

# City of Cambridge

6.

IN CITY COUNCIL

May 18, 1998

COUNCILLOR DAVIS  
COUNCILLOR BORN  
COUNCILLOR DAVIS  
VICE MAYOR GALLUCCIO  
COUNCILLOR REEVES  
COUNCILLOR RUSSELL  
COUNCILLOR SULLIVAN  
COUNCILLOR TOOMEY  
COUNCILLOR TRIANTAFILLOU

WHEREAS: Some bus routes are changing in late June; and

WHEREAS: The attached raises issues about roadway conditions; and be it further

ORDERED: That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report to the City Council and contact with the MBTA as soon as possible to assure that matters related to roadway condition and bus routes be addressed in a timely manner.

In City Council May 18, 1998.

Adopted by the affirmative vote of nine members.

Attest:- D. Margaret Drury, City Clerk.

A true copy;

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "D. Margaret Drury".

ATTEST:-

D. Margaret Drury  
City Clerk

**JOHN HANSEN**  
209 Green Street  
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139  
(617) 492-5680 • Work: (617) 972-8157

1 May 1998

Mr. Robert Prince  
General Manager, MBTA  
10 Park Plaza  
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Re: Potential Problems with Change of Routes to #64, #70 & #70A

Dear Sir:

I have read recently that the MBTA is planning to change the routes of the above-referenced bus routes, in order to serve the new supermarket being constructed at University Place, near Central Square, Cambridge. I wish to bring a few matters to your attention because this could adversely effect the neighborhood in which I live if proper planning does not precede this route change.

I am assuming the new bus route will bring the buses along Green Street for three or four blocks, and then they would turn down Western Avenue towards the Charles River. Currently, the buses board at a stop above the subway station along Massachusetts Avenue, then turn right on Pearl Street then right on Green Street for one block, before turning onto Western Avenue.

This new route brings the buses in front of the historic masonry house I own at 209 Green Street. There are two potential problems this new route will create. The first involves excessive vibration to the my house and the others in this block due to the poor condition of the pavement on Green Street (there is already problematic vibration from the #47 bus that passes this way). This problem is detailed in the attached letter to Cambridge City Councilor Henrietta Davis, and this is more of a concern for the Cambridge City authorities than the MBTA.

The second problem is an MBTA issue. There is currently a bus stop in my block for the #47 bus. If this stop also comes to serve the #64, the #70 and the #70A, it has the potential to become the busiest bus stop in all of Central Square! I frequently ride the #70 and the #70A, and these are common routes used by commuters to access Allston, Brighton, Watertown and Waltham from the Red Line. In the morning and evening, there are typically 30-40 people waiting for each and every bus—and they leave every few minutes. Right now the commuters board at the big bus stop with shelter along Massachusetts Avenue. But if the routes are changed, all of these subway riders and other commuters will board along Green Street. There are two potential stops on Green, but the one everyone will likely choose is the one in front of the group of houses where I live. That stop is almost equidistant from the subway exit as the alternative stop on Green at Magazine Street—but it precedes it. Believe me, it is often difficult to get a seat on the 70 or 70A, and the stop in my block is the one people will choose, in order to be assured a seat.

Bear in mind this is a *residential* block where the sidewalks are only six feet wide. It cannot accommodate that level of bus riders waiting to board the bus.

Director of the MBTA  
1 May 1998  
page two

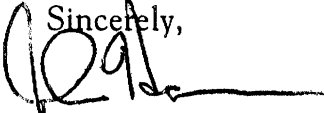
Furthermore, it will mean lots of folks sitting on our steps, hanging around and waiting. Furthermore, with that many people on a narrow sidewalk, it may present a danger to the bus riders and pedestrians because of people have to walk or wait in the street due to the crowds. It will surely decrease the quality of life for the local residents—this is *not* a commercial area.

There are several possible solutions. One is to route the buses down Massachusetts Avenue from the supermarket, then for the buses to turn down Pearl (as they currently do) and right onto Green for one block. If the buses must come down Green Street the whole way, then the bus stop on Green between Brookline and Pearl (i.e. in the residential block) should be removed. Some sort of study should be conducted on how to board the passengers, and that would likely lead to an expanded bus stop/loading area along the block of Green between Pearl and Magazine. This is a long commercial block that would allow for separate stops for the various routes, and it mostly consists of the back doors and loading docks for businesses that front on Mass Ave.

I trust you have officials that are already studying these traffic problems. However, I wish to bring these problems to your attention before any changes to the bus routes are actually made. These changes will alter the commuting habits of a very large number of riders, so it is best to get the changes right the first time.

Thank you for your attention to these matters, and I trust you and your staff will be acting appropriately regarding these matters.

With best regards, I am

Sincerely,  
  
JOHN HANSEN

cc: The Honorable Henrietta Davis  
Cambridge City Council

Robert W. Healy  
Cambridge City Manager

J. Roger Boothe  
Cambridge Director of Urban Design

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1 May 1998

The Honorable Henrietta Davis  
Member, Cambridge City Council  
City Hall, 795 Massachusetts Avenue  
Cambridge MA 02139

Re: Increased MBTA Traffic On Green Street, Routes 64, 70 & 70A

Dear Ms. Davis:

I recently received your "News-in-a-letter," where you speak about extending the #64 and #70 bus routes to University Park to serve the new supermarket that is currently being built there. I wish to bring to your attention an issue concerning changes to the routes which you probably haven't considered. In short, a block of Green Street needs to be repaved before this change is made, if the route of the buses is down Green Street from University Park to Western Avenue.

You see I live on Green street between Brookline and Pearl Streets, a block these buses will likely traverse on their way from the supermarket. I live in one of six historic brick townhouses (circa 1875) with semicircular facades, and the current #47 bus traffic along Green Street substantially disturbs these structures due to the poor condition of the pavement along that block. Every time a bus passes, all six houses shake as if an earthquake has occurred. In fact, the whole brick facades of #205 and #207 collapsed three years ago during renovation—due in part, I am sure, to the frequent vibration related to MBTA bus traffic.

Please bear in mind that this part of Central Square is built on landfill dating from the 1870's. This soil was not especially well-engineered or well-compacted, and the result is that the soil magnifies any ground vibration substantially. When the #47 MBTA buses round the corner from Brookline onto Green Street, their drivers typically jam the throttles and accelerate rapidly to 25-30 MPH. As these 15-ton buses pass over the irregularities in the pavement, their stiff suspensions and high-pressure tires pound the surface like jackhammers and shake these masonry houses. I remember experiencing a force 5.1 earthquake in California a few miles from its epicenter, and I swear that the vibrations to the houses created by the MBTA bus traffic are sometimes greater, sometimes less than earthquake forces of this magnitude.

This seismic phenomenon is magnified whenever a pothole opens up. It has been many years since that block of Green Street has been paved, and the pavement has become somewhat irregular due to the installation of cable TV, various utility cuts, etc. These vibration problems will only get worse if the #64 & #70 buses change their routes, for this will more than treble the level of bus traffic on this block of Green Street (curiously, trucks generally do not create the same vibration problems, as they cannot accelerate as rapidly between stop signs). I therefore request that any increase in bus traffic be preceded by a thorough reconstruction of the pavement of Green Street between Brookline and Pearl streets, in order to minimize the vibration imposed upon the six historic masonry properties located on the east side of Green Street, as well as other masonry structures on the west side.

The Honorable Henrietta Davis  
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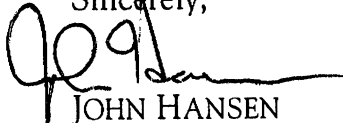
I trust that this letter will serve as due notice to the City of Cambridge of this vibration problem from MBTA buses, such that the liability of the City will be enhanced should damage to the various houses occur because of this increased bus traffic. I am also forwarding via certified mail notarized copies of this letter to the City Manager of Cambridge and to the Director of the MBTA, so that I might clearly demonstrate due notice of this problem to civil authorities should such proof become necessary.

Please bear in mind that I do not have objection to increased bus traffic *per se*—I am just insisting that the City repair its infrastructure so that the buses will not cause damage to the private landowners in the area due to the ground vibration problems the buses cause. I am also asking the MBTA to study where the main Central Square stops should be located, because the current bus stop in our residential block (which only has six-foot-wide sidewalks) might literally become the main bus stop of Central Square given the way the stops are currently configured. That would be an intolerable situation for Green Street residents, and it would constitute terribly bad planning and wholly unreasonable action by the City and the MBTA.

Thank you for bringing the change in bus routes to my attention, and I trust you will address appropriately the problems these changes will cause.

With best regards, I am

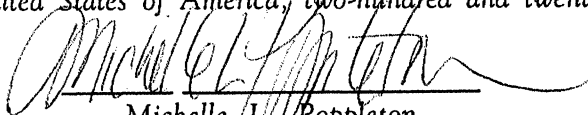
Sincerely,



JOHN HANSEN

*Town of Watertown, Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

*Sworn and subscribed before me on this Mayday, in the year of Our Lord one-thousand, nine-hundred, ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America, two-hundred and twenty-two.*

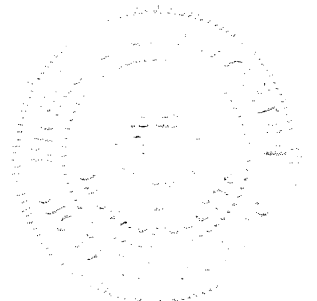


Michelle L. Poppleton  
Notary Public of the Commonwealth  
My Commission Expires April 2, 2004

cc: Mr. Robert Prince  
General Manager, MBTA

Robert W. Healy  
Cambridge City Manager

J. Roger Boothe  
Cambridge Director of Urban Design



Worcester bus routes are changing in late June. W: the attached raises issues about roadway condition

O: Transmit the attached letter to the CM and request a report to the ~~ASAP~~ and contact with the MBTA ASAP to assure that matters related <sup>^</sup> to ~~roadway condition~~ roadway condition + bus routes be addressed in a timely manner

H Davis

6

Order for next wk

see 5/11/98 at 10:55  
for 5/18/98.

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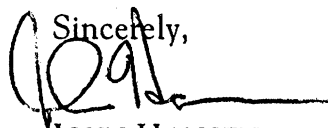
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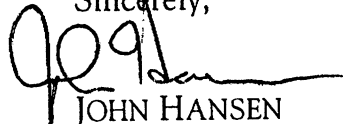
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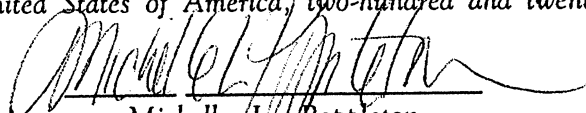
Sincerely,



JOHN HANSEN

Town of Watertown, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Sworn and subscribed before me on this Mayday, in the year of Our Lord one-thousand, nine-hundred, ninety-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America, two-hundred and twenty-two.

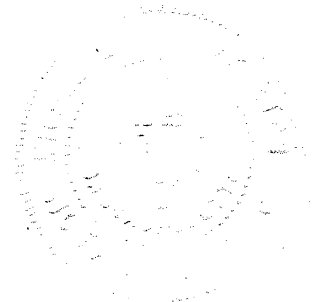


Michelle L. Poppleton  
Notary Public of the Commonwealth  
My Commission Expires April 2, 2004

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General Manager, MBTA

Robert W. Healy  
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J. Roger Boothe  
Cambridge Director of Urban Design





# City of Cambridge

6.

**IN CITY COUNCIL**

May 18, 1998

**COUNCILLOR DAVIS**

**WHEREAS:** Some bus routes are changing in late June; and

**WHEREAS:** The attached raises issues about roadway conditions; and be it further

**ORDERED:** That the City Manager be and hereby is requested to report to the City Council and contact with the MBTA as soon as possible to assure that matters related to roadway condition and bus routes be addressed in a timely manner.

203 CM

Consent Order #6

Councillor Davis re: change in bus routes  
and issues about roadway conditins near  
Central Square.

In City Council May 18, 1998

**ORDER ADOPTED**