

6 Saint Gerard Terrace
Cambridge, MA 02140
22 April, 1999

City Council
City Hall
Cambridge, MA 02139

RE: DEFICIENCIES IN NORTH MASS AVE REDESIGN PROJECT AND PROCESS

Dear Council Members:

A few days ago, in an envelope postmarked 16 April, I received a copy of a memo dated 24 February from DPW Commissioner Ralph Dunphy to City Manager Healy concerning the North Cambridge Stabilization Committee's (NCSC) concerns about the Mass Ave upgrade.

In particular, the NCSC had asked that an independently-funded ombudsman, picked jointly by local residents, businesses and city officials, be appointed to help the problematic redesign proceed with minimal neighborhood disruption.

Unfortunately, City officials have, apparently, decided that independence is not a necessary function for this position. The letter I received lists Mr. Steve White of DPW as the neighborhood's point of contact (POC). While I speak only for myself at this point, I can assure you that Mr. White, despite his professional qualifications, is not the independent POC this project needs. Over the past several months, not necessarily through any fault of his own, Mr. White has been difficult to talk to, has not proactively addressed the neighborhood, has not adequately responded to neighborhood concerns about the misrepresentation of the project by the City and its agents and appears thoroughly uninterested in having community input into DPW mailings on the project.

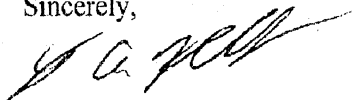
I cannot overemphasize what a bad project this is on all counts. The local community groups don't like it, the local business group doesn't like it and virtually any individual you might run into in North Cambridge thinks that this project, with its removal of roughly 50% of the Mass Ave Median Strip, the loss of roughly 13% of the Mass Ave parking, and the installation of bike lanes is a crazy and dangerous idea.

From virtually day one, the city has mischaracterized this project. Whether through incompetence or a complete misunderstanding of the neighborhood, the gaps in the City's redesign plans are huge. Crosswalks will be up to 500' apart, rather than the approximately 300' repeatedly claimed by the City, adequate traffic studies have not been done, the probable increase in double parking has not been addressed and so forth. Even the proponents' main claim that removing half of the median strip will cut down on vehicular speed is uncertain. While differing in many respects from North Mass Ave, the median-less strip of Mass Ave just on the other side of Alewife brook, in Arlington, averages speeds approximately 25% higher than North Mass Ave. While not entirely relevant, perhaps, this fact is far more relevant than any study done by the City or its agents because, evidently, they didn't do any.

The City's apparent refusal to appoint an independent ombudsman to help minimize the negative impacts of this sub-standard and dangerous project is just one more indication that the City does not care about the safety and well-being of the people who live in, work in or travel through North Cambridge.

As always, I may be reached at 354-8353 should you have any questions or comments about this letter or any other North Cambridge issue.

Sincerely,



Craig A. Kelley, Esq.

Consent Communication #20

2925
A communicationw as received from
Craig A. Kelley, Esq., regarding
deficiencies in North Mass. Ave.
Redesign Project and process.

In City Council April 26, 1999

Referred to
Traffic + Transportation
Committee to review the North
Mass. Ave Project.

4/28/99

sent to councillor Davis