



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

SUSAN B. SCHLESINGER

Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

BETH RUBENSTEIN

Deputy Director for
Community Development

To: Robert W. Healy, City Manager

From: Beth Rubenstein, ^{YBR} Acting Assistant City Manager, Community
Development

Date: October 21, 1998

Re: Council Order #085, dated 9/28/98 Re: Report on Bike Lanes and
Removal of Median Strip on North Mass. Ave.

With respect to the above referenced council order, I report the following:

The redesign of North Massachusetts Avenue is part of the sewer separation project that resulted from the court-ordered cleanup of Boston Harbor and is subject to court-ordered deadlines. The City was required to commence construction by July 1, 1998 and thus needed to set curb lines, including locations of sidewalks and medians, by last spring in order for the full design of the drainage system to be completed. The curb line decisions made last April have enabled the sewer design work to be completed on time. Further design work on the surface and streetscape treatments – including landscaping, street furniture, sidewalk paving materials, and lighting – still remains to be done, and there will be another series of community workshops and other venues for community participation in those design decisions.

Design Process for Surface Improvements

The initial design process for the sewer reconstruction and surface improvement project for North Massachusetts Avenue took place over a two-year period, involving the public from early 1997 when the City received MWRA funding. The Departments of Public Works, Community Development and Traffic, Parking and Transportation worked with area residents and businesses in a variety of ways: businesses along the corridor received individual visits, thousands of mailings were sent to residents and others interested in the project, and sixteen public meetings were held with the objective of obtaining community input.

To ensure widespread participation, meetings were held on weekday evenings and Saturday mornings, notice boards were posted at multiple locations on Mass. Ave., and meeting notices were sent to hundreds of North Cambridge residents and businesses. Design drawings of the entire corridor were sent to all who had expressed interest in the project to make clear exactly what was being proposed and to keep those who could not attend all of the meetings informed. In addition, special meetings were held with businesses and individuals to review site-specific

concerns. Finally, last April the City Council held two additional meetings to hear community comment.

Project Goals

The design goals for the project were as follows: to improve conditions for pedestrians; improve streetscape conditions; serve appropriate motor-vehicle needs; improve conditions for bicyclists; preserve appropriate commercial environment; improve safety for all users; and preserve/improve side street environment.

Project Elements

The plan for North Mass. Ave. reflects the collaborative effort of everyone who participated in achieving all these important objectives. The final elements include:

Enhancement of Existing Crosswalks and Addition of 9 New Crosswalks

All crosswalks will be enhanced by some combination of curb extensions, median refuge points, and/or improved signal timing. The addition of nine new crossings on top of existing crosswalks on Mass. Ave. will make crossing easier and more convenient. Curb extensions will shorten crossing distances at each crosswalk. More crosswalks will provide additional opportunities for safe crossing by pedestrians. Enhanced visibility and shorter crossing distances will add a significant safety factor, making it easier to cross Mass. Ave. in a single movement. Curb extensions will make it easier for motorists and pedestrians to see each other at intersections, prevent motorists from speeding around corners, improve sight lines and provide added space for street furnishings along the corridor.

Medians at All Unsignalized Intersections and Convenient Signal Timing at All Signalized Intersections

All non-signalized (and some signalized) crossings of Mass. Ave. have six foot wide median refuges. At all signalized intersections, pedestrians will be able to cross in one cycle, even for those who walk more slowly. At signalized crossings, signal timing will be adjusted to minimize wait time and increase the time to cross. In places where there are no signals, the median provides a refuge for pedestrians, and with a six foot width allows safe waiting for parents with strollers. This design, together with the curb extensions, will highlight the presence of crosswalks for motorists, who will better be able to see pedestrians crossing.

Intermittent Median Design

The plan retains 52% of the median, with medians serving either as pedestrian refuges at marked crosswalks or restricting undesirable turning movements. The intermittent median design (as opposed to a continuous median) discourages speeding and increases crosswalk visibility and awareness for drivers. Medians will be retained where left turns are undesirable and eliminated where improved access is desired.

Bicycle Lanes Added for Length of Corridor

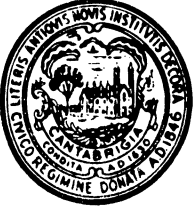
Bicycle lanes will be provided along the length of the project. The City's Vehicle Trip Reduction Ordinance requires that we promote bicycle transportation in Cambridge, and Massachusetts Law requires bicycle provisions for projects using state or federal funds. While bicycle lanes are not specifically required to receive project funding, the Massachusetts Highway Department looks carefully at design submittals for bicycle provisions and may withhold project approval for inadequate accommodation. In both federal and Massachusetts state guidelines, the prescribed facility for bicycles on an urban arterial with parking is a bicycle lane.

Bike lanes provide a more defined, visible place for bicyclists to travel. They organize how the road is used and have been shown to reduce bicycle traffic on sidewalks and increase the percentage of cyclists who obey traffic signals and other laws (for example, riding with the flow of traffic). Bike lanes increase safety for all modes and have been shown to reduce the number of accidents by 20-80 percent.

Safety through General Reduction of Excessive Speeds

The overall design of the street is intended to reduce excessive speeding along Mass. Ave. while not further slowing already slow traffic at rush hours. The elements that contribute to the speed reduction are: restriction of motor vehicle travel lanes to minimum widths, addition of bicycle lanes, intermittent median design, ample delineated crosswalks, slight deviation from totally straight sight lines, and landscaping features. Speed is one of the most significant safety hazards to all road users, and reducing speeds will provide tremendous benefits to the safety of the street.

The redesign of North Massachusetts Avenue has benefited greatly from extensive community process. Further, the project met the court-ordered deadlines for sewer separation work while addressing the project's initial goals.



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3.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

November 9, 1998

To The Honorable, The City Council:

Please find attached a response to Awaiting Report Item No. 14, regarding a report on bicycle lanes and the removal of the median strip on North Massachusetts Avenue, received from Acting Assistant City Manager for Community Development Beth Rubenstein.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mec
Attachment

Consent Agenda #3

7/1/5

Relative to AW #14, regarding a
report on bicycle lanes and the
removal of the median strip on
North Massachusetts Avenue.

In CityCouncil November 9, 1998

Placed on File.