

Town of Needham
Transportation Safety Committee

Minutes: August 9, 2023

Location: Forbes/McLeod Community Room, Public Safety Building
88 Chestnut Street

Livestreamed on Zoom: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJFLgo6jOXM&list=PL3PRZZjHC3yHcrqyXU8-nnEUWOvjZYQn1&index=9>

ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 13, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chair, Justin McCullen; Lt. John McGrath, Barry McNeilly, Guus Driessen, Rhain Hoyland, Tom Ryder, Rebecca Tarantino
MEMBERS ABSENT: Donna Mullin
STAFF PRESENT: Marianne Cooley, Select Board Chair; Tyler Gabrielski, Management Analyst; Robert Wilson, Engineer
PUBLIC PRESENT: Avery Newton and Warren St. Residents (see sign-in)

1. INTRODUCTION AND ROLL CALL

CALL TO ORDER

At 7:07 p.m., Chair McCullen called the meeting to order, took roll call, and disclosed the video recording.

Chair McCullen introduced Select Board Chair Marianne Cooley who explained that the Traffic Management Advisory Committee had transitioned to the Transportation Safety Committee. Her remarks are further summarized as follows:

The former Transportation Committee was focused on the MBTA and was managed by volunteers. Needham didn't have a Town Manager at the time. The Transportation Committee played a different role and was not involved in pedestrian, bicycle, and other modes of transportation (e.g. shuttles).

The Mobility Planning & Coordinating Committee has been formed to address these larger issues. It will meet semi-annually to convene with DPW, Public Safety, the Transportation Safety Committee and stakeholders to look at the plans for the upcoming season from a DPW perspective and discuss them publicly so community members can be informed about which streets will be impacted when. The MPCC will have the responsibility to develop a comprehensive transportation plan for the Town. The Town is more than cars and a commuter rail. We'd like to have a Town that is for everyone.

The new Transportation Safety Committee will have funding they can control, deploy, and make recommendations on how it should be used to benefit the Town. The TSC looks forward to a new era of holistic transportation planning that looks more broadly at how we get around in Town.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF JULY 12, 2023

MOTION:	G. Driessen moved to approve the Minutes of July 12, 2023.
SECONDED:	R. Tarantino
ABSTAINED:	Lt. J. McGrath, B. McNeilly for the reason they were not present on July 12, 2023
ROLL-CALL VOTE:	G. Driessen, aye, R. Hoyland, aye; J. McCullen, aye; R. Tarantino, aye. Unanimously approved with two abstentions.
MOTION CARRIES:	4-0-2

3. OTHER BUSINESS/TSC STATUS UPDATE REPORT

August 2023-3 Warren St. Line Striping – Ask DPW Highway to paint centerline and edgeline markings (9 foot lanes) on Warren St. between School St. & Norfolk St.

DPW Engineering Division laid pavement markings on Warren St. 7-21-23.

- Residents sent emails to TMAC, Select Board, Town Manager and DPW.
- DPW held a public information session on-site at Warren St. for residents who expressed concerns regarding:
 - Line markings and whether they would potentially work to reduce speeds
 - Painted yellow lines and the effect on residents' property, valuation, computations, salability, and desirability
 - No communication strategy was in place to notify residents in advance.

In view of the negative feedback from residents, TMAC/TSC members discussed the Motion approved at the 7-12-23 TMAC meeting (the former Traffic Management Advisory Committee is now the Transportation Safety Committee).

R. Wilson discussed feedback from residents with members:

- The Town has a limited budget for sidewalk and road improvements.
 - Speed calming improvements which include signs also incur costs.
 - The Town looks at points of quick safety action.
 - The latex painted lines are a pilot based on guidance (paint wears off).
 - Data evidence from the Federal government, interstate, and our State points to tightening the lanes down to between 8 and 9 feet to reduce speed.
 - Residents suggest speeds will increase if the lane width is reduced.
- R. Wilson has not seen any data to support this claim.

He reminded members of other speed calming measures (a toolkit containing speed tables, bumps, etc.) have to go through a competitive 5-year Capital Planning process. This project would compete for priority with other Townwide projects.

Members discussed:

- Any control using the traffic calming "toolbox" may have adverse outcomes.
- Figure out which control will be least impactful on home values.
- Studies have shown that speed can be reduced up to 7 mph when center lines result in a 9-foot lane width. This is the quickest safety measure to implement.
- Adding a crosswalk in the underpass is dangerous without traffic calming measures. There is a finite amount in the budget that restricts what can be done.
- The city of Cambridge is aggressively leading as a road treating community; they are reducing road widths down to 8 feet.
- Members acknowledged that Warren St. residents were unaware of the pilot. The big issue is that Warren St. is being used by cut-through traffic.
- Lt. McGrath noted the transition to the new Mobility Planning committee will benefit individual neighborhoods as a larger policymaking committee.
- Some recommended moving forward with the pilot to determine whether this technique would work in other areas of Town.

Members discussed the process to reduce the speed limit to 25 mph.

- The "thickly settled" road falls into the State's category of an unposted 30 mph.
- The Town cannot post a speed sign in an area with an unposted statutory limit.
- Changing the speed limit involves a process including:

- Engineering and Speed studies before and after to observe 85th percentile speeds and evaluate the controls.
 - In the past, a speed study may even indicate increasing the speed limit is warranted.
- Another speed limit-reducing process involves significant research. It would be implemented either street by street or Townwide. Ideally the TSC should look at the entire Town holistically. Are there streets where the speed should be reduced to 25 mph?

Members discussed a Town Traffic Calming Manual establishing the process.

Members discussed a means of communication to notify residents of projects.

M. Cooley thanked residents in attendance and suggested neighbors collectively discuss their priorities to determine which problems the Town should try to solve so the TSC committee can discuss available alternatives.

MOTION:	Lt. John McGrath moved to table painting double yellow center lines and white edge lines on Warren Street down to a width of 9 feet from School St. to Norfolk St. down Orange St.
SECONDED:	G. Driessen
ROLL-CALL VOTE:	G. Driessen, aye, R. Hoyland, aye; J. McCullen, aye; Lt. J. McGrath, aye; B. McNeilly, aye; R. Tarantino, aye. Unanimous.
MOTION CARRIES:	6-0

Members discussed how to handle internal communications regarding large scope initiatives.

Members discussed the Mobility Planning & Coordinating Committee could have the policy scope to create a Traffic Calming Manual to avoid potential overlap within various departments.

August 2023-3 Country Way, Warren St., **Cynthia Rd.**, Hazel St.

Cynthia Road Slip Ramp - Kendrick Street

Cynthia Rd. – 7/6 – 7/13 Traffic Study results: ADT = 87, 2.7% Trucks, 85% Speed = 24/25 mph.

Slip Ramp – ADT SB = 59, ADT NB = 72

- The study showed speed is not a problem and no action is required.
- The volume is low at 100 vehicles daily.
- Volume at the slip ramp at Kendrick and Greendale is approximately 100 vehicles daily traveling either direction.

June 2023-06 **Reinstitute the “No Turn on Red” for Highland Avenue at GPA**

The new "No Turn on Red" tab at Webster St. & Highland St. at the Fire Station has been installed.

- Turning right onto Highland St. from Webster St. the pedestrian signal is not in direct line of sight to drivers at the traffic signal. The intersection is not pedestrian or bicyclist safe.

January 2023-7 **Hillside Ave. near Cricket Field**

Install new “Children Playing” sign with Speed Tab on Hillside Ave. north of Avery St.

- The speed tab has been installed on the playground side of Hillside St.

4. HEATHER FINNEGAN - SPEEDING ON MELLEEN ST.

At 7:52 pm, the petitioner was not present. This item will be discussed at a future meeting.

5. AVERY NEWTON – SPEEDING ON GOULD ST./SAFETY AT KEARNEY RD.

Ms. Newton shared a slide presentation to members. Problem areas include:

- Gould St. is a long, straight road with high speed traffic and limited speed signage.
- Two childcare centers and a public park abut the street making it impossible for cars traveling 35-40 mph to stop quickly if a toddler runs into the road.
- Traffic turns from Gould onto Kearney Rd. at high speeds unaware a childcare pickup is at the corner with cars entering and exiting. Cars park nose-in, double park, and back into turning traffic.
- Poor quality sidewalks on Gould St. make it riskier for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Road safety must be addressed.

Ms. Newton shared potential traffic solutions:

- Flashing signs alerting drivers to their current speed
- A sign at the Gould/Kearney intersection alerting drivers of a daycare center and/or children
- A drop in posted mph and/or additional speed limit signage
- Speed bumps or speed tables

The daycare center does not include kindergarten and does not qualify for school zone signage. Members discussed a stop sign or adding painted lines to indicate the direction of Kearney Rd.

Action Items:

- Ms. Newton will notify the childcare center director of the Town's intention to make road improvements and notify Tyler Gabrielski when this has been communicated.

MOTION:	G. Driessen moved to have Traffic Engineering conduct a study including a sketch of a marked plan which may include signage, marked lines and etching and present the proposal to the Transportation Safety Committee.
SECONDED:	R. Tarantino
ROLL-CALL VOTE:	G. Driessen, aye, R. Hoyland, aye; J. McCullen, aye; Lt. J. McGrath, aye; B. McNeilly, aye; R. Tarantino, aye. Unanimous.
MOTION CARRIES:	6-0

MOTION:	J. McCullen moved to amend the previous motion for the feasibility of adding a stop sign and stop line on Kearney Rd. at the intersection of Gould St. as part of the intersection marking plan previously approved.
SECONDED:	R. Tarantino
ROLL-CALL VOTE:	G. Driessen, aye, R. Hoyland, aye; J. McCullen, aye; Lt. J. McGrath, aye; B. McNeilly, aye; R. Tarantino, aye. Unanimous.
MOTION CARRIES:	6-0

6. MATTERS NOT ANTICIPATED BY THE CHAIR WITHIN 48 HOURS OF THE MEETING - NONE

At 8:24 pm, Tom Ryder joined the meeting.

7. ADJOURNMENT - ROLL CALL VOTE

MOTION:	R. Tarantino motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:26 p.m.
SECONDED:	B. McNeilly
ROLL-CALL VOTE:	G. Driessen, aye, R. Hoyland, aye; J. McCullen, aye; Lt. J. McGrath, aye; B. McNeilly, aye; T. Ryder, aye; R. Tarantino, aye. Unanimous.
MOTION CARRIES:	7-0

Respectfully submitted,

Dale Michaud
Recording Secretary