

To: The Belmont Select Board: Adam Dash, Roy Epstein, and Mark Paolillo
Cc: The Belmont Town Administrator: Patrice Garvin
The Belmont Town Engineer: Glenn Clancy
The Belmont Transportation Advisory Committee: Jessie Bennett, Jeff Roth,
Dave Coleman, Chip Gaysunas, Charlie Hamad, and Larry Macdonald

From: The Transportation Advisory Committee Chair, Dana Miller

Re: **The Concord Avenue Striping Plan Recommended to the Select Board,
Background**

This memo provides background information about the Concord Avenue striping plan that the Transportation Advisory Committee has unanimously voted to recommend to the Select Board.

- Three Committees have endorsed this plan: The High School Building Committee and the High School Traffic Working Group developed and endorsed this plan. Following the Transportation Advisory Committee's second public meeting about the plan, the Transportation Advisory Committee became the third Town committee to endorse the plan.
- The TAC voted to recommend to the Select Board that the April 28, 2021 Nelson Nygaard plan for striping Concord Avenue be implemented, with a delay of striping on the block between Blanchard and Hamilton Roads to provide the Town additional time to better understand parking concerns on this block and to explore means of addressing these concerns. As a minor amendment to the plan, the Town may stripe contiguous parking spaces as parking blocks to allow additional parking flexibility.
- Goal: Among the original and continuing goals of the plan is the provision of a protected bike lane on Concord Avenue to support an increase in the number of students and other residents bicycling instead of taking automobiles to the new school and other destinations.
- Main proposed change to the roadway: The plan involves the creation of protected bike lanes on both sides of the street for the full length of Concord Avenue, from the Cambridge city line at Blanchard Street, to the intersection with Common and Leonard Streets at the railroad bridge.
- Benefits: The plan honors the Town's commitment to provide safe non-motor-vehicle transit to school for its 7th- through 12th-grade students. It also increases the likelihood that commuters and non-student residents will travel by bicycle and that Belmont car congestion will thereby be reduced. In addition, because the plan involves a slight narrowing of the travel lane, it is likely to result in cars traveling at lower and safer speeds on Concord Avenue. Further, to the extent that more people travel by bike and fewer travel by car, the plan increases the likelihood that fewer cars will be parked in the neighborhoods near the new school--this is an issue of particular concern because the new school will not allow student parking on campus for at least two years.

Traffic in Belmont has been deteriorating for years and we have few options for reducing the volume of motor-vehicle traffic on our streets. Most of our neighborhoods have been subject to increasing traffic volumes and traffic that travels at unsafe speeds. Belmont

traffic congestion is driven by heavy cut-through traffic and school commuting. Near the high school, our streets are often filled with high-school related parking. While there are no easy solutions to these problems, a best strategy could involve marginal shifts aimed at increasing safety for all by lowering vehicle speeds, reducing traffic-congestion peaks as possible, keeping cut-through traffic out of our neighborhoods, and slowing the rate of increase of Belmont's cut-through traffic.

Even small shifts towards increased bike use could help at the margin with traffic peaks. Providing a coherent, protected bike lane that connects to Cambridge's extensive bike network could support an increase in bike commuting. In addition, because a parking-protected bike lane allows bikers to feel safe--and parents to see that their children are safe--when traveling by bike, Belmont may gain more students traveling to school without cars that need to be parked in the neighborhoods. While a parking-protected bike lane is far from a silver bullet, it is an important step that Belmont can afford to take as part of a continued effort to manage the Town's traffic challenges. The Transportation Advisory Committee held two public meetings about the Concord Avenue striping plan: a public hearing for which the Town mailed notices to all neighbors, and a follow-up meeting to present a revised plan that responded to concerns raised in the first meeting.

Below are concerns raised about the striping plan; all of these concerns are addressed by the Nelson Nygaard April 28, 2021 plan and I would be very pleased to discuss the concerns with you and the ways in which the plan addresses them. If you have questions or concerns about the plan, please feel free to contact me before the public meeting. I am also happy to answer any questions you raise at the public meeting.

Concerns Raised About The Concord Avenue Striping Plan

- The plan involves a reduction in on-street parking
- The June 2020 plan allows for a travel lane that might be insufficient to accommodate emergency vehicles, delivery trucks, and other large vehicles
- The June 2020 travel lanes could be further narrowed to allow for safer car passage and safer bicycle passage.
- The June 2020 plan might not allow for emergency vehicles to pull up to the curb in front of a dentist's office and emergency vehicles at this location might therefore block traffic on the Westbound side of Concord Avenue.
- The use of delineators to mark the boundaries of the parking-protected bike lane could impede emergency vehicle access to the buildings on Concord Avenue and delineators would make it difficult for the Belmont DPW to keep the bike lane clear.
- The cumulative width of the bike lane, buffer lane, and parking lane might make it difficult for drivers to see and to maneuver when exiting their Concord Avenue driveways into the flow of traffic on Concord Avenue.
- The striping plan might narrow the turning radius for eastbound cars making a U-turn near the intersection with Blanchard Road.
- A 7'-wide parking lane could be insufficiently wide for larger vehicles and trucks; the parking lane should be a minimum of 9 - 10' in width.
- The Nelson Nygaard measurements could be inaccurate and the roadway might not allow for the stipulated 5' bike lane, 3' buffer, 7' parking lane, and 11.5' travel lane.

- The plan does not provide a buffer zone for cars in the 7' parking lane opening their doors into the 11.5' travel lane.
- The section of Concord Avenue between Baker and Trowbridge Streets is on a hill and cars might skid into the parking lane.
- The Town should reverse its ban on overnight on-street parking and this plan exacerbates parking problems for residents who have not arranged for off-street parking.