



Public Safety & Transportation Committee Agenda

City of Newton **In City Council**

Wednesday, March 20, 2019

7:00 PM
Room 205

Items Scheduled for Discussion:

- #59-19 Discussion on Washington Street Vision Plan's Impact on Transportation**
COUNCILORS GROSSMAN AND AUCHINCLOSS requesting a discussion with the Principle Group and city representatives from Planning & Development, Transportation Planning, and Transportation Operations regarding the "Hello Washington Street" vision for transportation on the corridor, specifically in regards to multi-modal mobility and the prospect of reducing lanes from four to three.

All other items before the Committee will be held without discussion.

Respectfully submitted,

Allan Ciccone, Jr. Chair

The location of this meeting is accessible and reasonable accommodations will be provided to persons with disabilities who require assistance. If you need a reasonable accommodation, please contact the city of Newton's ADA Coordinator, Jini Fairley, at least two business days in advance of the meeting: jfairley@newtonma.gov or (617) 796-1253. The city's TTY/TDD direct line is: 617-796-1089. For the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS), please dial 711.



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Barney S. Heath
Director

MEMORANDUM

Date: March 15, 2019
To: City Council, Public Safety & Transportation Committee
From: Nicole Freedman, Director of Transportation Planning
Lily Canan Reynolds, Community Outreach Manager
Subject: #59-19 Discussion on Washington Street Vision Plan's Impact on Transportation

This memo provides background information for the Public Safety & Transportation Committee's discussion of transportation relative to the Washington Street Vision Plan, taking place on Wednesday, March 20th, 2019.

Over the last eleven months the City has been in conversation with the community about the future of the Washington Street area. A consistent theme has been a call for a safer street that better facilitates the activities of daily life – getting to and from work and school, spending time in the village centers of West Newton and Newtonville, and crossing from one side of the street to the other. The public has articulated clearly the experiences they want on Washington Street:

1. Vibrant village centers with thriving local businesses and shops
2. A place for people to gather, meet, walk, sit, eat, people watch, etc.
3. Safe, steady flow of cars with manageable congestion and traffic
4. Convenient ways for people to cross the street safely
5. Safe options for bicycling

A guiding principle for the Washington Street Vision Plan is to purposefully design for the future Newton wants. This is especially important for transportation where the design of the roadway will have lasting impact on people's experience of the area for decades.

Today, Washington Street functions as a major four-lane thoroughway. It currently demonstrates an outdated design for streets, harkening back to the era of the highway and is focused on moving cars quickly through Newton. It is unsafe in many places. People who need to cross Washington Street on foot are faced with racing across approximately 70 - 95 feet of roadway of fast-moving cars with few pedestrian crosswalks. There are no bicycle lanes. There are minimal bus shelters.

The street will not get better by itself. However, a new layout can bring the improvements that the community wants to see. Our task is to employ roadway design elements to support the desired experiences. Chapter 4 of the Draft Two Vision Plan describes supportive design elements that will help to improve Washington Street.

Supportive Design Elements	Not Supportive Design Elements
• Wide sidewalks with trees, lights, and benches to enable people to enjoy the street	• Wide roads that can't be crossed, contribute to speeding and are dangerous for pedestrians
• Efficiently managed street parking in village centers to facilitate thriving businesses and slow vehicles	• A sea of parking lots that make uninteresting and unsafe walking environment
• Narrowed and/or reduced number of travel lanes, crosswalks, bumpouts and/or signal equipment to increase safety and enable safe street crossings	• Minimal trees and greenery, adds to the heat island effect and polluted air
• Bike, pedestrian and transit-friendly design to reduce vehicle trips	
• Traffic calming on residential side streets to discourage cut throughs and speeding	

Washington Street, a four-lane road with a parallel highway and commuter rail system, provides an unparalleled opportunity to employ the full range of design elements in pursuit of the vision, while maintaining people's ability to get where they want. The Vision Plan specifically recommends the following overarching concepts.

1. **Convert road from four to three lanes** – Enhances safety and experience while maintaining throughput
2. **Implement bike, pedestrian and transit improvements** - Increases the ability for people to travel to/ through the corridor
3. **Neighborhood traffic calming** – Preserves integrity and safety of neighborhood streets amid growth

It is important to clarify that while the Vision Plan provides guidance for future changes, it is only laying the groundwork for a complete detailed planning process that the City will need to undertake. That will include a fully updated traffic feasibility study; concept, 25% and 100% design phases; and multiple public meetings and City Council presentations. Further, the City will pursue TIP funding through MassDOT, following their process and timeline in parallel. One of the first implementation steps of the Washington Street Vision will be beginning this detailed transportation planning process in 2019-2020 using \$2 million that has been allocated in the CIP for design.

On Wednesday, March 20th the project team will present on these design elements for Washington Street transportation vision including case studies and best practices in comparable communities.