

Engineering Services Division

Traffic Operations Committee

Meeting Minutes – October 15, 2013

Attendees: Rob Mack, PE, PTOE, Engineering Services

Ed Roberge, PE, Engineering Services Steve Henninger, Planning Division

Jim Major, General Services Greg Taylor, Police Department Rick Wollert, Fire Department Dick Lemieux, TPAC Chair

A. Regular Discussion Items

1) Overview of city-wide accident data, including prior-month accident summary and discussion of select accident locations, circumstances and potential action.

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: Traffic accident data for September 2013 was reviewed. There were 105 reportable accidents in September 2013. This compares with 107 and 78 reportable accidents in September 2012 and 2011, respectively. 20 accidents resulted in total of 26 people injured, 4 of which occurred on Loudon Road. There was one fatality resulting from a vehicle leaving Horse Hill Road near Runnells Road and crashing into trees (still under investigation).

There was one accident involving a pedestrian: a pedestrian aged 77 years walking in the Wal-Mart parking lot and being struck by a vehicle backing out of a parking space (minor injury, driver at fault).

There was one accident involving a bicyclist: a bicyclist aged 27 years traveling northbound along Mountain Road near Tow Path Lane and being sideswiped by a passing northbound vehicle (minor injury, driver at fault, no helmet worn).

2) City Council meeting update.

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: City Council will meet tonight to consider TOC's report to Council regarding traffic concerns at the Centre Street driveways at TD Banknorth and The Prescription Center.

3) Transportation Policy Advisory Committee (TPAC) update.

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: TPAC's September meeting included a review and discussion of the CIP19 Loudon Road Corridor Improvement project.

B. On-going Discussion and Action Items.

1) Referral from City Council requesting an examination of traffic performance at the Regional Drive/Chenell Drive intersection (Council: 08/12/13).

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: Further discussion of this item was deferred pending a study currently being conducted by Engineering.

C. New Discussion and Action Items

1) Request from a resident on N. State Street to install 'traffic turning and entering signs' and a crosswalk in the vicinity of Blossom Hill Cemetery (Engineering: 09/30/13).

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: At issue is a request by a N. State Street resident to install a new crosswalk on N. State Street at the entrance to Blossom Hill Cemetery and to install 'Traffic Turning and Entering' signs for residential driveways in this area. A concern is lack of crosswalks in the immediate area, with the nearest one being far to the south near Boutwell's Bowling Center.

The engineering design of nearly-completed improvements to N. State Street had considered these items. Regarding the crosswalk to the cemetery, there is (or will be, as soon as the final pavement markings are installed this fall) a painted crosswalk to the cemetery side of the street just south of the Rumford Street intersection; this crosswalk connects to sidewalk on both sides of the street and is in an area at which pedestrian crossings can be focused. In the vicinity of the Blossom Hill portion of the cemetery there is no sidewalk along the west side of the street, thus a crosswalk here would not have been appropriate. North of the cemetery, the next pedestrian crossing is located at the signal at McGuire Street, also an area of concentrated pedestrian crossings.

'Traffic Turning and Entering' signs are typically appropriate, say along a long stretch of rural road where there are minimal cross streets and driveways, but suddenly there is one busy driveway location (say a sand and gravel pit, or a major farm stand) where one of these signs might be considered to alert traffic. Along N. State Street, as along most streets in the city's urban core, driveways and turning vehicles (and crossing pedestrians and bicycles) occur with great regularity. Drivers are continually aware of this situation, and TOC members concurred that additional signage would be of little benefit.

2) Request from a commuter to remove the crosswalk weeble on S. Main Street at Sanel Auto Parts (General Services: 10/02/13).

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: This has been a recurring request to TOC over the years and generally involves inadequate space (actual or perceived) to drive along the northbound lane next to the crosswalk weeble when vehicles are parked near or on the crosswalk in front of Sanel Auto Parts. Staff has noted observations that auto parts customers, including large delivery trucks, park next to or on the crosswalk where the weeble is located which can significantly restrict the effective travel lane width for moving northbound vehicles.

TOC felt that there was value in maintaining the weeble at this crosswalk location, although the practice of vehicles parking on or too close to the crosswalk was a concern, both due to the subject width restriction for northbound traffic as well as for safety of pedestrians having to cross from between parked vehicles. TOC

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members concurred that the issues could be mitigated, and pedestrian crossing safety enhanced, if vehicles were encouraged to not park on or too close to the crosswalk. General Services will paint 20-foot long diagonal stripes on each side of the crosswalk on the northbound side of S. Main Street to better indicate the 'no-parking' area. It was noted that the southbound side of the street has driveway openings and a fire hydrant that already precludes parking too close to the crosswalk here. In any event, the weeble here will soon be removed with the coming of the winter season. Staff will continue to monitor.

3) Request from Merrimack Valley School District to review the one-way signing on Allen Street at the High Street/high school driveway intersection (*General Services: 10/08/13*).

DISCUSSION / ACTIONS: At issue is a concern by staff at MVHS that some traffic exiting MVHS at the Allen Street driveway opposite High Street is illegally turning right (against the westbound one-way signage) to travel wrong-way on Allen Street up to Community Drive. Rob Mack met at the intersection with MVHS Principal Michael Jette and School Resource Officer Carl Notarangeli on October 10 to discuss the issue. One-Way and No Right Turn signs were posted at the intersection facing school driveway traffic. While some of the signs were faded, the legends appeared amply visible to traffic that might want to turn right. It appeared that this might be more of an enforcement issue. It was suggested that some enforcement, even it if begins with a 'friendly reminder' would be needed as it seems some drivers have been turning right here against the signage with impunity for some time.

TOC concurred that upgrading the dated one-way signage to include two signs on the side-street approaches (MVHS driveway as well as High Street) would be appropriate. General Services will schedule the sign updates. TOC felt that education and enforcement of the restriction would be the most effective deterrent to this occasional infraction. Greg Taylor will coordinate with the school resource officer in this regard. Staff will monitor intersection operation, in concert with MVHS staff, to gauge the effectiveness of the improved signage and enforcement efforts.

D. Open Discussion Items

4)	Staff response to miscellane	eous inquiries (refer to	correspondence in agenda packet).
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Respectfully submitted,

Robert J. Mack, PE, PTOE, Traffic Engineer
Chair, Traffic Operations Committee

The next Traffic Operations Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 19, 2013 @ 12:00 PM in the 2ND Floor Conference Room.