

## City of Cambridge

The Elder Affairs Committee held two public meetings on Wednesday, April 1, 1998 to discuss the concerns of residents regarding the North Massachusetts Avenue Road Construction Project. The first public meeting was held at the Leonard J. Russell Apartments located at 2050 Massachusetts Avenue at nine o'clock a. m. and the second public meeting was held at the Burns Apartments located at 50 Churchill Avenue at ten o'clock and fifty-five minutes a. m.

Present at the meetings were Councillor Sheila Russell, Chair, Councillor Kathleen L. Born, Steve White, Deputy Public Works Commissioner, Sue Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation, Cara Seiderman, Transportation Program Manager, Community Development, Michael Halle, member of the Bicycle Committee, Mr. Jerry Friedman, from Tams Consultant.

Councillor Russell opened the meetings at each location by informing the seniors that the meetings were scheduled as a mechanism for the seniors to be informed about the North Massachusetts Avenue Road Construction Project and to have their concerns addressed.

### OVERVIEW OF THE NORTH MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE ROAD CONSTRUCTION PROJECT

Mr. Steve White, Deputy Public Works Commissioner described the proposed North Massachusetts Avenue Road Construction Project.

He informed the audience that the project would take a couple of years to complete and would begin in July starting on Oxford Street working toward the Arlington area. The project started as a sewer separation project. Sanitary sewers need to be separated from storm water. A \$12.5 million grant has been received from the MWRA to start this project which will continue until the year 2001, he said. Mr. White stated that while the city is doing sewer pipe work the city will undertake roadway improvements and this has lead to the design process that is in place today. Mr. White stated that while the work is ongoing Public Works will take into consideration the regular everyday routine and work with the community.

At this time Mr. White turned the presentation over to Sue Clippinger, Director of Traffic, Parking and Transportation who stated that with the street being torn up it is a good opportunity to look at the design of Massachusetts Avenue and the vehicular traffic which comes into the city. She stated that there have been nine community meetings on this project, with the last three meeting held on Saturdays. She distributed information entitled North Massachusetts Avenue Surface Design Project which outlined the design goals and the design principles and project features.

(ATTACHMENT A)

The design goals, she said, were prepared with input from the community, businesses and residents from the community meetings held. She stated that Massachusetts Avenue is not an easy street for pedestrians to cross and the design will make it easier and safer to cross the street. The streetscape will be improved with the placement of benches, trees and trash receptacles. She stated that the city does not want the needs of motor vehicles to overrun the city's concerns. Massachusetts Avenue, she stated, is a great access road and the cars and pedestrians need to know where the bicyclists should be. She informed the audience that safety is the number one concern.

She outlined the design principles as follows:

- 9 new crosswalks across Massachusetts Avenue
  - the median strips will have a cut through which will make the refuge areas easier for pedestrian to cross safely
  - the timing mechanism on the walk light will be long enough to cross safely
  - there will be six feet less of cross walks to cross with the extension of the curbs
  - two travel lanes will be maintained to protect residential side streets
  - travel lanes, bike lanes and pedestrian crossings will be well organized.
- After the transportation modes are operational, Massachusetts Avenue will be looked at to make sure sidewalk conditions, trees, benches and bus stops are functional.

### **LEONARD J. RUSSELL APARTMENT SPECIFICS**

Ms. Clippinger described the improvements to Massachusetts Avenue which would take place in the general area of 2050 Massachusetts Avenue.

A new cross walk will be added on the other side of Blake Street, she said. At Walden Street the median will be eliminated to allow a left turn lane for vehicular traffic. The signal and the crosswalk will remain at this location. Ms. Clippinger stated that additional time for the cross walks will be looked at and two crosswalks will be added to Cogswell Avenue.

The committee heard from Eva Ficaro, a resident, who stated that she hopes Walden Street will be straightened out. It is a hard street to cross, she said. Ms. Clippinger asked if the difficulty was the signal or the ramp. Ms. Ficaro responded that the signal time is too short. Ms. Clippinger stated that the flashing "don't walk" orange hand is up longer than the walking person to give an average person time to get to the other side of the street.

The committee heard from Ms. Williams who expressed concern about the cars going through the light. Ms. Clippinger stated that the Traffic Department will come out and walk through the intersection with the seniors.

A resident stated that the bikes and skateboards will kill you. Ms. Clippinger stated that there are enforcement issues. The Police Department, she stated, has issued bike violations. She further stated that the city needs to make sure the physical design will provide safety for all.

Councillor Russell stated that Walden Street is hard to cross. Ms. Seiderman stated that there is a No Right Turn on Red sign at this location. A resident stated that the pedestrian cross button is hard to push. Ms. Clippinger stated that this should be changed. Mushroom buttons will be added, she said. A resident asked when the lights were changed to walking people. Ms. Clippinger responded that marketing research was done and it was found that "walking people" symbol was more universally understandable.

Mr. Horace Goodridge, a resident, stated that Walden Street is the most dangerous crosswalk and it should be looked at to correct it. Councillor Born stated that Walden Street was drawn with two lanes of traffic, but there are three lanes. Councillor Russell stated that there are only two lanes of traffic at the corner of Walden Street, maybe there should be only one lane of traffic at the corner. Ms. Clippinger stated that the Traffic Department needs to look at this location. Ms. Clippinger asked the residents which was scarier to cross, Massachusetts Avenue or Walden Street. The residents responded "both". Councillor Russell stated that she thought Walden Street was more difficult. Ms. Clippinger stated that the Traffic Department will look at the Walden Street design and make changes. Conceptual design decision will be made by the middle of this month to take advantage of the available funds to do the maximum changes, she said.

The committee heard from Joe Kavens, a resident who stated that he felt the design in Central Square was a mess. Ms. Clippinger stated that more cars yield to pedestrians at Pearl Street and an additional crosswalk was added at City Hall. Councillor Russell stated that the problem in Central Square is the pedestrians who do not pay attention. Central Square, she said, represents what we want for our streets:

- travel lanes working
- bike lanes
- pedestrian safety
- bus stops.

There are more modes of travel and we are trying to accommodate all modes of transportation. She further stated that we are trying to get more out of our infrastructure which does not grow and are trying to make it more efficient.

Ms. Clippinger stated that the sidewalk has been expanded at Rindge Avenue and the signal timing will be reviewed.

The committee heard from Steve Merritt, CHA Manager of 2050 Massachusetts Avenue, who asked about access to the building during the construction period. Mr. White responded that the city will do its best to accommodate the community needs. Delivery schedules, he said, will need to be provided to the Public Works Department so that the city can work together with the residents.

Ms. Williams asked whose responsibility it is to remove snow from bus stops. Ms. Clippinger stated that it is not the T's responsibility. It is the abutters' responsibility. Councillor Russell stated that the city tries. She informed Mr. White that there is a handicapped space at 2050 Massachusetts Avenue and the water collects and the space is not accessible. Mr. White responded that 2050 Massachusetts Avenue will be placed on the list now to have snow removed.

Mr. Goodridge stated that the Kentucky Fried Chicken establishment never shovels in front of their business.

Mr. Merritt stated that the snowblower owned by the Housing Authority is to be used by CHA personnel to provide access to the bus stop.

The meeting at the Leonard J. Russell Apartments adjourned at ten o'clock and thirty minutes p. m.

### **BURNS APARTMENT SPECIFICS**

Ms. Clippinger outlined the specifics of the project in the vicinity of Churchill Avenue:

- Of the nine new crosswalks, Ms. Clippinger said that three would be in the vicinity of Churchill Avenue.
- Richards Avenue, she said, would have a narrow median to prevent left turns.
- There will be a crosswalk added at Clarendon Avenue to a refuge space in the middle (cut out walk through), leaving a six foot shorter street to cross.
- Clarendon Avenue will have a wider median to Edmond and Washburn Avenue and a new crosswalk with a refuge point.
- No parking along the Midas Muffler site.
- MBTA stop at Churchill and Cottage Park Avenues will remain.

- No median at Cottage Park.
- Newman Street and City Paint will have a new crosswalk with a refuge point.
- New crosswalk at Linear Park
- Cedar Street, design work being done to slow the traffic speed and to construct a sharper curve at Cedar Street.
- Harvey Street one way from Cedar Street to Massachusetts Avenue.

The committee heard from Janet Goode, a resident, who asked if there would be benches on Massachusetts Avenue. Ms. Clippinger asked Ms. Goode if she wanted benches? Ms. Goode responded in the affirmative. Ms. Cara Seiderman stated that it would be helpful to know if there is a specific place you would like benches.

The committee heard from Mr. Paul Amato, a resident in the Churchill Avenue area, who stated that the residents can only use one sidewalk on Churchill Avenue. The traffic on Churchill Avenue has increased 500%, he said. No one stops for lights anymore, cars or bicyclists, he said. He is glad that safety is being discussed. He asked Mr. White if the city is working on lead water pipes. Mr. White responded the city is surveying the houses in the area. Mr. White stated that a great cost reduction will be passed onto the homeowners because the city will be doing construction in the area.

The committee heard from Alice LeBeau, a resident, who asked how high the median strip would be. Ms. Clippinger stated that the walkway will be at street level, there will be no stepping up onto a curb. The city, she said, is required to make the crosswalk accessible for wheelchairs.

A resident expressed concern about bicycle riding on the sidewalks. Ms. Clippinger informed the resident that the Police Department has written a lot of citations for bicycle riding on the sidewalks.

Councillor Born stated there will be a new Massachusetts Avenue. The new design and the emphasis on pedestrian safety will result in automobile speed being reduced. More crosswalks will be added with level walk throughs, which will increase pedestrian safety..

The meeting adjourned at eleven o'clock and fifty-five minutes a. m.

For the Committee,

  
Councillor Sheila Russell,  
Chair

# **NORTH MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE SURFACE DESIGN PROJECT**

## **DESIGN GOALS**

- **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**
- **Preserve/Improve Side Street Environment**

# **NORTH MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE SURFACE DESIGN PROJECT**

## **DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND PROJECT FEATURES**

### ***PEDESTRIAN ENHANCEMENTS***

- Nine new pedestrian crossings
  - increase pedestrian access and safety.
  - the average distance between crosswalks is reduced by 149’.
- All non-signalized crossings have 6’ median refuges.
- Signal timing is adjusted to minimize wait time and increase time allowed to cross.
- Curb extensions are added to shorten crosswalks.

### ***MEDIAN***

- 52% of the median retained.
- Medians serve either as pedestrian refuges at marked crosswalks or restrict undesirable turning movements.
- Intermittent median helps prevent speeding and increases crosswalk visibility and awareness for drivers.

### ***BICYCLE FACILITIES***

- Design provides space for bicycles along the Avenue.
- Bicycle lanes organize how the road is used by all modes and increases safety.

# **NORTH MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE SURFACE DESIGN PROJECT**

## **DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND PROJECT FEATURES**

### ***VEHICLE FACILITIES***

- Capacity of vehicle travel lanes is maintained.
- Median retained where left turns are undesirable, but opened where improved access is desired.
- Protect residential streets from unnecessary traffic by maintaining efficient flow on Mass Ave. and allowing direct access to streets and sites where appropriate to reduce circulating traffic.
- Discourage excessive speeds.

### ***PARKING SUPPLY***

- 90% of the parking spaces retained.
- Parking is removed to provide pedestrian crossings.

### ***URBAN DESIGN/ESTHETIC IMPROVEMENTS***

- Add landscaping and other urban design features that enhance environment for residents, businesses and users of the roadway.
- Create an identity that is not auto dominated for the Avenue

Committee Report #5

S-272

Communication was received from Donna P. Lopez, Deputy City Clerk, transmitting a report from Councillor Sheila Russell, Chair of the Elder Affairs Committee, for two meetings held on April 1, 1998 for the purpose of discussing concerns of residents regarding the North Mass. Ave. Road Construction Project.

In City Council April 13, 1998

*Report Accepted*  
**PLACED ON FILE**

Referred to  
*to 7:00 pm hearing*