



City of Cambridge

Committee Report #8

IN CITY COUNCIL

January 11, 1999

COUNCILLOR RUSSELL

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to look into the possibility of using audible signal systems at the most active intersections in the city.

In City Council January 11, 1999.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

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City Clerk



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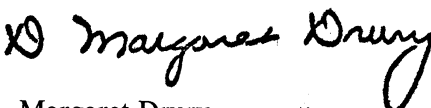
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Councillor Russell stated that bicyclists were omitted from the presentation by Ms. Seiderman. She stated that people are concerned about bicyclists. Ms. Seiderman responded that the city tries to make sure bicyclists have a place on the road and to make sure bicyclists follow the rules. Bicycles, she said, are not allowed on sidewalks in congested areas of the city. Ms. Suzanne Rasmussen, Community Development Department, stated that an effort has been made by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committees to regulate where bicycles can and cannot travel. Councillor Russell stated that she has been a strong supporter of a campaign for motor vehicles and bicycle rules being the same. They need to be enforced for bicycles as well as motor vehicles.

The committee heard from Sergeant Sugrue who stated that the problem is that people from outside the city are unaware that there are bicycle laws. He informed the committee that Cambridge is the only city or town, out of 351, that is enforcing the bicycle laws. Somerville, he said, will be enforcing the bicycle laws. He is working with other surrounding cities and towns, such as Arlington and Belmont, to encourage these communities to enforce the bicycle laws.

Councillor Davis stated that the city is using the 4 E's, education, engineering, enforcement and encouragement, to help with pedestrian issues.

The committee heard from Fran Chaiken, Auburn Street, who stated that she was dependent on public transportation and she walks a lot. She informed the committee that when she crosses Green Street, she does not feel safe because the cars do not stop. She stated that older people and mothers pushing carriages are at risk. She also informed the committee that the only safe place to cross Massachusetts Avenue is in front of City Foods because the traffic in both directions has to stop. She urged additional timing at lights for the seniors.

The committee heard from Doug Lee, 33 Lexington Avenue, former member of the Pedestrian Committee, who stated that he was disappointed that the improvements to Broadway did not include pedestrian safety issues. He stated that when you chip away at parking spaces you raise ire, but eliminating parking spaces makes it better for pedestrian traffic.

The committee heard from Betty Davis, 13 Ware Street, Pedestrian Committee member, who stated that she is a pedestrian and has lived in the city since 1971. She stated that she does not see things improving. She informed the committee that drivers engage in erratic behavior. She stated that the city needs enforcement. Drivers speed, they do not stop for pedestrians or red lights, she said. She cited the crossing in front of Johnson Gate on Massachusetts Avenue across from the T station as a dangerous crosswalk. The crosswalk is busy, the traffic is fast and the pedestrians are at the mercy of the vehicular traffic. When the light turns red, the motorists block the crosswalk, she said. She further stated pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists all are erratic in the city. She informed the committee that the best crosswalk is located at 77 Massachusetts Avenue, in front of M.I.T.

The Committee heard from Kenneth Bowles, 40 Bigelow Street, representing the disabled population as a member of the Commission of Persons with Disabilities, who stated that he does not see the situation in the city improving. He stated that he lost his eyesight fifteen years ago. He has been hit by an automobile twice, he said. He stated that it is an enforcement issue. He further stated that drivers in the other states follow motor vehicle rules because the rules are strictly enforced. He stated that the laws in Massachusetts are lackadaisically enforced. He stated that when he was crossing Inman Street, a car was blocking the crosswalk and in an effort to embarrass the motorist he walked right up to car. He asked if the Traffic Regulations and the Bicycle Regulations are distributed with the excise tax bills. Councillor Davis informed Mr. Bowles that there are no mandatory bicycle licensing regulations. Councillor Russell stated that bicycle riders who travel through Cambridge would not be licensed. Mr. Bowles stated that Cambridge is a doormat into Boston. He stated that the Traffic Department's concern is to get the traffic through Cambridge. Ms. Seiderman's presentation encouraged a change in philosophy. Mr. Bowles asked if the city has foot patrols. Officer Giacoppo responded in the affirmative. However, he stated, a foot patrolman would not be beneficial to stop a speeding car. They are beneficial to issue citations to bicyclists, he said.

The committee heard from Liz Seelman, 25 Richard Avenue, who worked with the senior population. She stated that the most important issues are the pedestrian issues. She stated that brick sidewalks are a handicap, especially to people with walkers. She informed the committee that trucks unloading force the seniors out onto the street. She stated that the courts do not take the violation tickets seriously. The seniors are petitioning the state legislature to correct this issue.

The committee heard from Robert Winters, 366 Broadway, who spoke as a pedestrian, a motorist and a bicyclist. As a pedestrian, he said, the crosswalk at Johnson Gate is bad because of the lack of enforcement. Drivers are ignorant to pedestrians in crosswalks, he said. He informed the committee that he stops for pedestrians who are walking in crosswalks when he drives his bicycle. He cited the two lane traffic on Massachusetts Avenue in the area of the Dolphin Seafood Restaurant as a bad area because if the first lane of traffic stops for a pedestrian, the second lane can strike the pedestrians. This situation should be addressed, he said. He informed the committee of mechanical problems. The light at Massachusetts Avenue and Dunster Street has a broken button, he said. He urged the city to fix or remove the light. He further stated that there is an aggressive effort to enforce bicycling infractions - on the small issues. He has seen the data for fines and warnings; however, he wants to see this data for motorist infractions as well.

Mr. Winters asked the Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation about the maintenance on the lights. Do they break frequently, he asked. Ms. Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation, responded that this is important to her department. She encouraged anyone if they see a broken signal light to call David Bryant at 349-4715 (24 hours a day) and leave a message with the location and the problem. She also stated that the signals are synchronized. She informed the committee that when you push the walk signal you may get other phases before the pedestrian phase. Councillor Russell asked Ms. Clippinger if her department has regular scheduled maintenance for signals. Ms. Clippinger responded in the affirmative and her department has personnel to check for problems.

The committee heard from Rozann Kraus, 91 Chilton Street, mother of Connor Epstein Kraus, a nine year old boy who was struck by a car who was given the go ahead to cross the street by a driver and a second car passed this car illegally on the right and struck Connor. Ms. Kraus stated that the current laws need to take away the discretionary rights of officers. She informed the committee that the woman who broke the rules received a \$75.00 ticket. She urged a change in philosophy and asked what does "encouragement" stand for in the 4 E's. Ms. Seiderman stated that "encouragement" means urging people to walk to work or use other modes of transportation than an automobile. She added that this really is a change in philosophy. Ms. Kraus stated that the city needs to focus on pedestrian safety. She informed the committee that her philosophy is that everyone is in more of a hurry than she is and she lets them go. She stated that the 4 E's do not work if they are viewed as four separate issues. Ms. Kraus stated that warnings should be eliminated. Education should be the focus, she said. She urged "out-of the box" thinking. She used the example that when a police officer gives a warning, they ask the offender if they are aware of why they are given a ticket. She further stated that when people come to Cambridge, they need to be responsible.

The committee heard from Arvilla Sarazen, 15 Lambert Street, who stated that the city does not have enough police officers and the bicycle symbol on the sidewalk are too small. She informed the committee that Ms. Buchman, a pedestrian hit by a car exiting an underground garage, is still in bad shape from an accident that happened a year ago. She stated that bicycles and cars need to stop for pedestrians. Ms. Sarazen stated that the city needs signs telling cars to stop when approaching sidewalks from an underground garage or audible signals like the ones at Miller River. She stated that the senior citizens want something done. She further stated that the lighting in East Cambridge is inadequate. She stated that Lambert Street is dark. Cambridgeport, she stated, is well lit. She informed the committee that a yield sign is needed at Massachusetts Avenue and Remington Street. She urged education, awareness and signs erected at garage entrances and exits.

The committee heard from Astrid Dodds, 73 Wendell Street, member of the Pedestrian Committee. Ms. Dodds urged the Traffic and Transportation Committee to meet at least one time per year at the Senior Center. She urged the seniors to support the growth management petition to reduce parking spaces. She urged a state wide bicycle licensing and registration program, support of the Urban Ring and support for the newsbox ordinance. She said that Cambridge should bring a law suit against the use of the sidewalks for the newsboxes. She urged support of a photo enforcement ordinance to photograph license plates of violators. She also urged legislation to regulate the crosswalk law. Ms. Dodds further stated that she feels the "right-on-red" law to be the worst law for pedestrians quality of life.

Councillor Russell stated that the "pass on right" is also a bad law for the quality of life.

Ms. Dodds stated that the Red Line cleanliness is a direct result of consumer activists. She informed the committee that Somerville has received a three year city-sponsored shuttle grant. Cambridge, she said, should investigate this grant. She further stated that it was the consensus of the Pedestrian and Bicycle committees that a trial was going to be tried on a few city streets on the issue of bikes on sidewalks. She also stated that she would like to see an effort made by the city to track accidents; to track what happens to both victim and perpetrator. The culture around pedestrian life in a mobile culture is also an issue, she said. She informed the committee that in Portland, Oregon the names of pedestrians killed are published in a newsletter.

Councillor Russell stated that she gave the information on the shuttle in Somerville, called "City Bus," to the City Manager and the Assistant City Manager for Community Development. Councillor Davis stated that she would like to see Cambridge get a "City Bus."

The committee heard from Alexia Hayes, Pilgrim Street, who stated that a car ran the light at the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and Prospect Street and almost hit someone. She stated that the only solution to this situation is to stop the traffic in both directions. Bicyclists, she said, can also do a lot of damage. She wrote an article entitled "Dangerous Crossings" for the Cambridge Candle which is made part of this report. **(ATTACHMENT A)**. Ms. Hayes stated that the Inman Street light is set so that the traffic stops, the pedestrians cross, but the light is not long enough for pedestrians to cross.

The committee heard from Carolyn Swift, 269 Harvard Street, who informed the committee that when she crosses at Massachusetts Avenue and Inman Street and Massachusetts Avenue and Prospect Street, she is fearful for her life. Cars are turning when she is crossing Inman Street, she said. She informed the committee that she had a confrontation with a police officer who was riding his bike on the sidewalk. She stated that she was hit by a car today on Prospect Street at Bread and Circus; only her hand was hit by the car. She further stated that she finds the bricks on the sidewalks are slippery. She is concerned about pedestrian safety and bicyclists. She asked about the requests made by seniors for a crosswalk in front of the Senior Center to enable them to get to the bus stop. She informed the committee of the difficulty the seniors have to get to the bus stop safely.

The committee heard from Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager, who stated that the crosswalk in front of the Senior Center is not recommended by the traffic engineer because it is a high volume traffic area in a mid-block crossing. The city is looking to move the bus stop to the crosswalk, he said. Mr. Rossi stated that mid-block crossings are not safe. There is a mid-block crossing at Bow and Arrow Streets in front of the Inn at Harvard, he said. The city erected a yield sign and placed a barrel in the street which was mowed down. He agreed with Ms. Swift about the bricks.

The committee heard from Fran Wirta, 141 Erie Street, who stated that the orange barrels are very effective.

Ms. Alexia Hayes stated that bicyclists flying through red lights are college students and businessmen going toward M.I.T.

Councillor Davis asked whether the approach used in New York regarding issues of the quality of life can be applied in Cambridge. Mr. Rossi stated that the city is implementing a new philosophy of departments working together. The city is trying to change fifty years of bad habits. He said that the city administration has plans and programs around pedestrian and bicycle safety to work with schools and seniors. He informed the committee that the New York program uses a mapping system and records everything. New York conducts weekly meetings. He stated that Cambridge plans to move to this type of system and incorporate this planning and meetings into our departments. He also stated that video cameras are sent out unannounced. He stated that these tools are used to encourage people to do things the right way. He informed the committee that data regarding the size, speed and types of vehicles is being collected by the Police Department.

Councillor Davis stated that her intention is to take the information and create a matrix of what the issues are and how they can be addressed.

Councillor Born suggested that a sticker be placed above the button on the signal light with instructions for reporting unworking mechanicals. She further stated that signs or banners which state "Cambridge enforces state laws", "No bicycle riding on sidewalks" and "Jay walking not allowed" could be erected at the entrance to Cambridge.

Councillor Born also suggested that CCTV or cable could do a television program showing people doing things the wrong way. She further stated that she thought names should be published for traffic violations.

Councillor Russell stated that she has been talking about an advertising campaign for a long time. She asked what the city needs to do to get the judges to pay attention to the violation tickets. Deputy Superintendent Giacoppo informed the committee that the Police Department has a meeting scheduled with the new Chief Justice.

Councillor Russell stated that the M.I.T. crossing is a safe crossing. She asked why the city cannot have audible signals at Massachusetts Avenue and Cameron Avenue and Massachusetts Avenue and Alewife Brook Parkway. Ms. Clippinger stated that the audible signal makes one sound for traffic travel north and south and another sound for traffic traveling east and west. She informed the committee that at some locations, residents may not want to hear this sound. She further stated that her department is working with Michael Muehe on this issue.

Councillor Russell made the following motion:

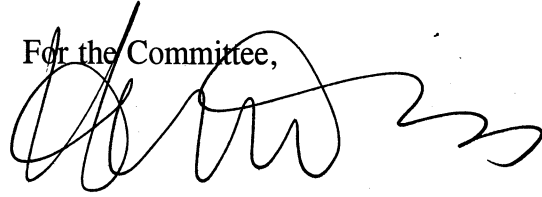
ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to look into the possibility of using audible signal systems at the most active intersections in the city.

This motion carried.

Councillor Davis stated that she wanted this issue to remain in committee. She stated that this has been a fruitful discussion. She further stated that she would conduct another meeting on this matter in about 4-6 weeks. She urged all present to think of one main issue that would make Cambridge a more pedestrian friendly city. At the end of the meeting, it was decided that a flyer with this question would be developed and distributed to the Senior Center for community input. **(ATTACHMENT B).**

The meeting was adjourned at eight o'clock and fifty minutes p.m.

For the Committee,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Henrietta Davis', written over the text 'For the Committee,'.

Councillor Henrietta Davis
Chair

Dangerous Crossings

by Alexia Hayes

From August 1, 1996, to the end of August of this year, there were 189 accidents involving pedestrians in Cambridge. The police think this is a fairly good record, considering the size and density of the city and other factors. Some of those other factors, however, such as conflicting traffic signals, are inexcusable.

All through this city are intersections where traffic gets a green light for turning into a street at

in Cambridge. Ours are too small and inconspicuous, and furthermore are only at a very few crosswalks.

We also need signs at key crossings that say "Bicycles must stop on red." But cyclists and the traffic laws are a subject in itself.

Some of the most hazardous crossings are at Inman Square. The complexity of the intersection is appalling. Each pedestrian signal for the six ~~four~~

Citizens have made many complaints, but only at the corner of Inman St. and Mass.Ave. has the situation been corrected, and only very recently.

the same moment that pedestrians get a walk sign for crossing at that same place. The most flagrant example is the middle of Central Square. Citizens have made many complaints, but only at the corner of Inman St. and Mass.Ave., next to City Hall, has the situation been corrected, and only very recently.

Note that the Police Department has nothing to do with the placement or operation of traffic lights. This is the work of the Traffic Department.

Of our three major squares — Porter, Harvard, and Central — Porter has the most accidents of every type. Although few of them have involved pedestrians, the crossing from the shopping center to the T is notably dangerous. Somebody was injured there quite recently. At best it is very difficult to hurry to an island on one light, then wait there for the next — as you watch your bus pulling away.

It is surprising, considering the age and complexity of Harvard Square, its many visitors, and the thousands of hurrying young people, that it does not claim the greatest number of pedestrian accidents, rather than Central Square. Harvard Square's most serious trouble spot is at and near the intersection of Mass.Ave. and Garden St., where heavy traffic, including buses, exits the underpass in two directions and enters as well from two directions. The lights are insufficient for pedestrian safety, and accidents have occurred there. Another trouble spot is at the beginning of Brattle St. Another is where Brattle intersects with Mt. Auburn. Still another is at JFK and Memorial Drive.

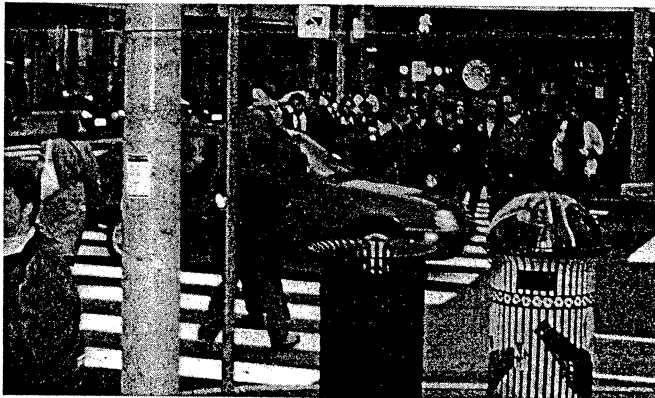
Also, on Memorial Drive, both at Western Ave. and at River St., the lights do not stay on long enough for even a jogger to get to the other side.

At crosswalks without traffic signals, vehicles are supposed to yield to pedestrians, but they often don't stop. One of the most egregious examples of this is at the approach to Harvard Square from the east at the junction of Mass. Ave. and Arrow, where traffic also comes in behind you from Quincy and Harvard Streets. To walk into the Square from this intersection you have to cope with at least two crosswalks.

In Davis Square in Somerville there are big black-on-yellow signs that say "YIELD for pedestrians in crosswalks." We ought to have the same kind

converging streets is in conflict with one or another of the vehicular signals. Moreover, the pedestrian signals do not come on frequently enough and do not last long enough for everyone to get across.

The main intersection with Mass.Ave. of River, Magazine, and Western on one side and Prospect on the other — Central Square — presents, as noted, the worst confrontation of vehicles and pedestrians. Before the recent changes in Central Square there was a separate right-turn lane onto Mass.Ave. from the direction of the river, with its own traffic light. One had to wait for two lights before crossing Mass.Ave., but it was much safer than the present arrangement. Three other crossings at the same intersection — across River and Western, across Mass.Ave. on the left side, and across Prospect — were hazardous before the changes and still are.



This photo, taken during a typical busy period at Mass. Ave. and Prospect St. in Central Square, illustrates pedestrians and automobiles trying to negotiate the same space — and both doing it legally.



Another example of inadequate traffic control at the intersection of Mass. Ave. and Prospect Street.

I have stood on the corner with my back to the Holmes site during a weekday rush hour, as people poured out of the T station onto Mass.Ave., when the lead auto stopped before turning, in order to let the people cross. Traffic was held up on Green, River, and Magazine Streets as far as one could see, and horns blew constantly through two changes of the light.

I have heard from residents, drivers, and police personnel that the narrowing of Mass.Ave. in Central Square and the consequent slowing of traffic have increased the traffic on Green, Franklin, and Howard Streets and even on Putnam Avenue, as well as on other "escape" routes such as Columbia Street. The confluence of Green, Magazine, River, and Western has seen four accidents in the past year. Many residents of the Manning Apartments, between Green and Franklin, are extremely disturbed, as well they might be, not only by the greater density that is planned for the Holmes site, but also by the idea of a huge parking garage with two curb cuts on Green Street!

The only viable remedy for all these intersections, with their conflicting signals, is to stop traffic in all directions while pedestrians have crossing signals. There has been an obvious choice between slower traffic and more safety, and faster traffic and less safety.

Signal lights have not caused all the 26 ^{pedestrian} accidents in the past two years in the Central Square area, but they have been a factor in some of them and can be easily corrected.

At Essex St. the arrow for a left turn from Mass. Ave. into Essex is simultaneous with the walk light for crossing Essex. In the last year six injuries to pedestrians, the largest number in the area, have happened at this corner alone.

At Pearl St. and Mass.Ave. there is no light at all, and both buses and autos turn here from both directions. Someone was hurt at this corner just recently.

At Brookline and Mass.Ave. vehicles coming out of Brookline can turn left, right, or diagonally across the avenue to Douglass, with a green light. All these turns interfere with pedestrian crosswalks. Needless to say, there have been accidents at both corners.

Pedestrians do crazy things, apparently thinking, if they stop to think, that they still have the right of way everywhere. They do not; only at designated crosswalks may they cross. But if one gets hurt, it hardly matters who is at fault. Nevertheless, if the traffic signals are not corrected, and the other dangerous crossings are not policed, the City of Cambridge is at fault.

Many thanks to several police officers, especially public information officer Frank Pasquarello, who provided several yards of computer printout; Mel Burns, who is active in community-oriented policing; Bill Cavellini, honored "Taxi Driver of the Year" and an expert on traffic problems; and Hatch Sterrett, long-time activist with a particular concern for Central Square. ‡



PEDESTRIANS

WE NEED YOUR INPUT!

Councillor Davis, Chair of the Traffic and Transportation Committee, is seeking community input to make Cambridge a *pedestrian friendly city*.

Please list below the ONE thing you feel would make Cambridge a more pedestrian friendly city and improve its quality of life.

Please return this flyer in the envelope provided by
January 31, 1999.



City of Cambridge

In City Council January 11, 1999

The Traffic and Transportation Committee conducted a public meeting on Tuesday, December 15, 1998 at six o'clock and forty minutes p.m. in the Sullivan Chamber.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss pedestrian crossings and to look at pedestrian safety issues in the city.

Present at the meeting were: Councillor Henrietta Davis, Chair; Councillor Sheila T. Russell; Councillor Kathleen L. Born; Richard Rossi, Deputy City Manager; Rachael Seymour, Management Intern; Harold Murphy, Superintendent of Police; Officer Paul Sugrue, Bicycle Patrol; Officer Michael Giacoppo, Night Traffic Unit; Vicki Boulrice, Police Department; Sue Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation; Suzanne Rasmussen, Director of Environment and Transportation, Community Development Department; Cara Seiderman, Bicycle and Pedestrian mobility and traffic calming issues, Community Development Department; Rosalie Anders, Pedestrian issues and education, Community Development Department; Cathy Walkins, Community Development Department; Liz Seelman, Elder representative; and Donna P. Lopez, Deputy City Clerk.

Councillor Davis opened the meeting by stating that there is an effort underway to deal with pedestrian issues in the city. There is a pedestrian committee and a large city staff working on traffic issues. She further stated that there is increased enforcement efforts especially since the accident on Huron Avenue when Connor Epstein Kraus was struck by a car. Councillor Davis stated that she wants Cambridge to be a model for pedestrian safety.

At this time Ms. Cara Seiderman, Community Development Department, presented a slide presentation. She outlined the following:

- Signals are not always pedestrian friendly, the city can make improvements;
- At public events the city is trying to get the word out;
- Enforcement is an educational effort;
- Pedestrian laws need to be strengthened;
- Drivers running red lights are serious, the city is contemplating doing camera enforcement where license plates are photographed as they violate the laws;
- Engineering tools can be used to give the pedestrian an advantage;
- Concord Avenue will have islands with cut out walkways through them;
- The city is looking into ways to make streets safer. Berkshire is a street where traffic calming efforts have been instituted.

Committee Report #8

542

A report from Councillor Davis,
Chair of the Traffic and Transportation
Committee, for a hearing held on
December 15, 1998, for the purpose of
discussing pedestrian crossings and to
look at pedestrian safety issues in the
city.

*Report Accepted
Placed on file
Order Adopted*

In City Council January 11, 1999