

Town of Needham
Transportation Safety Committee
Minutes: November 8, 2023

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

Livestreamed on Zoom: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WaRXWwBgxwk&t=384s>

ADOPTED DECEMBER 13, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT:	Chair, Justin McCullen; Guus Driessen, Rhain Hoyland, Lt. John McGrath, Barry McNeilly
MEMBERS REMOTE:	Tom Ryder
MEMBERS ABSENT:	Donna Mullin, Rebecca Tarantino
STAFF PRESENT:	Tyler Gabrielski, Management Analyst; Robert Wilson, Engineer
PUBLIC PRESENT:	Andrea Dannenberg, Meredith Kristall
PUBLIC REMOTE:	Carolyn Kenline

1. INTRODUCTION AND ROLL CALL

CALL TO ORDER

At 7:00 p.m., Chair McCullen called the meeting to order, took roll call, and disclosed the video recording.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF OCTOBER 11, 2023

MOTION:	J. McGrath moved to approve the Minutes of October 11, 2023.
SECONDED:	B. McNeilly
ABSTAINED:	G. Driessen for the reason he was not present on October 11, 2023
ROLL-CALL VOTE:	R. Hoyland, aye; J. McCullen, aye; J. McGrath, aye; B. McNeilly, aye. Unanimous.
MOTION CARRIES:	4-0-1

3. OTHER BUSINESS/TSC STATUS UPDATE REPORT - R. WILSON

BOND ST AT FALCON ST STUDY, HIGH ROCK & OAK ST PILOT PROJECTS

WEBSTER ST AT SOUTH ST - The RRFB has been installed but not yet connected to power.

OAK ST LANE WIDTH RESTRICTION FOLLOW-UP

A follow-up count for narrowing was completed.

- A comparison between 2020 volumes and speeds were compared to November 2023.
 - Speeds of 30 mph both east and westbound directions were observed.
 - Year 2020 counts were 25 mph eastbound, 29 mph westbound for a volume of 2,800 vehicles.

HIGH ROCK - High Rock counts are pending.

At 7:10 pm, Tom Ryder joined the meeting.

BOND ST. AT FALCON ST. TRAFFIC STUDY

R. Wilson made observation on 10-19-23 between 7:55-8:25 a.m. and 2:00-3:00 p.m. He shared the statistics of those observation periods.

- Crosswalk should be placed on the north side of Falcon at Bond St. for people crossing Falcon St.
- An observable crosswalk may help pedestrian crossing variances
- Low traffic volumes would not warrant an additional stop sign
- Sight distance issue looking left on Bond St. travelling eastbound from Washington across Falcon
- A former speed study and volume study indicate signage currently in place is still applicable.

Petitioner, Carolyn Kenline of 342 Hillcrest Rd. joined the meeting remotely.
Mitchell School doors open at 8:05 am. Traffic is heavier at 7:45 a.m. Please revisit to recount.

T. Ryder suggested long-term plans include improvements for stormwater runoff that could improve traffic flow. They will look at the whole block south of Falcon St. They will develop concept plans that may include a one-way location. The intersection is geographically off-set.

Members discussed getting a full review with accident history. The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices contains clauses that allow for unfortunate geometry or sight lines as exceptions.

In the short-term, a new speed study will be done this fall. If speed is an issue, traffic calming measures can be used. One member suggested a full evaluation for a 4 way stop sign. This would be at the Town engineer's discretion to make this decision. Is there a commonsense clause for this intersection?

Members discussed a 2017 Traffic Study that was done for the intersection. Falcon St. had twice the amount of traffic as Bond St.

Members discussed whether Town Counsel should review. TSC will request a full review.

MOTION:	J. McGrath moved to have the Engineering Dept. prepare a study to evaluate the intersection of Bond St. and Falcon St. for the purpose of a four-way stop sign and recommend short-term improvement to the Transportation Safety Committee by the next monthly meeting.
SECONDED:	T. Ryder
ROLL-CALL VOTE:	R. Hoyland, aye; J. McCullen, aye; J. McGrath, aye; B. McNeilly, aye; G. Driessen, aye; T. Ryder, aye. Unanimous.
MOTION CARRIES:	6-0

BANCROFT ST. AND WASHINGTON AVE. - C. Kenline brought forth discussion.

This intersection is closer to Mitchell School than Bond St. and Falcon St. There is a stop sign on Bancroft but not on Washington. Drivers think it is a 4 way stop. To count pedestrians and vehicles, she suggests observing between 7:45-8:40 am and 2:20-3:10 pm. R. Wilson will make observation.

4. ANDREA DANNENBERG - SPEED AND VISIBILITY ISSUES ON CHARLES RIVER ST.

A. Dannenberg lives at 131 Locust Lane off of Charles River St. near the Grove St. intersection. Grove St. dead ends at Charles River St. and there is a split. Drivers are unsure whether either road at the split is a two-way road. There is a hill approaching the intersection at Charles River St. from Grove St. The speed limit is 30 mph. Vehicles travel more than 40 mph down the hill approaching the intersection.

She looked at the last traffic study done in July 2021. The study looked at the intersection of Charles River St. at Pheasant Landing Rd. which is just before the Grove St. intersection. Eight-five percent of vehicles were clocked at 39-42 mph. The posted speed limit is 30 mph. For those turning onto Charles River St. from Locust Lane, the move is treacherous. Drivers are speeding down the hill. The petitioner requested a long-term solution to make the Charles River St. and Grove St. intersection a rotary to slow vehicles down. Short-term, she would appreciate a speed radar sign on the hill.

Members discussed 2012 DOT standards for a school zone, thickly settled, non-thickly settled, residential, and highways. Members discussed petitioning the State to post the speed at 40 mph.

Members discussed a rotary, roundabout at Charles River St. and Grove St. Long-term geometric improvements should be prioritized. Short term solutions could include radar speed sign, paint, two unenforceable advisory speed signs, Spring line painting at 6 inches.

MOTION:	J. McGrath moved to add 30 mph advisory speed signage where Engineering sees fit between Locust St. and Grove St.
SECONDED:	J. McCullen
ROLL-CALL VOTE:	G. Driessen, aye; R. Hoyland, aye; J. McCullen, aye; J. McGrath, aye; B. McNeilly, aye; T. Ryder, aye. Unanimous.
MOTION CARRIES:	6-0

5. MEREDITH KRISTALL – CROSSWALK SAFETY ON GREAT PLAIN AVE AT STOCKDALE RD

Meredith Kristall of 43 Stockdale Rd. noted there is a crosswalk warning sign at Stockdale Rd. at Great Plain Ave. Vehicles are speeding and the crosswalk is not visible. She requested an upgraded pushbutton, flashing crosswalk sign indicating an active pedestrian is at the crosswalk. She showed a video of speeding cars while a family tried to cross. The crosswalk could be repainted to stand out from other street lines or add stripes on the road. Cars are using the yellow lines as a turnaround.

Members discussed sloping the granite crosswalk. A short-term solution is to evaluate for solar RRFB's, continental painting, and/or yellow pole extensions. Do both sidewalks. Trees obstruct the crosswalk warning sign. One recommendation is to grind the painted lines in the crosswalk to prepare for epoxy paint in the Spring. The petitioner is in contact with the property manager for Olin College. She will communicate that DPW wants trees trimmed back so crosswalk signage is visible.

MOTION:	J. McGrath moved to have the Town restripe the crosswalks at Great Plain Ave. and Stockdale Rd. in the Spring and bring them up to continental, as well implement yellow stanchions to create an island or center shoulder, with solar upgraded RRFBs (rectangular rapid flashing beacons).
SECONDED:	G. Driessen
ROLL-CALL VOTE:	G. Driessen, aye; R. Hoyland, aye; J. McCullen, aye; J. McGrath, aye; B. McNeilly, aye; T. Ryder, aye. Unanimous.
MOTION CARRIES:	6-0

6. COMMITTEE DISCUSSION – ADDITIONAL EXIT LANE AT NEWMAN, SIGNAL TIMING ON CENTRAL AVE AT GPA

J. McCullen expressed thanks for putting the barrier up at the crosswalk by the church. He recommends a high visibility, chevron reflective striping on the barrier so it can be seen in the dark.

In the spring, evaluate the crosswalk in front of Blue on Highland because of the parked cars. To prevent someone from parking in a high risk area near the crosswalk at the intersection, install a barrier in front of the space.

NEWMAN SCHOOL

R. Wilson reported that in 2020, BETA did a traffic study of Great Plain Ave. at the Central Ave. intersection. Cars were backing up to RTS. We went back to the study and changed the signal timing at GPA and Central. The previous timing was 30 seconds each way. The engineering firm recommended

doing a dynamic 10 second interval on Central Ave. so as the loops pick up cars, they add 10 seconds at the signal up to 70 seconds. On Central Ave. backups are significantly less. The next step is to reduce the wait time for people leaving Newman School. Police have done a great job. Crossing guards have pulled the kids back a little; with the new signal timing, it is working well.

Fifteen years ago, we put an island in; it's not quite a two way exit. We can add 6-7 feet to the width to push the ramp back and have a turn lane that would support bus turning movements so they wouldn't be crossing the yellow lane which would be helpful to clear out the traffic.

J. McCullen suggested the big issue is the left hand turn on Central Ave. coming from Dover to Newman School. Members discussed the feasibility of a dedicated left hand lane, a turning lane, moving the center line, moving the radius out, pushing the granite curb out without a berm, and/or moving the drainage.

T. Ryder said they looked at doing a turn lane; there wasn't enough room. The crowded intersection is used for theatre events. R. Wilson suggests to do a study to widen the road by taking the grassy areas.

T. Ryder suggested this would be long term. Traffic calming at the Newman School intersection could include a zipper lane to slow traffic, widen the road slightly, and creep the lanes during drop-offs. This would be a huge maintenance issue. Look into a speed table. Members suggested redesign include vertical deflection along with a left turn signal. If you widen the road, walkers on the sidewalk are closer to cars.

Members discussed having an evaluation done long term to calculate the volume of cars going to Newman versus straight. Do a speed study when the crossing guard is not there.

The Town should standardize school zone signs. Remove the non-regulatory 20 mph school zone sign.

T. Ryder shared plans for future improvements. We have the design for Great Plain Ave. for new traffic lights scheduled for construction in FY26. We looked at doing a roundabout alternative with a turn lane but there is not enough room. We would take some church property. He shared the concept design plan.

J. McCullen suggested we should look at high hazard crosswalks to add high output light heads. T. Ryder suggests one on Dedham Ave. where there isn't one yet, and two on Webster Ave.

**7. MATTERS NOT ANTICIPATED BY THE CHAIR WITHIN 48 HOURS OF THE MEETING
GOULD ST. AND KEARNEY RD.**

B. McNeilly asked if there was consideration for a no parking sign on Gould St. before the stop sign at Kearney Rd. A vehicle is parked outside the marked parking. There is no signage. R. Wilson said there is no plan to investigate.

8. ADJOURNMENT - ROLL CALL VOTE

MOTION:	J. McCullen motioned to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m.
SECONDED:	G. Driessen
ROLL-CALL VOTE:	G. Driessen, aye; R. Hoyland, aye; J. McCullen, aye; J. McGrath, aye; B. McNeilly, aye; T. Ryder, aye. Unanimous.
MOTION CARRIES:	6-0

Respectfully submitted,
Dale Michaud
Recording Secretary