

Belmont Middle and High School Traffic Working Group
Minutes
September 29, 2021
5:00 PM

Attending were: Roy Epstein, Chair, Select Board Representative, Patrice Garvin, Non-Voting TA, Jeffrey Held, Resident, Larry Link, Resident, Martin November, Vice-Chair, Resident, Jeffrey Roth, Transportation Advisory Committee, (TAC) Representative, Alex Thurston, Resident, Mary Wybieralla, Secretary, Resident
Members Absent: Kate Bowen, School Committee Representative

The meeting was called to order at 5:02 p.m.

I. Approval of Minutes:

Motion by Roy Epstein to approve minutes of the September 24, 2021 Meeting.
Seconded by Larry Link. Unanimous roll call vote approved the Minutes.
Kate Bowen was in absentia.

II. Discussion of Scope:

Roy Epstein began identifying the scope of this Committee stating where there is overlap with TAC, the MHSTWG yields to TAC. Any ambiguity will be resolved by the Chair.

Larry Link said student safety was implicit but not explicit in the statement of scope. The Committee is trying to ensure the safety of all students to and from the High School.

Roy Epstein agreed and said he would revise the wording in the scope.

Martin November added TAC has recommended Speed Tables and 4-way stops on upper Goden. Would TAC take ownership of these recommendations, while the MHSTWG would keep it on the agenda to monitor? This Committee needs to keep TAC items on our “radar” and ensure these issues are addressed.

Roy Epstein responded that because the TAC recommendations will come before the Select Board, the MHSTWG should not separately address them. Martin November responded he was using these mitigations as an example of another Committee addressing an issue that is relevant to this Committee. The MHSTWG should keep it in its agenda and monitor.

Alex Thurston requested the Geographic Map be expanded along Brighton Street. There are many students walking to school on Brighton Street. The crosswalks on the south side of the railroad tracks are not well marked. When the Middle School opens, the average age of students walking along Brighton Street will drop, especially at the Hittinger/Trowbridge entrance.

Roy Epstein said he would expand the map but Brighton Street is a grey area for the MHSTWG. It is an extremely busy corridor and he hoped TAC would take the lead in traffic mitigation measures there. The pedestrian/bicycle crossing at Brighton Street by the railroad tracks is also

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part of the engineering for the Community Path Project. The MHSTWG could certainly participate in these discussions with limits to be determined.

Jeffrey Roth stated other streets may be considered relevant.

Roy Epstein stated we have to draw the line and there are sufficient issues at Concord/Goden area to keep us busy. Jeffrey Held suggested perhaps he and Alex Thurston could undertake an assessment of the Hittinger area, similar to the assessment Martin November and Larry Link did for Cottage to Orchard. It would be good to see what is happening. This doesn't mean the scope needs to change.

III. Update on Concord/Goden Traffic Signal:

Roy Epstein stated that as of 9/1/2021, the traffic signal at Concord/Goden is under the control of the Town. Any issues concerning timing, maintenance, or alteration of the light is a Town decision. Patrice Garvin stated there is still a collaborative relationship with the Building Committee because they are responsible for warranty issues for the light. She indicated that the town is waiting for information about options to control brightness and shielding of sight lines. Roy Epstein indicated another issue with the intersection is the missing stop line on Goden Street, which wasn't replaced when National Grid re-paved. The line will be painted 20 ft. from the intersection per the original BSC plan and work will be done soon.

IV. Review of Data Collected by Residents:

Larry Link presented observations:

1. Drop offs are a big concern. Parents are looking to do it quickly. Some are using Cottage, Oak, and Stone Road.
2. U-turns are a problem at Goden/Concord
3. Parking on side streets, especially Oak and Orchard/Orchard Circle. Cars are awkwardly parked. There are no sidewalks on Orchard between Concord and Orchard Circle. Students are walking in the street, bicyclists are in the middle of the street.
4. Concerned about Driver's awareness of Pedestrians and bicyclists on these streets. There needs to be repeated messages about this to parents and students.
5. Cottage Street Pedestrian Crossing continues to be problematic. It is dangerous. Cars coming out of Cottage: some turn left onto Concord, some bear left into "jug handle" in front of soccer field next to rink, and some turn right into crosswalk onto Concord Ave. It's an issue.
6. There are signage issues. A 20ft setback is needed on Oak and Orchard.
7. There are few drop offs on Concord between Orchard Street and Louise Road.

Mary Wybieralla reiterated u-turns at Goden/Concord remain a problem. Sign needs to be more visible on the median by the stop line. The crossing at Cottage remains a problem. Pedestrians cannot see the light. Perhaps an audible cue would help. The light should blink red when engaged. Cars often do not stop.

Patrice Garvin agreed to look at the pedestrian signal at Cottage Street.

Roy Epstein agrees that re-education of drivers and parents is important

Alex Thurston asked Larry Link and Martin November to send their template of raw data so it could be incorporated with plans to observe the Hitting area.

Larry Link also noted the rough pedestrian/bike counts:

Cottage Street: 110

Goden Street: 170

Orchard Street: 215

Roy Epstein noted he observed that most pedestrian/ bikes coming down Cottage Street turn right on Concord to cross at the Concord/Goden crossing.

Jeffrey Roth noted it was amazing the number of students walking where there are no sidewalks. Parked cars are pushing pedestrians to the streets.

Larry Link noted cars parked in the area of Orchard with no sidewalks are students. Many more cars are coming down Stone Road to drop off at the end of street.

Jeffrey Roth reiterated Orchard Street between Concord and Orchard Circle has no sidewalks. Students are in the street, cars are having difficulty getting to Concord Ave.

V. Discussion of possible no parking/no standing restrictions:

Roy Epstein identified another issue. There is a steady stream of east bound cars dropping off just after the intersection at Goden/Concord. Cars “swoop” in so students can get out. When leaving, they back into the crosswalk, forcing bicyclists out of the bike lane, and make any merge of traffic after the intersection more difficult. He recommended installing a “No Standing/No Stopping” sign at an appropriate point on the curb and investigating whether other measures might be advisable, such as realigning the bike lane there or creating a no parking zone. Patrice Garvin would like to have Glenn Clancy and TAC look at this question.

Jeffrey Roth added that it is a problem. The bike lane on the westbound side of Concord Ave. is more protected. It is part of the Consultant Plans. TAC is working on this. Larry Link added the whole section is not marked. There is no restriction of drop offs in that area.

Martin November stated that Roy has highlighted the combination of illegal drops, parking on both sides of the street, no sidewalks, in essence, how does this Committee want to address these issues?

Roy Epstein replied he was inclined to take concerns on a case by case basis. For example, the drop off eastbound on Concord Ave. is not utilized enough.

Jeffrey Held responded that the eastbound drop off is not marked well and creates chaos. Cars are veering into the bike lane. Kids are jumping out of cars as they approach the stop light. How do we help people be more aware of the designated drop off? He suggests:

1. Mark it better
2. Guide people to it better

We need more clarity around where cars are supposed to go.

Roy Epstein agreed the drop-off zone should be marked more clearly.
Patrice Garvin agreed to follow up with Glenn Clancy

V. Parking on side streets

Roy Epstein stated a Public Hearing may be required to address parking issues. The Police will not enforce parking restrictions if they are not posted. We need to determine what type of restrictions are acceptable to the neighborhood.

Larry Link responded Time Restrictions would prevent student use. Would student parking be accommodated on the school campus?

Roy Epstein responded he was informed by Bill Lovallo, that the Building Committee did not plan any student parking on-campus east of Harris Field. Patrice Garvin stated there are plans for 90-110 student spots west of Harris Field. She agrees there needs to be a Public Hearing to address neighborhood parking restrictions.

Roy Epstein added we need to determine which streets to include for this hearing.

Roy Epstein proposed a discussion of parking in the “Jughandle” on Concord Ave. It has become student parking. This is Town-controlled land. It is posted “4 hour parking” on the right side. Nothing posted on the left. Students can park there all day. Concord Avenue is marked as student parking next to the jughandle but it is not being used. He will bring this up again at the next meeting, with feedback from Patrice Garvin and Glenn Clancy.

Jeffrey Roth said it would be good to have data indicating where students are parking now.

Larry Link added that parents are using the jughandle for drop offs. He added 95% of the cars parked there are students.

VI. Cottage Street Intersection

Roy Epstein raised questions about the signal at Cottage St. The signal lights are not visible to the pedestrian, the lights are yellow instead of red, and there is no audible message that the pedestrian should cross. He also observed that cars traveling westbound on Concord Ave. cannot see pedestrians when a car is parked just before the crosswalk. He suggests prohibiting parking near this crosswalk.

Patrice Garvin stated a third party Consultant could look at issues. Glenn Clancy might have some input.

Larry Link responded that perhaps 3-4 people from this Committee, with TAC and the Police could walk the area and identify areas of concern.

Martin November offered to coordinate this effort and present it to a third party. He will follow up with Patrice Garvin and Glenn Clancy to organize.

Roy Epstein added it would be useful to meet next week to collectively compare notes and compose a short report of observations.

VII. Public Comments:

Chi-Ting Huang, Goden Street: The left turn lane is confusing and few are using it. People blast through and it creates inappropriate merges. It's design is pushing the bike lane close to curb. A lot of people are dropping in the bike lane. We need to look at traffic holistically. Perhaps the area between Myrtle and Goden, where the bus stop is going to be removed, would be a better eastbound drop off. She also questioned if you limit side street parking, where are the students going to park?

Maryam Aboosaber, Goden/Concord: No standing/stopping sign is a problem. She would have no access to park by her home on Concord. Parking on Goden in front her house is also restricted. She recommends banning drop offs, not parking.

Jeffrey Roth added that a bike lane pushed to the curb in that area would eliminate parking.

David Coleman, TAC: There is a Public Forum in October with Nelson Nygaard, Traffic Consultant, to take a holistic look at Concord Ave. We could combine the forum with TAC.

Roy Epstein responded we are limiting focus to side streets.

David Coleman has questions about a "budget" of how many student cars in total? Is it 180?

Roy Epstein responded the maximum is 200 cars, so 180 would be accurate.

Patrice Garvin said she is a little concerned this Committee will discuss something while TAC is also working on it.

Roy responded the parking on Concord Ave. impacts the side streets. It is important to consider the big picture. A Public Hearing is necessary to get a sense from residents on parking.

Deborah Talanian, Goden Street: Student Drop Offs should be available on campus. What happened to student parking on campus? It was part of the plans.

Patrice Garvin respond that she thinks we have to look at the Site Plan Review from the Planning Board.

Deborah Talanian stated that parking was there, when was it removed?

Martin November stated we need to make sure we have clarification on student parking.

Larry Link asked if temporary signage to clear the Concord/Goden intersection, and at Orchard Street.

Patrice Garvin said the Police could do it.

Roy Epstein will discuss this with Sgt. Paul Garabedian. He added we need to proceed incrementally and further vet the grey area of no standing/stopping.

Jeffrey Roth moved the meeting be adjourned

Larry Link seconded the motion

The motion was approved by unanimous roll call

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 pm