



Public Safety & Transportation Committee Agenda

City of Newton **In City Council**

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

7:00 PM

Council Chambers

Item Scheduled for Discussion:

- #105-20 Requesting public comment on priorities for transportation planning**
CHAIR OF PUBLIC SAFETY & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE requests public comment on priorities for transportation planning.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Jacob D. Auchincloss, 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.

Danielle Delaney

From: Danielle Delaney
Sent: Wednesday, January 29, 2020 3:06 PM
To: Danielle Delaney
Subject: FW: Suggestions for Safety & Transportation Legislative Priorities
Attachments: TAG meeting Notes June 2013 -official.docx; Driving Life Expectancy of Older Drivers.docx; The Times, They are A' Changin'.pdf

From: HOLLY GUNNER <>
Sent: Wednesday, January 22, 2020 8:06 PM
To: Jacob D. Auchincloss <jauchincloss@newtonma.gov>; Andreae Downs <adowns@newtonma.gov>; Allan Ciccone Jr. <acicconejr@newtonma.gov>; Rebecca Walker Grossman <rwgrossman@newtonma.gov>; Richard Lipof <rlipof@newtonma.gov>; Christopher J. Markiewicz <cmarkiewicz@newtonma.gov>; Alicia Bowman <Alicia.Bowman@comcast.net>
Cc: Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>
Subject: Suggestions for Safety & Transportation Legislative Priorities

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Dear Members of the City Council's Committee on Public Safety and Transportation:

Along with many others, I received an email from Councilor Downs suggesting that we residents offer you any suggestions we may have as you consider your committee's legislative priorities for this new legislative session. Although I cannot attend your meetings in person, I would like to offer some ideas. And, since I know you're very busy, I'd like to do so succinctly and in a way that makes efficient use of your time.

My suggestions address the demographic facts of Newton, specifically that almost 30% of Newton residents today are what we call 'Senior Citizens' -- i.e., 60 years old or older. (This and all my demographic statistics come, via Doug Greenfield, from Newton's own annual census going back to 2002.) In particular, the age 70-75 population already accounted for 14% of our population in Nov. 2017, and grew by a whopping 36% between 2014 and 2017 (which is the most recent data I have). The first Newtonian in the famously large "Baby Boom" generation turns 75 next January 1. When the Baby Boomers begin

turning 75, they will also begin swelling the 75-plus age cohort of Newton, as they already did for the cohort 70-75.

THIS HAS SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SAFETY AND PARTICULARLY FOR TRANSPORTATION. If we define "transportation" as including not only machines we get on or into (such as cars, buses and bicycles), but also our own two feet, then your committee needs to attend to things such as setting the timing of traffic lights to give older people adequate time to cross streets safely, providing shelters with some seating at bus/transit stops, installing benches for people to rest at intervals along sidewalks, and providing adequate street lighting after dark along *sidewalks*, not just roadways. These things become essential for the safety and mobility of our older residents, who are fast becoming our largest age cohort.

I am attaching 3 short, quick-read documents that provide more specifics on these points. The first is a one-page summary of a June 2013 Newton Transportation Advisory Group meeting at which a well-known Gerontology Professor emeritus spoke on the physical mobility needs of older people. A member of that committee, I invited him with the support of Councilor Downs, who then chaired that group. The second document is a 1 1/2-page Journal of Public Health article on the 'driving life expectancy' of older drivers in relation to their general life expectancy. The third is a 1 1/2-page recommendation piece I wrote as a member of Mayor Fuller's Transition Team, All-Age-Friendly sub-committee.

Thank you for considering these ideas.

Holly Gunner, Ward 2
49 Janet Road, Newton Center

P.S. Please send this to Councilor Malakie, whose address I cannot find on the City's website.

Am J Public Health. 2002 August; 92(8): 1284–1289.
PMCID: PMC1447231

Driving Life Expectancy of Persons Aged 70 Years and Older in the United States

Daniel J. Foley, MS, Harley K. Heimovitz, PhD, Jack M. Guralnik, MD, PhD, and Dwight B. Brock, PhD

Abstract

Objectives. We estimated total life expectancy and driving life expectancy of US drivers aged 70 years and older.

Methods. Life table methods were applied to 4699 elderly persons who were driving in 1993 and reassessed in a 1995 survey.

Results. Drivers aged 70 to 74 years had a driving life expectancy of approximately 11 years. A higher risk of mortality among men as a cause of driving cessation offset a higher risk of driving cessation not related to mortality among women that resulted in similar driving life expectancies.

Conclusions. Nationwide, many elderly drivers quit driving each year and must seek alternative sources of transportation. Because of differences in life expectancy, women require more years of support for transportation, on average, than men after age 70.

The health and longevity of the elderly population in the United States are at unprecedented levels, and many older persons continue to drive throughout their eighth and ninth decades of life.^{1,2} Both the aging of the post–World War II “baby boom” generation and an increasing proportion of women who drive among those turning 65 years old will contribute to a rapidly growing number of older drivers in the US population in the years ahead. In addition, driving exposure in the elderly population is at an all-time high. Male drivers aged 65 years and older average about 10 000 miles of driving per year, an increase of 74% over the last 3 decades. In contrast, elderly female drivers average 5000 miles per year, a 31% increase in driving exposure over the same period.³

Compared with middle-aged drivers, older drivers have about a 3-fold increased risk of crashing per mile driven. However, older persons drive markedly fewer miles annually than middle-aged drivers, resulting in an equivalent annualized risk for crashing.⁴ Consequently, older drivers, on average, have little increase in their annual cost of automobile insurance during their transition from middle age. In contrast, teenaged drivers, on average, have a very high risk of crashing on an annual basis, regardless of miles driven, and pay much higher premiums for their automobile insurance. **The greater threat to an older driver is the risk of fatality from an automobile crash. Although the annual risk of crashing remains fairly stable over the years of driving,**

the risk of dying after involvement in an automobile crash increases significantly with age. Compared with middle-aged drivers of the same sex and involved in the same severity of crash, older drivers are 3 times more likely to die as a result of the crash.⁵ Nearly 5000 drivers aged 70 years and older were involved in fatal crashes in 1999, a 42% increase in the number over the preceding decade.⁶ This trend for an increasing number of elderly driver fatalities is expected to continue as long as the proportion of all drivers who are aged 70 years and older continues the rise observed over the past few years—for example, from 8% in 1989 to 9% in 1999.

In general, older drivers decide for themselves when to quit, a decision that often stems from the onset and progression of medical conditions that affect visual, physical, and cognitive functioning and consequently driving skill.^{7–10} In addition, studies show that cessation is not an easy decision and may have consequences such as depressed mood and less social engagement due to loss of mobility.^{11,12} The role of health professionals in assisting with this decision continues to be discussed, as does the role of state policies for license renewal.^{13,14} Of paramount concern to the older driver who is pondering cessation is the availability and cost of alternative sources of transportation.¹⁵ Such sources may include formal services such as public transportation systems, taxis, and community-sponsored or church-sponsored van services. More informal support typically comes from family and friends who live nearby and can drive.

Few epidemiological studies have addressed the implications of this transition to dependency on others for transportation among elderly drivers in the context of public health planning and provision of services. We used data from a longitudinal study of aging in a nationally representative sample of older adults to estimate both total life expectancy and driving life expectancy, which can be used to project the number of years of life, on average, in which older persons will be dependent on alternative sources of transportation. In addition, we estimated the number of elderly persons nationwide who do not drive and the number who quit driving each year, and we assessed the effect of visual, physical, and cognitive impairments on their risk for driving cessation.



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

Transportation Advisory Group (TAG)

TAG Meeting Notes 6-26-2013

Setti D. Warren, Mayor

TAG members present: Andreae Downs (chair), Lois Levin, Holly Gunner, David Koses, Bill Paille, Adam Peller

Guests: Frank Caro, Ald. Vicki Danberg, Nancy Scammon, Marion Knapp (CoA), Alice Bailey (Dept. Senior Services), Audrey Cooper (CoA), Naomi Gordon, Ald. Deb Crossley, Ald. Ruthanne Fuller

Members

Sgt. Jay Babcock
Patrick Baxter
Alicia Bowman
Andreae Downs, Chair
Lucia Dolan
Les Fiorenzo
Holly Gunner
Candace Havens
David Koses
Lois Levin
Capt. Howard Mintz
Srdjan Nedeljkovic
William Paille
Adam Peller
Sean Roche
Bob Rooney
David Turocy

Pedestrian Issues and Older People

Holly introduced U. Mass. Emeritus Professor of Gerontology Frank Caro, a former member of Brookline's finance committee, who has organized a group called Brookline CAN (Community Aging Network). BCAN works with many municipal departments on concrete actions to support Brookline's population as it ages.

She noted that between the 2002 and 2012 City Census, the cohort of Newton population between 60-69 increased 69.4%. In the same period, the population age 70-75 increased 22.3%. This means that we

have a huge ramp-up in our senior population, and the rate of that ramp-up as our younger seniors age is about three times as fast. We need to make the city work for a larger-than-ever aging population.

Caro introduced the concept of Age-Friendly Cities, which support participation of older people through interconnected elements. He named two of roughly 8 themes:

- **Density—people are in close proximity to each other and resources, houses with universal design, transit, grocery stores, banks, post office, etc.**
- **Transportation—there are multiple non-car alternatives, older people can walk successfully because things are close by, there are good sidewalks, safe crossings, fill-in transit services and affordable taxis**

Benefits of walking for seniors

- Independence
- Health & exercise
- Sustain communities—social

Obstacles to walking:

- Stiff joints
- Balance
- Hearing loss
- Vision decline (tripping)
- Less energy, so can't walk as far as when younger
- Slower

Falling on sidewalks (or elsewhere) is more often fatal—short or longer term—for seniors, and can start a downward spiral for a senior's health.

Naomi described her difficulties resuming an active life after a fall 9 weeks ago on a crack in the sidewalk in Brookline. She used to swim laps regularly for exercise. She may never be able to do that again.

According to federal standards, a deviance of ½" is too much in a sidewalk.

Senior Safety factors in the environment:

- Dense development
- Smooth sidewalk networks
- Safe street crossings—narrow, marked crosswalks, pedestrian islands, signals, good lighting
- No ice
- Benches (ca ¼ mile apart)
- No obstacles, like tree wells
- Shade

B-CAN finding ways to address these issues—collaborate with Council on Aging; vehicle for more citizen participation: Livable Communities Advocacy Committee

- ✓ Bring attention to Brookline's great features
- ✓ Make things better for older people
- ✓ Establish relationships with all town departments and invite them to BCAN meetings
- ✓ Use Brookline's online system to report problems observed that need fixing
- ✓ Establishing visibility with the citizenry. People contact them about issues they hadn't thought about.
- ✓ Got town to commit to being an Age-Friendly City as defined by the World Health Organization

Practical accomplishments:

- Volunteers with stopwatches documented an unsafe crossing on Rt. 9 near the Reservoir
- Volunteers monitor the success of sidewalk clearance in business districts & report violations to the town for enforcement
- Moving to a pedestrian access study around areas with heavy concentration of seniors
- Advocating for parks to include parking for easy access by seniors and restrooms
- Overnight parking for caregivers

Vicki applauded the snow task force, and noted how important it is for Newton to acknowledge that residential snow clearing is a benefit for seniors, not a burden. She also highlighted how Newton's proposed park at Waban Reservoir in Chestnut Hill might also benefit from senior parking.

Caro noted how park loops for walking, with benches, were ideal for seniors getting exercise

Ruthanne asked what essential community resources Caro would identify. He noted groceries, drugstores, banks, transit. Others noted coffee, mail boxes, hardware stores.

Deb noted that sidewalk and crossing improvements also help people with disabilities remain independent and were often preferred by families with young children. But given that the city's resources are few, how distribute the improvements fairly? Had B-CAN partnered with the disability community, safe routes to school or others?

Caro mentioned that they had teamed up with the new Teen Center. He agreed that many of the improvements B-CAN seeks benefit all who don't drive. But in Brookline, schools get a lot of attention. Livability doesn't get as much.

**THE TIMES, THEY ARE 'A-CHANGIN'
(AND NEWTON NEEDS TO CATCH UP)**

- In the three years from 2002 to 2005, Newton's population age 70-75 DECREASED by 8.4%. Our population age 75 and older DECREASED by 22.2%.
- In the three years from 2014 to 2017, Newton's population age 70-75 INCREASED by 36%! Our population age 75 and older INCREASED by 9.5%, faster than our population as a whole.
- Today, Newton's older adult population, which includes everyone age 60 or older, accounts for fully 27% of our total population. And about half of that group, the fast-growing 70+ age cohort, is already 14% of Newton's total population. In fact, about 40% of Newton households today include at least one of these older residents, and has increased steadily for several years.

THIS INCREASING AND RAPID GROWTH OF OUR OLDER NEIGHBORS IS A BIG CHANGE FROM WHAT WE'VE KNOWN BEFORE. THESE DAYS, PEOPLE ARE LIVING LONGER. AND, THEY'RE NOT GOING AWAY.

In 2014, Newton's Senior Department commissioned a survey of Newton's residents age 50 and older. The survey had a high response rate and was conducted by the Center for Social and Demographic Research on Aging, Gerontology Institute, McCormack Graduate School of Policy & Global Studies, U Mass. Boston. (<http://www.newtonma.gov/civicax/filebank/documents/74184>)

Here's an excerpt from the survey report:

"The majority (63%) of respondents age 50 and older reported living in Newton for 25 years or longer, and nearly half (49%) have lived in their current residences for that long. Thus, much of the growth in the older population has occurred as a result of Newton residents aging in place. By and large, aging in place is a common goal in Newton, as indicated by the 88% of Senior respondents who stated it is important to them to stay in Newton as long as possible, and 78% of Seniors who said it is important to remain in their current village as long as possible. The vast majority of survey respondents (72%) reported that they lived in single-family homes." In Newton, many live alone in these single-family homes.

AND, THEY'RE NOT GOING AWAY.

Here are some facts about the physical and social characteristics of older adults:

- Their life expectancy exceeds their driving life expectancy. Researchers have estimated that people age 70-74 have about an 11-year driving life expectancy, but a longer life expectancy. Many people, in fact, stop or modify their driving around age 80-82 (e.g., after dark, bad weather). (See attached *American J. Public Health* article.)
- As people age, they experience physical changes that include walking more slowly, needing to rest from time to time while walking a distance, decreased balance, less visual and hearing acuity. (See attached minutes of the Newton TAG.)
- Older adults who experience social isolation (because, for example, they live alone and don't drive after dark, or at all) actually die sooner than those who are engaged in social and community life.
- Falling (perhaps because of broken sidewalks, tripping while walking on poorly lit streets, rushing to cross a street before the light changes faster than they can walk to get to the other side) is extremely dangerous for older bodies. According to the CDC, 30% of women 65 and older fall. Of those who fall, 25% end up dying from injuries resulting from the fall. A larger percentage

sustains injuries that prevent them from ever resuming their lives as before, including often being unable to return to the same living situation.

What does this mean for Transportation and Infrastructure Planning and Operations in Newton?

- Newton needs to establish a reliable and affordable intra-city transit system that enables all people – not just our oldest citizens – to get places they choose to go to at all hours of all days and evenings. Vehicles need to accommodate people who don't climb steps.
- Newton needs to do a better job of making sidewalks safe to walk on without placing people in danger of falling, including attention to broken sidewalks, snow/ice removal, and improving sidewalk lighting (not just roadway lighting, which is primarily what now exists).
- Newton needs to pay attention to the timing of traffic lights in relation to Federal guidelines on the pace at which older people can walk certain distances to cross streets.
- Newton needs to install benches or other resting places where they don't now exist in parks and their walking paths, on sidewalks, particularly in or near village centers, at bus stops and at other places where people walk.

Most of all, Newton needs to encourage task forces, commissions, city departments and staff, and anyone involved with transportation and infrastructure to **CONSTANTLY BE AWARE THAT OUR CITY IS INCREASINGLY FULL OF OLDER PEOPLE** who want and need to get places safely and enjoyably. We, as a community, need to support them as they participate in the city and the community they made and paid for over many years. The things that older adults need for basic mobility, for productive involvement in their community, for safety, livability and enjoyment are not rocket science. Many of those things are not costly and/or involve how we go about spending budgeted money we were going to spend anyway. We can do these things if we just pay attention and put our older adult neighbors high on our list of priorities.

THE TIMES, THEY ARE A CHANGIN'. AND NEWTON NEEDS TO CATCH UP.

Prepared for:

The Transportation and Infrastructure Transition Team

By Holly Gunner, member of the All-Age-Friendly Transition Team

Attachments

Danielle Delaney

From: Danielle Delaney
Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2020 9:11 AM
To: Danielle Delaney
Subject: FW: Newton Safe Routes to School priorities for PS&T
Attachments: SRTS_PSandT_Priorities_2020.pdf

From: Jenn Martin
Sent: Monday, February 3, 2020 1:09 PM
To: Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>
Subject: Newton Safe Routes to School priorities for PS&T

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Dear Councilors,

Thank you for considering the Newton Safe Routes to School Task Force priorities. We are unable to send a representative to the Feb 19th Committee meeting since it is during February School Vacation Week so appreciate you reviewing the attached memo instead.

We also invite you to an upcoming regular meeting of the Task Force. The meeting this Friday, February 7 at 9:30 a.m. at the Waban Library will focus on School Zone safety including the listed PS&T priorities. Several other councilors plan to attend as well. Please let me know at newtonsaferoutes@gmail.com if you plan to attend. I am also available by phone at 617-460-9849 or to meet in person to answer any questions you may have regarding the memo.

Thank you,
Jenn Martin
Newton Safe Routes to School Task Force Chair
www.newtonsaferoutes.org.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Public Safety & Transportation Committee
FROM: Newton Safe Routes to School Task Force
DATE: February 3, 2020
RE: Safe Routes to School Priorities

Newton Safe Routes to School works to promote walking, biking, and taking the bus to school through encouragement, education, infrastructure improvements, and safety enforcement. Our goal is to create a healthy community for everyone.

The Safe Routes to School Task Force has two strong priorities for the Public Safety & Transportation Committee: 1) **improving safe pedestrian routes to and around schools** and 2) **increasing school bus ridership**. The crossing guard being struck by a driver at Memorial Spaulding on January 23 and the pedestrian struck in the crosswalk on Lexington outside Burr School a few days later are reminders of the urgency of safety improvements around school.

In her 2020 State of the City Address, Mayor Fuller stated that “[The City] will invest aggressively to address traffic congestion”.¹ An estimated 4,500 vehicle trips each morning and 4,000 trips each afternoon are students being driven to and from school in a private vehicle.² The City can help reduce city traffic congestion by providing safer pedestrian routes to and around schools so more families are comfortable walking to school, and by working with Newton Public Schools to increase bus ridership.

1) Connected & Safe Pedestrian Routes

Pedestrian infrastructure needs the City’s attention. A single residence without a sidewalk on a route to school puts children in the street and encourages families to drive their children short distances because no safe route exists, thereby increasing traffic on our streets. This is an even bigger concern in the winter since the snow ordinance only requires removing snow from paved sidewalks. In addition, and especially for families with younger children, caregivers park their vehicle on surrounding streets and walk over to school at arrival and dismissal, making them de facto pedestrians.

¹ Mayor Fuller’s [State of the City Address](#), Jan 21, 2020.

² [Newton Student Transportation Survey](#). City of Newton Planning Department Safe Routes to School Spring 2014

Newton needs a **sidewalk prioritization plan** that focuses on connected walking routes to key destinations like schools. In addition to creating sidewalks where none exist, the plan should include repairing broken sidewalks, and widening sidewalks to accommodate wheelchairs and strollers.

It also means **making crossings safer** and **adding crossings** to get children where they are trying to go. Crossing guards are only available for elementary school routes and students, so improving the safety of the actual crossings is vital for middle and high school students, and for the many times when the guard is not there - to get to and from before- and after-school programs, for weekend and after-school playground access, and for caregivers walking to pick up their children after school.

This means better lines of sight at crossings, improved pedestrian signalization at stoplights, increased visibility of the crosswalk, and better street lighting. It also means reducing the width of crosswalks to minimize time pedestrians and cars are in a shared space, and reducing corner radii to naturally slow turning vehicles.

City Actions:

- 1) Collect data on current sidewalk conditions and crosswalk conditions.
- 2) Develop a prioritization plan with other stakeholders (Council on Aging, Commission on Disabilities, etc.)
- 3) Implement the plan.

2) School Buses

School buses are the largest Newton-controlled transportation system with average daily ridership on regular education buses of 2,700 students daily across 21 schools on 73 morning routes and 60 afternoon/evening routes.³ Each bus currently runs several routes in the morning and afternoon and most are either at capacity or do not have enough time between routes to add another stop.

The City of Newton should work with Newton Public Schools to assess how school buses can play a role in a city-wide transportation plan to reduce traffic. School buses are part of the Newton Public Schools budget; Safe Routes to School does not want increased bus ridership to come at the expense of education initiatives. **Therefore we recommend that the City better fund this public transportation system to reduce the number of daily individual vehicle trips which will help achieve the goals set by the City of the Climate Action Plan.**

³ Source: [Newton Public Schools School Transportation Efficiency Study and Later High School Start Time Analysis](#), prepared by Public Management Associates, LLC. April 8, 2019.

Some thoughts on how to increase bus ridership:

- Set a goal for a maximum door-to-door commute time from home to school that includes all modes for a given trip (i.e. walk to bus, bus ride to school). See Table 1 for average route times; bus stops are up to 0.5 mile walk from a student's home.
- Mode shift opportunities exist and would require more buses (Tables 2,3, and 4). Add bus stops closer to schools and review bus stops locations so they better serve current students.
- Flexible bus passes, such as a morning-only pass or a monthly pass for those who want to walk/bike in the fall and spring and ride the bus in the winter. The MBTA reduced fare is a good model for this at \$1.10 each way, or \$30 for a monthly pass.
- Consider eventually reducing or eliminating the bus fee, which is currently \$350. The Newton North Tiger parking pass is only \$25 (price set by City of Newton/Newton Police because it is off school property) making driving very attractive by comparison and also inequitable (those who can afford to have a car pay less than those who choose or have to take the school bus). The priorities are inverted.
- Consider bussing students to popular after-school programs and key City locations like the Newton Library.
- Consider bus stops along the MBTA green line for NPS staff and students, and a shuttle between Newton South and Newton North, with stops at Newton Center and the Library.

Additionally, there are MBTA bus stops directly adjacent to the middle schools and Newton North, and a half mile walk from Newton South, and students are eligible for half-price fares. Safe Routes to School has worked to increase awareness about the routes and Student Charlie Card for 2019-2020 and will continue to do so, as well as advocate for increased bus service on these routes. These MBTA routes are not under the City's control.

Short-Term Possibility:

As a strategy for reducing traffic near schools, next year pilot a satellite bus location for high schools that is $\frac{3}{4}$ -1 mile from the school and on an existing commuter route. This would require additional buses. Parents would drop off their secondary school students on their way to work and students would enter a waiting bus and be shuttled to their school. Depending on location, the shuttle could do multiple trips, or perhaps do a trip to a high school and a second trip to a middle school. Locations would need to be 1) on or near an existing commuter route, and 2) able to accommodate a bus without stopping traffic for an extended period while students load with the stop arm extended. The target audience is students who are currently being driven to school and the goal is to reduce vehicular traffic at the crowded secondary school campuses.

NPS Regular Education Transportation: Trips TO School in A.M. ^{#105-20}

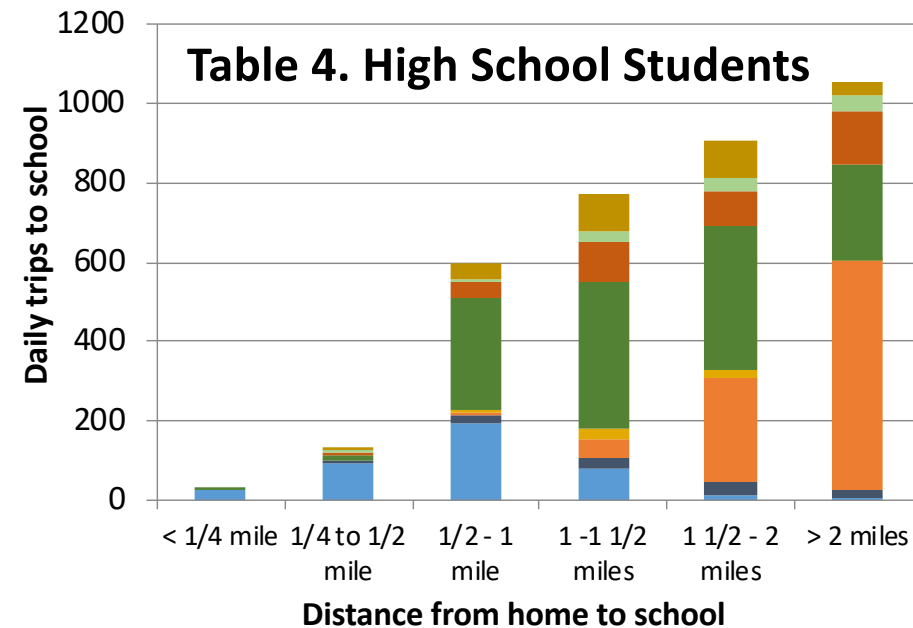
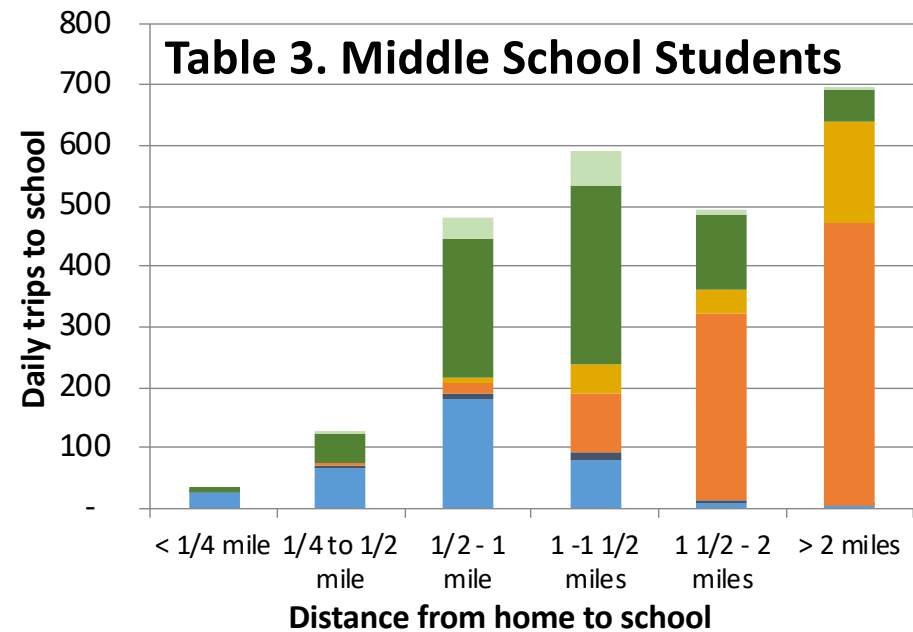
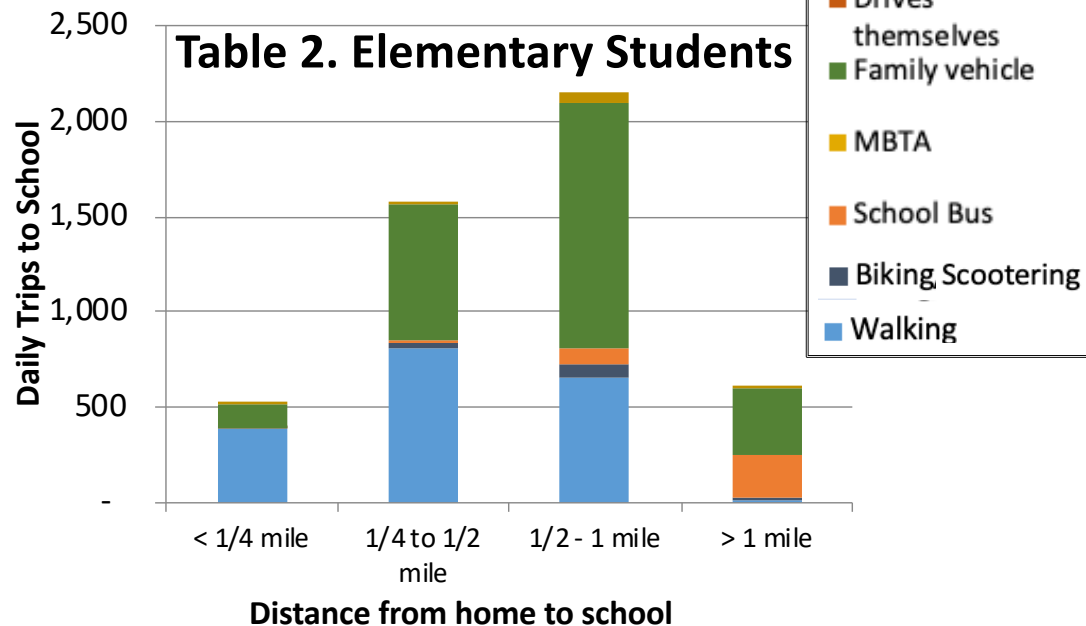
Table 1. Bus Ridership 2018-2019

	Buses*	Routes	Scheduled Load	Actual Student Load	Ave. Route Time	Total Daily Riders
High Schools	22	22	52	43	24.5 min	946
Middle Schools	20	25	50	40	27 min	1000
Elementary	26	26	50	27	22 min	702

Source: Newton Public Schools School Transportation Efficiency Study and Later High School Start Time Analysis, prepared by Public Management Associates, LLC.

April 8, 2019

*34 buses total, included the 6 swing space buses



Source: Newton Student Transportation Survey, City of Newton Planning Department and Safe Routes to School, Spring 2014.

Danielle Delaney

From: Danielle Delaney
Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2020 10:31 AM
To: Danielle Delaney
Subject: FW: Transportation thoughts

From: Jo Forman < >
Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2020 4:30 PM
To: Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>
Subject: Transportation thoughts

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

I am writing in response to Andreae Downs request for comments that appeared in her latest newsletter.

My biggest concern is the proposed reduction of travel lanes on Washington Street. For those of us in the northern section of the city, Washington Street is critical for getting from place to place. In a typical week, I'll visit the YMCA, Whole Foods, and CVS many times(the Y and WF almost daily), and I use Washington Street to get to my doctors at Newton-Wellesley Hospital and in Wellesley. The stretch of road between Newton Corner and Newtonville is often backed up, and traveling westbound through West Newton Square can be a nightmare. Once it took me 20 minutes to get through the square.

Reducing the travel lanes from two to four will make driving down Washington Street a miserable experience. I often encounter 18-wheel trucks parked for 30 minutes or more making deliveries. How is one supposed to get by them if there are only two lanes? Buses also obstruct the travel lanes, though not for as long, but frustration can build up if one has to stop and start to follow a bus on its route instead of driving directly to one's destination.

I understand that some people may want to make driving (and parking) unpalatable so that residents will choose greener forms of alternative transportation, but I don't think giving up my car is practical. I can't ride a bicycle because of a hip problem. Although I like to walk, I can't carry a whole load of groceries or personal care products for a half or three-quarters of a mile. And, as an older woman who has to be careful about her bones, I certainly wouldn't feel safe walking when it's icy. Finally, I don't see why I should incur the extra cost and inconvenience of the ride share service when I have a car of my own and am still able to drive.

Before the November election, my book club was discussing the issues and the candidates. One person said that she used to feel that no matter who got elected, they would take care of the people and the city. I agreed, but I no longer feel that way. It feels like a lot of the people want to create some kind of fantasy city that will be harder for me to live in. I am not a wholesale opponent of development. I would welcome younger and diverse folks to Newton. But please, don't shut me out and make it difficult for me to live my life in this city.

Respectfully submitted,
Jo Forman

Danielle Delaney

From: Danielle Delaney
Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2020 11:02 AM
To: Danielle Delaney
Subject: FW: Transportation thoughts

From: Danielle Delaney
Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2020 11:00 AM
To: Jo Forman
Subject: FW: Transportation thoughts

From: Rick Lipof <rlipof@lipofres.com>
Sent: Wednesday, February 5, 2020 10:47 AM
To: Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>
Subject: RE: Transportation thoughts

[DO NOT OPEN links/attachments unless you are sure the content is safe.]

Well said, So noted. I believe that balance is always the focus on our deliberations and considerations on the council and I agree with you that a bit more balance in considering change is in order.

Rick Lipof, Vice President
Councilor-at-large, Ward 8
City of Newton, Massachusetts
(617)817-5956
rlipof@newtonma.gov

From: Danielle Delaney [mailto:ddelaney@newtonma.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, February 05, 2020 10:44 AM
To: Allan CicconeJR_Comcast; Jacob D. Auchincloss; Julia Malakie; Christopher J. Markiewicz; Andreae Downs; Alicia Bowman; Rebecca Walker Grossman; Richard Lipof
Subject: FW: Transportation thoughts

From: Jo Forman <>
Sent: Tuesday, February 4, 2020 4:30 PM
To: Danielle Delaney <ddelaney@newtonma.gov>
Subject: Transportation thoughts

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I am writing in response to Andreae Downs request for comments that appeared in her latest newsletter.

My biggest concern is the proposed reduction of travel lanes on Washington Street. For those of us in the northern section of the city, Washington Street is critical for getting from place to place. In a typical week, I'll visit the YMCA, Whole Foods, and CVS many times(the Y and WF almost daily), and I use Washington Street to get to my doctors at Newton-Wellesley Hospital and in Wellesley. The stretch of road between

Jane and Philip Hanser, Priorities for Public Safety and Transportation Committee, 2020

1. THE FIVE MILES OF NEWTON'S PORTION OF THE COMMONWEALTH AVENUE CARRIAGE ROAD (CR) should be designated a “linear park,” connecting Boston and points west, thus fulfilling its potential as a world-class resource for recreation and relaxation.

RATIONALE: Designating Newton’s portion of the Carriage Road as a “linear park” supports the *VisionZero* strategy for making our roads safer for pedestrians and bicyclists. It would support Newton's *Safe Routes to School* program by providing safe routes for our school children both to and from school whether walking or bicyclists; all pedestrians and bicyclists remain vulnerable when having to use busy and overloaded roads for transportation and recreation. Furthermore, Newton should finally pay homage to the vision of Frederick Law Olmstead, the founder of American landscape architecture, who created the world’s first “linear park” in Boston, and to complete the jewel that the Olmstead began and envisioned. Making the CR safer for walking and bicycling also promotes the Climate Action Plan, and its goals, that the City has committed to achieving.

a. The Carriage Road should be made safe and legal for two-way bicycle travel.

RATIONAL: The Comm Ave Carriage Road extends continuously from the border with Boston on the east to the border with Weston on the west. Paralleling Commonwealth Avenue, with homes lining its northern side, the CR is a major resource for bicycle riding and pedestrian foot traffic (walkers and runners). Currently it is legal for bicyclists westbound only. This scenario plays out with repercussions that endanger our children, seniors and thousands of others who use it: We cannot allow our children and others to cycle westbound on a protected artery and then provide *them no safe way back home*, requiring them to return back home vulnerable on busy crowded arterial roads shared with motor vehicles, often heavy motor vehicles. Furthermore, often bicyclists cycle eastbound *anyway*, despite the lack of signage and striping which would and could make a significant difference in protecting them from NB/SB motor vehicles and those crossing the CR berm, many of whom are oblivious to the fact that bicyclists and other non-motorized users of the Carriage Road will be coming from the west and heading EB. We have a responsibility to provide appropriate signage to provide warning and guidance to vehicular traffic and bicycle and pedestrian traffic is essential in protecting our cyclists and pedestrians. Signage would also protect pedestrians heading EB by advising them to (stop and) look to the west before entering into the intersection; many unfortunate interactions and near misses have occurred because of this lack of signage and instruction.

b. Blocks where there are no driveways should be closed off, wherever possible, to vehicular traffic. Thus: Close off the block of the Comm Ave CR between Bristol and Chestnut, thereby making this block, where there are no driveways, for recreational use only. Add park-like facilities (park benches, etc.) for bicyclists, runners and walkers.

RATIONALE: In addition to the goals stated above, motor vehicles such as landscapers who turn into this block frequently violate the “ALL VEHICLES MUST TURN RIGHT” sign at the corner of Bristol and Chestnut, and go straight across Chestnut St., and despite there being no safe signalization there. This would prevent that.

- c. **View and classify the entire Commonwealth Ave. Carriage Road *berm* as a “pedestrian refuge island.”** All crosswalks between the south side of Comm Ave and the north side of the Carriage Road must utilize the berm as a “pedestrian refuge island.”

RATIONALE: Due to design and engineering irregularities and inconsistencies, a pedestrian following a “crosswalk” between one side of Comm Ave (State Route 30) and the other side of the CR will have to spend up to 145 feet in the middle of a major east-west arterial road where the crosswalks bypass the berm, a common-sense safe place for a pedestrian to stop and wait. Numerous such poorly designed crosswalks exist close to schools, and where there are no other signals to help identify crossing pedestrians to oncoming traffic. We endanger our school children often at times of day when vehicular traffic is at its greatest and quickest levels. Comm Ave is often curved and meandering up and down hills, often making it difficult for drivers, who may even be distracted – a growing problem in Newton and elsewhere - and/or speeding, to see crossing pedestrians. These erratic crosswalks put pedestrians, many of whom attend our public schools, at risk.

Tragedies such as recent hit of a crossing guard outside of Memorial-Spaulding elementary school by a driver underscore the importance of basic and minimal sensible and safe pedestrian crossing patterns.

- d. **The integrity of the Carriage Road should be maintained wherever possible; that is, regular Comm Ave traffic should be routed into Comm Ave and not “take over” the Carriage Road.** Thus: The right-hand lane of the Carriage Road between Oldham Rd., across Washington St., and ending at Arapaho, which is currently right-turn only and which was taken over the main Commonwealth Ave traffic should be returned as “Carriage Road” and turned into a bicycle counter-flow lane.

RATIONALE: The takeover of the CR by main vehicular traffic endangers those who have been cycling down the protected lanes to this point – only to suddenly find this protection suddenly ended. Returning the integrity of the CR to its original purpose and function is essential. Giving sections where this integrity has been compromised and instituting a “counter-flow status” for EB bicycle travel and pedestrian foot traffic would also protect cyclists headed EB. This reclassification already has the support of the Transportation Division. Returning the integrity of the Carriage Road supports our *Safe Routes to Schools* and our *VisionZero* goals.

2. COMMONWEALTH AVENUE from city border to city border should be consistently safe for our school children and others to cross.

RATIONALE: Schools and other institutions line Commonwealth Avenue, a winding and hilly road where visibility is often compromised, yet there remain many sections and intersections where pedestrians who want to cross remain vulnerable. Budgets often do not allow for school crossing guards in the morning and the afternoons and also cannot account for students leaving school late; crossing guards may not be easily visible in bad weather. Many parents are afraid to allow their children to walk to school, when school is less than ¼ mile away, because they don't want their children crossing Comm Ave., and end up driving them adding to VMT (against the recommendations of our Climate Action Plan) and congested roads. *Signalization that students who want to cross Commonwealth Avenue can operate manually* is critical and its implementation needs to be increased. A *"belts and suspenders" approach is essential when dealing with the safety of our school children.*

3. The installation of BUS SHELTERS which have a roof and sides at select locations should be increased.

RATIONALE: At high usage areas, bus shelters are essential wherever possible, especially in this northern environment where daylight is limited half of the year in the mornings and early evenings when people are going to and from employment, and going about other business, and where weather can include rain, sleet, wind and snow.

A bus shelter with a seat can also give a child a safe place to sit while waiting for a bus rather than wandering off and near traffic, or an elderly person safety and shelter from inclement weather. Bus shelters will also make the idea of using public transit more attractive, and support the goals of Newton's Climate Action Plan.

a. Priority should be given to bus stops in village centers, near medical facilities, large apartment complexes, and locations near senior housing.

b. Authorization and the cooperation of Parks and Recreation should be obtained to construct bus shelters on *select* more highly used Comm Ave *berm* at locations where the MBTA has placed bus stops.

RATIONALE: The many students, employees of Newton businesses and faculty at Comm Ave colleges have to cross busy Comm Ave to get to and from the bus stops that are located in the berm, with no pedestrian crossing and no shelter from busy vehicular traffic. This is highly dangerous and is inconsistent with the practice of the Town of Brookline, for example, which provides pedestrian crossings and attractive and safe bus shelters in the berm. They can be made safe and embellish the beauty of the Carriage Road and its berm. Location such as these

can be served with a *park bench*, and a *formal pedestrian crosswalk* across Commonwealth Ave. and across the Carriage Road to make for safe access. *They can be further beautified with the planting of low and flowering bushes.*

4. The City should study the results of the Massachusetts Electric School Bus Pilot Program and make appropriate recommendations.

RATIONALE: School bus transportation of students results in a substantial number of vehicle miles travelled (VMTs). Although the tailpipe emissions from such low mileage vehicles comply with relevant environmental regulations, they still have significant environmental impacts. In addition, Newton has adopted a Climate Action Plan which aims at bringing Newton's carbon footprint in line with the UN's IPCC goals for 2050. Moving the school bus system to an electric fleet will assist Newton in achieving that goal.

https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/04/30/Mass%20DOER%20EV%20school%20bus%20pilot%20final%20report_.pdf

5. Despite 311 options for inputting resident foliage that compromises the integrity of public sidewalks for pedestrian use, there is no proper redress procedure where 311 has responded “No such problem” and yet there is an obvious problem with residential foliage covering or significantly covering and blocking sidewalk. There should be a clear reference as a response to 311 requests as to why the complaint is not valid, and a procedure for redress.

RATIONALE: Foliage covering sidewalks is a problem where there are *bus stops*, and *in the vicinity of schools*, where we want children to be walking and not have to walk *in the berm* and that much closer to moving vehicles - where the city actually *has* sidewalk. Too often homeowners are remiss in sufficiently trimming back their foliage, leaving pedestrians only a foot or less of sidewalk for walking, and pushing them out toward the curb and heavy traffic, and 311 responds that there is no problem. The sidewalks are public property, and this process needs overhauling to increase pedestrian safety, provide Safe Routes to School for our children, and our Climate Action Plan.