

CENTRAL SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD COALITION

P.O. Box 391294 Cambridge, Massachusetts 02139 (617) 497-5518

March 31, 1994

Dear Councillor Triantafyllou,

Enclosed please find a letter addressing Central Square neighborhood truck traffic concerns that I had hoped would be included on the agenda of the next City Council meeting on April 4. The City Clerk has informed me, however, that unless a councillor moves to override the agenda to include this letter and the issues that it addresses, the letter won't be discussed until the April 11 council meeting. We had hoped to have this matter addressed on April 4 as the CSNC Traffic and Parking Committee is meeting with city officials later in the week and we would like to have the force of a council order to guide the direction of this first meeting as well as any future actions the City might take to alleviate truck problems.

Would you be interested in sponsoring such an order on our behalf and/ or voting to pass such an order? We would appreciate your help.

I will send you a copy of the CSNC Traffic and Parking Survey results when I finish compiling them. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours truly,



Vici Casana, Chair
Traffic and Parking Committee
547-4773

P.S. Thanks for questioning the City Manager's hiring procedures! I have run into problems with cypricians review policies for city jobs, too, and will write you about them.

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TO THE HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL:

The first finding of the Central Square Neighborhood Coalition's traffic and parking survey, which received 175 responses from residents, is that truck traffic problems in the neighborhoods that border Central Square--Cambridgeport, Riverside, Area 4 and Mid-Cambridge--need to be addressed.

We request that the City investigate reports of increased truck traffic--particularly 18-wheelers and haulers of hazardous cargo--by measuring truck traffic volume on River Street, Western Avenue, Pleasant Street, Massachusetts Avenue, Brookline Street and Magazine Street. City officials have previously said that the Traffic and Parking Department has no data on truck traffic on any Cambridge street (according to a letter from Annette LaMond and Susan Miller-Havens in the 11/11/93 Cambridge Chronicle). We believe that the responsibility for gathering such data belongs to paid employees of the Traffic and Parking Department, not to the residents bothered by the truck traffic. Recently citizens who have complained of truck traffic problems have been told that if they think there's a problem, they should gather the data to document their complaint.

Respondents to our survey also complained about truck noise (rumbling, screeching of air brakes), truck vibrations that shake buildings and crack walls and ceilings, air pollution caused by truck exhaust, speeding trucks and truck moving violations (such as trucks making an illegal left turn from River Street onto Mass. Ave. because they can't continue onto Prospect St.). The frequency of trucks carrying hazardous cargo through residential and commercial areas is also a major problem.

Another major complaint is that the truck ban that has existed since the mid 1970's which prohibits the travelling of trucks weighing more than 2.5 tons on residential streets between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. and on weekends is not enforced. Many residents who live on the truck routes or on neighboring side streets have complained of being awakened at all hours of the night by trucks. An added problem is when speeding trucks hit potholes and cause loud noises "like a bomb going off" (survey comment). Another respondent noted that the night-time vibrations "feel like shock waves under the street."

This problem might be partially alleviated if better signs were posted about the truck ban. Right now there are two small signs--one at the beginning of River Street at Memorial Drive (for trucks that just got off the Mass Pike) and one on Pleasant Street at Mass. Ave.--that are virtually useless. These two small, white signs are clustered among other signs, thus can be easily missed.

Perhaps the City ought to consider also whether 2.5 tons is a ^{low} high enough weight limit for trucks travelling through residential neighborhoods. Many respondents noted that an empty large truck might weigh 2.5 tons or less but can still make a lot of noise rumbling down the street and hitting potholes. Perhaps a 1.5 tons or less limit would be more appropriate.

(more)

A number of Prospect Street residents have complained about trucks illegally travelling that street. Since 1987 all non-local truck traffic has been banned from Prospect Street. One resident has written of the "vibrations that have cracked walls and ceilings of many homes on both sides of Prospect Street." This resident also wrote of an elderly woman who was hit by a truck while crossing Mass. Ave. at Prospect several years ago and died the next day.

Perhaps the overriding question is how long the residential and commercial streets of Cambridge will serve as a truck thoroughfare. Last spring a Community Development Department document (4/9/93) noted that "as part of the Services Agreement signed by the Executive Office of Transportation and Construction (EOTC), the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) and the City of Cambridge relating to the Central Artery (I-93)/ Third Harbor Tunnel (I-90) Project, the MDH agreed to initiate a study of truck traffic using Cambridge streets to reach non-Cambridge destinations. The study is to include an examination of present hazardous cargo routes on the regional roadway system, including those through Boston and Cambridge, and shall identify alternative routes. The study will identify the feasibility of preventing hazardous cargo vehicles on the Massachusetts Turnpike from exiting at the Allston/ Cambridge interchange and travelling to non-Cambridge destinations via Cambridge streets, and while recognizing the need to serve existing industrial area, will consider the feasibility of a ban on classes of hazardous cargo on I-90 east of Route 128. The study will also consider measures to reduce truck traffic on Cambridge residential streets. Measures to accomplish this might include alternate routing, a truck ban on River Street, Western Avenue and East Cambridge residential streets, and other possibilities as yet undetermined. The City Manager has recently sent a letter to EOTC reminding them of their commitment and requesting that this study be included as part of the State's Unified Transportation Planning Work Program for FY 93/94." The report from which I have just quoted is titled "City Truck Policy and its Effect on Central Square." What is the status of the aforementioned study? What of the possibilities of limiting or excluding truck traffic from residential streets?

On November 1, 1993, in response to the Brattle Street neighbors' complaints about trucks, Councillor Duehay filed an order calling for a city-wide traffic study of trucks. The City Manager was to hire a consultant for this traffic study. What is the status of this study?

Recently some citizens have voiced their anger at the possibility of trucks marring the tranquillity of Memorial Drive by travelling for 2/10 of a mile on that roadway to service an expanded Stop and Shop. I would hope that these citizens and indeed the City government are equally concerned about the truck problems other residents must endure 24 hours per day. Please investigate the above-mentioned problems and enact legislation to give the residents who live on or near truck routes some peace of mind.

Respectfully submitted by

Vici Casana

Vici Casana, Chair
Traffic and Parking Committee

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Another major complaint is that the truck ban that has existed since the mid 1970's which prohibits the travelling of trucks weighing more than 2.5 tons on residential streets between 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. and on weekends is not enforced. Many residents who live on the truck routes or on neighboring side streets have complained of being awakened at all hours of the night by trucks. An added problem is when speeding trucks hit potholes and cause loud noises "like a bomb going off" (survey comment). Another respondent noted that the night-time vibrations "feel like shock waves under the street."

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Respectfully submitted by



Vici Casana, Chair
Traffic and Parking Committee

Consent Communication #11 S-40

A comm. was received from the Central Square
Neighborhood Coalition regarding a traffic
and parking survey.

In City Council April 4, 1994