



Thomas F. Rocca
Chief of Police

CITY OF WATERTOWN

TRAFFIC COMMISSION



David Sampson
Sergeant
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Thomas F. Rocca, Chair
Ryan Nicholson, Provisional Fire Chief
Gregory St. Louis, Superintendent of Public Works
Steven Magoon, Community Development and Planning
Ms. Kelly Gallagher
Mr. Robert Airasian

November 2, 2022

October 26, 2022 Traffic Commission Meeting Minutes

In attendance: Thomas Rocca, Ryan Nicholson, Steven Magoon, Gregory St. Louis, Kelly Gallagher, Robert Airasian

Traffic Commission members addressed the following items:

Item 1 – Mr. Magoon made a motion to approve the September 28, 2022 Traffic Commission meeting minutes; Mr. Airasian seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

Item 2 – The Commission received an informational presentation by Mr. Walt Woo, Senior Traffic Engineer of Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. on behalf of their client Alexandria Real Estate Equities, Inc. regarding proposed corridor improvements on Arsenal Street associated with the proposed Arsenal on the Charles redevelopment project.

The area slated for improvements by Stantec is from 311 Arsenal Street (West Garage) to an area just west of Arsenal Way (approximately 2100 linear feet). Planned improvements include bicycle facilities with 5-foot lanes, maintaining 4 travel lanes, new traffic signals on Arsenal Street at Talcott Ave and at School Street, a two-stage left turn box on School Street to allow bicycles to get ahead of the motor vehicle traffic, new sidewalks, a bike box westbound at Talcott Ave, new highway street lighting, new signing, pavement markings, and drainage improvements. This work is considered Package B improvements (Package A was discussed at the September, 2022 meeting).

Item 3 – The Commission reviewed a request by Mr. Walt Woo of Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. on behalf of their client Alexandria Real Estate Equities, Inc to restrict parking on the south side of Arsenal Street from a point 516' east of Louise Street to a point 611' east of Louise Street as a bus stop.

Mr. Woo reported that the proposed bus turnout would be in front of the current Arsenal on the Charles West Garage and is intended for shuttle bus pick-up and drop-off. The stop is approximately 95 feet long and can accommodate two 40' buses.

Ms. Gallagher inquired whether the turnout would have any impact on the bicycle lanes. Mr. Woo reported that the bicycle lane will start approximately 100 feet past the turnout.

Watertown resident Sue Potter asked and was informed that the off-street bike path on the north side of Arsenal Street would remain in place.

Sgt. Sampson requested that in addition to MUTCD bus stop signage, supplemental signage indicating what modes of transportation may use the bus stop be required. This will reduce any confusion between this stop and MBTA bus stops.

Mr. St. Louis asked who would be responsible for maintenance and snow removal from the bus stop. It is understood that the sidewalks would be cleared privately, but Mr. Woo would report back to Mr. St. Louis regarding clearing of the bus turnout.

Mr. St. Louis also inquired about the current handicap ramp at the site of the turnout – Due to its location, it does not appear to serve a proper purpose. The ramp should be closed off and replaced with two pieces of curb.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to restrict parking on the south side of Arsenal Street from a point 516' east of Louise Street to a point 611' east of Louise Street as a bus stop and include additional distinct signage; Mr. St. Louis seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 4 – The Commission reviewed an informational presentation by Mr. Vinod Kalikiri of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. on behalf of their client ARE-MA Region No. 77, LLC regarding proposed transportation improvements to Coolidge Avenue associated with the development of 99 Coolidge Avenue.

Mr. Kalikiri reported that the portion of Coolidge Avenue covered in the presentation was from Arsenal Street to Grove Street. With the development of a life science building at 99 Coolidge Avenue, these off-site improvements would completely make over the roadway to accommodate multiple modes of travel. The proposed improvements include changing the all-way stop at the intersection of Coolidge Avenue and Grove Street to a fully actuated traffic signal, a multi-use off-road path from Arsenal Street to Grove Street, pedestrian crosswalks across all four legs of the intersection of Coolidge Avenue at Grove Street, a mid-block crosswalk including a rectangular rapid flashing beacon at 99 Coolidge Ave (approximately halfway between Arsenal Street and Grove Street), a turnout in front of 99 Coolidge Avenue to accommodate a shuttle bus stop, and a customized sensor driven vehicle detection sign at 125 Coolidge Avenue to warn cyclists and pedestrians that a vehicle is exiting the 125 Coolidge Avenue garage.

Mr. Kalikiri described the proposed upgrades at the intersection of Coolidge Avenue and Grove Street. Bike Boxes were drawn on Grove Street southbound and Coolidge Avenue southwesterly; due to the installation of bike boxes, Mr. Kalikiri noted that No Turn on Red restrictions would be required at these locations. Mr. Kalikiri suggested that the No Turn on Red restriction apply only to motor vehicles, and that bicycles would be exempt from this restriction.

Mr. Kalikiri explained that the length of the proposed shuttle bus stop is approximately 85 feet long and would include a 2-foot offset to buffer from the travel lane. Ideally, Mr. Kalikiri envisions the stop servicing shuttle buses, Uber, Lyft, and taxis.

Mr. Airasian was informed that all existing on-street parking would remain available, and that the roadway will be narrowed to accommodate the off-street bike path. Mr. Airasian cited the September 2022 meeting and inquired whether the bike boxes should be applied in green so that there is consistency with Arsenal Street. Mr. Kalikiri reported that the green element can be added to the plans if that is the City's preference. Mr. Airasian inquired whether anyone has discussed the garage sensor with the residents of 125 Coolidge Avenue.

District A Councilor Nicole Gardner reported that she received a lot of feedback about the vehicle detection warning system for the driveway of 125 Coolidge Avenue. Councilor Gardner reported that residents are worried about the likely increase in pedestrians and cyclists crossing the front of the driveway. Councilor Gardner felt that the detection system was an important facet of the improvements.

Mr. St. Louis was informed that an audio speaker could be added to the detection system to assist vision impaired users of the path.

Mr. Airasian inquired whether the detection system would also alert cyclists and pedestrians to vehicles exiting the upper lot of 125 Coolidge Avenue. Mr. Kalikiri explained that the original purpose of the system is for the comfort of the drivers exiting the steep incline from the garage, but the sensor can be expanded to also include the adjacent upper lot.

Mr. St. Louis was concerned with the bicycle exception proposed at the intersection of Coolidge Avenue and Grove Street. Bike boxes are new to the City, and this exception may cause confusion; Mr. St. Louis would like to avoid this type of signage.

There was discussion about the staging area for commercial trucks on Coolidge Avenue waiting to enter the Aggregate Industries site. A wider shoulder is being maintained in this area of Coolidge Avenue, and Aggregate Industries is aware of the proposed changes to the roadway. District C Councilor Vincent Piccirilli noted that high number of trucks expected to be on the roadway in the winter, including many municipally owned vehicles.

Ms. Gallagher was concerned about the lack of a proposed No Right Turn on Red restriction on Coolidge Avenue northeasterly at Grove Street. Ms. Gallagher pointed out that the off-street path ends at this intersection, and motorists are required to enter deep into the intersection to make the right turn onto Grove Street extension. Pedestrians and cyclists entering the roadway could be at risk due to this right turn by motorists.

Item 5 – The Commission reviewed a request by Mr. Vinod Kalikiri of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. on behalf of their client ARE-MA Region No. 77, LLC to make the following changes to Coolidge Ave:

- a. Restrict Right Turns on Red on Grove Street southbound at Coolidge Avenue
- b. Restrict Right Turns on Red on Coolidge Avenue southwesterly at Grove Street
- c. Install a mid-block crosswalk with a rectangular rapid flashing beacon at 99 Coolidge Avenue
- d. Restrict parking on the east side of Coolidge Avenue from a point 906' north of Arsenal Street to a point 991' north of Arsenal Street as a bus stop

Sgt. Sampson echoed Mr. St. Louis' concerns about the No Turn on Red bicycle exception proposed at the intersection of Coolidge Avenue at Grove Street. Sgt. Sampson explained that the City's peer reviewer also held the opinion that the exception was not advised at this location. Mr. Magoon, Mr. Airasian, and Mr. St. Louis agreed with removing the bicycle exception.

Sgt. Sampson also noted that, similar to the Arsenal Street request, supplemental signage indicating what transportation companies may use the bus turnout to service riders should be installed. This will reduce confusion with MBTA bus stops.

The Commission agreed with Ms. Gallagher that the end of the off-street path and the geometry of the roadway supported an additional No Turn on Red restriction on Coolidge Avenue northeasterly at Grove Street.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to restrict Right Turns on Red on Grove Street southbound at Coolidge Avenue, Coolidge Avenue southwesterly at Grove Street and Coolidge Avenue northeasterly at Grove Street, install a mid-block crosswalk with a rectangular rapid flashing beacon at 99 Coolidge Avenue, and restrict parking on the east side of Coolidge Avenue from a point 906' north of Arsenal Street to a point 991' north of Arsenal Street as a bus stop. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 6 – The Commission reviewed a request by Ms. Elvira Rosati of 18 Jewett Street to restrict one parking space in front of 18 Jewett Street to Handicap Only Parking.

Sgt. Sampson reported that Ms. Rosati is confined to a wheelchair. Ms. Rosati has a wheelchair ramp that leads from her front door to the end of her walkway; she must be picked up regularly for medical appointments etc., but the front of her house is often unavailable due to other parked cars. Ms. Rosati requested a Handicap Only space to better access her rides.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to restrict one parking space in front of 18 Jewett Street to Handicap Only Parking; Ms. Gallagher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 7 – The Commission reviewed a request by Chief Nicholson of the Watertown Fire Department to restrict parking on the east side of Cross Street (John “Sonny” Whooley Way) from a point 50 feet north of Main Street to a point 25 feet south of Cross Street Extension to Permit Parking Only, intended for Fire Department use.

Chief Nicholson explained that this parking would add to the Department’s allotment of spaces on Cross Street Extension. New additional parking would reduce the number of overflow vehicles belonging to Fire Department personnel in the library lot. The new spaces would also assist with parking during shift changes.

Mr. St. Louis made a motion to restrict parking on the east side of Cross Street (John “Sonny” Whooley Way) from a point 50 feet north of Main Street to a point 25 feet south of Cross Street Extension to Permit Parking Only, intended for Fire Department use; Mr. Magoon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

New Business –

Mr. St. Louis reported that the Mt. Auburn Street 75% design plan has been submitted to MassDOT, maintaining the City’s project submission schedule.

Chief Nicholson reported that he received a lengthy email from parents concerned about the crosswalk on Main Street at Evans Street, and traffic and solar glare on Highland Avenue at Copeland Street. Chief Nicholson responded and explained the in-street pedestrian sign that the Commission recently approved, and the City’s Highland Avenue roadway project to the residents.

Sgt. Sampson noted that the crossing guard post on Highland Avenue at Copeland Street is currently vacant, but that an applicant is currently in the hiring process. If all goes well, a new crossing guard may be assigned to this location in the near future.

Mr. Magoon made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Airasian seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Sgt. David Sampson
Assistant to the Traffic Commission