (add); Hammond Street, southbound at Commonwealth Avenue (add); and Hammond Street, southbound at Carriage Road (add).

- **The following changes will be made to TPR-97, Left lane must turn left, at the following locations: Commonwealth Avenue, eastbound onto Grant Avenue (add); Commonwealth Avenue, westbound onto Grant Avenue (add); Grant Avenue, northbound onto Commonwealth Avenue (add); Grant Avenue, southbound onto Commonwealth Avenue (add); Commonwealth Avenue, eastbound onto Hammond Street (add); Commonwealth Avenue, westbound onto Wachusett Road or Hammond Street (add); Hammond Street, northbound onto Commonwealth Avenue (add); Hammond Street, southbound onto Commonwealth Avenue (add); Commonwealth Avenue, eastbound onto Mt. Alvernia Road (add); Commonwealth Avenue, westbound onto Old Colony Road (add); and Commonwealth Avenue, westbound onto Boston College Entrance (add).**

- **The following changes will be made to TPR-98; Right lane must turn right, at the following location: College Road, northbound onto Commonwealth Avenue (add).**

- **The following changes will be made to TPR-147, Stop sign changes, at the following locations: Manet Road at Commonwealth Avenue, northbound (retain); Manet Road at Commonwealth Avenue North Drive, southbound (retain); Manet Road at Commonwealth Avenue North Drive, northbound (remove); Manet Road at Commonwealth Avenue, southbound (add); Crosby Road at Commonwealth Avenue, northbound (add); Mt. Alvernia Road at Commonwealth Avenue, southbound (add); and Old Colony Road at College Road, eastbound (add).**

- **The following changes will be made to TPR-148, Yield signs, at the following locations: Commonwealth Avenue, eastbound at the channelized traffic island at Grant Avenue (add); Commonwealth Avenue, westbound at the channelized traffic island at Grant Avenue (add); Commonwealth Avenue, eastbound at the channelized traffic island at Wachusett Road (add); and Old Colony Road, westbound at the channelized traffic island south of Commonwealth Avenue (add).**

- **The following changes will be made to TPR-176, Parking regulations pertaining to particular streets, at the following locations: Hammond Street, prohibited all days, from Commonwealth Avenue, northerly 100 feet (delete); Commonwealth Avenue, north side, prohibited all days, from Boston line westerly to a point 184 feet east of Melrose Street (delete); and Commonwealth Avenue, north side, prohibited all days, from Grant Avenue to a point 184 feet east of Melrose Street (add).**

- **The following changes will be made to TPR-220, parking prohibitions for tow zones, at**

the following locations: Hammond Street, both sides, from Carriage Road, northerly 100 feet (add); Commonwealth Avenue, north side, from Boston line to Grant Avenue (add); Commonwealth Avenue, south side, from a point 170 feet west of Grant Avenue to a point 235 feet west of Hobart Road (add); Commonwealth Avenue, south side, from a point 225 feet west of Wachusett Road to a point 160 feet east of Hammond Street (add); Grant Avenue, west side, from Commonwealth Avenue, southerly 100 feet (add); Grant Avenue, east side, from a point 100 feet south of Commonwealth Avenue to Commonwealth Avenue (add); and Commonwealth Avenue, south side, from a point 200 feet west of Old Colony Road to a point 580 feet east of College Road (add).

NOTE: Mr. Danila said that MassDOT is completing the construction project on Commonwealth Avenue from approximately Grant Avenue to 700' west of the Boston line this year. MassDOT agreed that when they completed the 75% project design, they would submit traffic control agreement with the City. This never happened. Mr. Danila is making amendments to the TPR to add left lane must turn left, right lane must turn right, stop signs and yield signs so that what is going to be installed is enforceable.

Mr. Danila reviewed all of the above actions with Traffic Council members and asked that they be approved to change the City's TPR's.

Mr. Koses was concerned about singling Commonwealth Avenue to posting tow zones, rather than no parking zones, due to the safety and cost issues involved with having your car towed, especially when honest mistakes can be made. Sgt. Norcross felt that residents should be notified of tow zones. Mr. Koses felt residents should be notified of all changes before the signs are installed.

Mr. Danila moved approval on the above actions be approved. The Council voted in favor 3-0, with Ciccone not voting and Grafe not present.

Respectfully submitted,

David Koses, Chairman