

Traffic Advisory Committee Public Hearing--Minutes for Thursday, July 7, 2005.

In attendance: L. Nickens, A. Masciari, T. Turner, T. Riley, P. Curro.

Absent: M.J. Frisoli, T. Olson.

JUL 29 3 45 PM '05

Also attending; G. Clancy, Sgt. Hamilton, BSC Group representatives C Kalauskas, P. Brier, Marybeth Murphy. Approximately 25 residents.

7:04 p.m. Meeting called to order

(7:05 p.m.) Linda Nickens read a statement from Chairman Frisoli, outlining her thoughts on the purpose of the series of four public hearings. She apologized for holding these meetings during the summer months, but the schedule was made necessary by the aggressive plan proposed by the BSC Group so that the Belmont-Trapelo Corridor project (BTC) can be placed on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) agenda for their Feb/Mar 2006 meeting.

(7:10 p.m.) C. Kalauskas gave the assembly a brief overview of the timetable for the BTC. The application to the (TIP) of the MPO must be completed prior to approval of state/federal funding that will be required for constructing the project. An ambitious deadline to be met will come up in March 2006; much work will be required to meet that deadline. P. Breire elaborated on the details of the preliminary timetable for the project design phase, outlining the amount of time to complete the 25% design, public hearing, and 75% design phases. If all goes according to plan, the construction could begin in spring 2009.

P. Breire went on to outline specific concerns:

Bicycles. Mass Highways has stipulated that all state highway projects will make provisions for bicycle accommodations. This places certain constraints on roadway design; he went on to describe how the existing right of way might be configured in order to accommodate bicycles, pedestrians, and vehicles.

Comments from residents: D. Mercier expressed support for a bicycle lane near Grove St. due to the difficulty he has experienced exiting his parked vehicle. C. Starr, speaking as a commercial property owner, voiced his general concern that roadway design would result in loss of parking space. A. McClurg emphasized the difficulty in accommodating all the competing interests in a single design. *** is a cyclist who commutes by bike. He was less concerned about bike lanes than he was about conflicts between bicycles and parked cars/opening doors, and rough pavement/pot-holes. Jan Cruise* expressed her desire for better bike lanes and sidewalks. Because of its small size, Belmont could be an ideal cycling community. K. Hamilton is concerned about side-by-side riders, and would prefer that bike lanes not be too wide so as to encourage this behavior. T. Riley expressed his support for bike lanes. His experience is that such lanes vastly improved bicycle safety. A. Mascari reported on her research into the impact of bike lanes. She reported that bike lanes improve safety and rider behavior. S. Bass pointed out that wider sidewalks will allow the town to plant more street trees. G. Kamrock noticed that in areas where lane reductions occur, that motorists "race" to be the first vehicle through the neck-down, and that the neck-downs encourage double parking. A. Paulsen reminded the assembly that it is state law that bicycle accommodations be made in the planning of BTC. She expressed her view that single lanes on Trapelo will facilitate business activity. She cited Cambridge as an example of how traffic calming and bicycle accommodations have improved quality of life. J.C. Bojoyjian reminded the committee that development in Waltham and McLean will increase traffic. He stated that pedestrian safety is a primary concern, and that increased level of service will be needed. D. Becker of the Belmont Bikeway Planning Committee spoke to praise the TAC for its attention to bikeway accommodation on the BTC. He disagreed with previous statements that intersections could not accommodate bicycle lanes, citing Huron Avenue at Fresh Pond Parkway where the stripping for the bike lane becomes discontinuous approaching the intersection to alert all users that the lanes are to be shared. Also, he shared an anecdote regarding reduced sight lines at certain intersections with Trapelo Rd., and recommended that parking be restricted to improve visibility. Finally, he read a note from S. Marsh of Belmont Bike/Walk Group advocating a

pedestrian-activated signal on Trapelo near the new Fire Station to facilitate pedestrian access to Pequotsette Park. L. Adams expressed his concern that the new neck-down at Trapelo and Poplar has made the crosswalk more dangerous, since vehicles accelerate to race to the merge. K. Hamilton explained that the crosswalk signs have not been installed because the neck-down is not yet complete. At Hawthorne St., the signs are in place. T. Riley asked D. Becker about the bicycle route planned to link Alewife and the Minuteman Trail with the western suburbs. DB stated that Trapelo Rd. was not considered because there were preferred routes. N. Capelean expressed concern about bicycle/vehicle conflicts at the new neck-downs. Glenn Clancey stated that the current lanes, at 15 feet, are sufficiently wide for both a bicycle and vehicle to share. A. McClurg Reminded the assembly that the new neck-downs are not representative of the designs currently being proposed for the roadway. The current configuration of the neck-downs was dictated by construction costs. J. Yost presented his view that lane reductions create conflicts and that they should be dealt with by traffic design. An extensive discussion revolving around crosswalks and the new neckdowns, was heard, without providing any new insight.

(8:21 p.m.) PB returned to describe some considerations of the intersections along Trapelo; Mill/Trapelo, Pleasant/Trapelo, and Lexington/Trapelo (Waverley Sq.), Waverley/Trapelo, Slade/Trapelo, Common/Payson/Trapelo (Cushing Sq.), Pine/Belmont/Trapelo (Benton Sq.), Grove/Arlington/Belmont.

(8:47 p.m.) Disability Access Issues. PB presented current designs for curb-cuts and crosswalk textures for ADA compliance. S. Baghdady expressed his concern that the slope of handicap ramps be considered so that it not be so steep as to create a hazard, especially during winter months. Various means of introducing texture into the roadway were presented.

(9:01 p.m.) Marybeth Murphy gave the assembly an overview of the design process to create "streetscapes". Elements for design include trees, street furniture, lamp posts, bike posts, trash receptacles, and pavement design. These strategies help create neighborhood identity, and improve corridor appearances. The first element is the canopy created by mature trees. Second, sight amenities such as bike racks, benches, bollards, lighting, clocks, trash receptacles, etc. Finally, pavement textures and adornments were discussed.

(9:30 p.m.) PB presented preliminary designs for three intersections in the BTC. CK introduced the presentation by emphasizing that these designs are very preliminary, and the process will be open to public comment and input. First, Trapelo/Beech St. This is a Level of Service (LoS) grade "B". Redesign to create a third center turn lane along with 5-foot bicycle lanes conceivably reduce LoS to "C". Cushing Square design includes eliminating left turns in the westbound increased the LoS from "D" to "C" in both the morning and evening. Third, Grove/Arlington/Trapelo, is currently "D" in the morning and "E" in the evening. Proposed design includes a right turn lane eastbound and westbound, with a left turn lane eastbound. This increased the LoS to "C" in the morning, but it remained "E" in the evening.

The meeting closed with a discussion of creating better, more hospitable destinations for people, including restaurants, to make the town more livable.

Meeting Adjourned 10:10 p.m.

FOR THE
TOWN OF
BELLINGHAM
JUL 23 3 45 PM '05