

Waban Area Council
Waban, MA 02468

Setti Warren, Mayor
City of Newton
1000 Commonwealth Avenue
Newton, MA 02459

December 9, 2016

Re: Needham Street project

Dear Mayor Warren,

The project to reconstruct Needham Street in Newton offers the opportunity to not only improve auto throughput, but it can also be a catalyst for enhanced economic vitality in the corridor. We are concerned that the current design of the roadway does not meet key criteria to improve pedestrian safety or desirability to pedestrians to walk in this corridor. Therefore we urge the city of Newton to work with Mass DOT and with local abutters and businesses to accomplish the following:

- **Undergrounding of utilities.** The utility poles that are present throughout Needham and Winchester Streets are unwanted and are not part of any future vision of corridor. Construction of the roadway should not commence until undergrounding is included in the plans.
- **Pedestrian access and safety.** The undergrounding of utilities will improve the accessibility of the corridor for pedestrians, including those with mobility impairments.
- **Economic vitality.** Undergrounding of utilities will create an attractive streetscape that will encourage the success of commercial businesses along the corridor. Foot traffic will increase, leading to community vitality. Needham Street can easily become a “go-to” destination for the entire region.
- **Street trees and decorative elements.** With utilities buried, the corridor should be designed to include street trees adjacent to the roadway within an expanded sidewalk zone, similar to what is done in most other pedestrian zones. Decorative elements such as contextual street lighting and benches can be incorporated into a pedestrian friendly design

We request that, at a minimum, a **working plan** should be developed and the conduit be placed during the roadway reconstruction, and so that a definite cost for undergrounding can be determined. It would be an awful waste of public money to construct a new roadway, only to have the unsightly jumble of poles and overhead wires remain.

Sincerely,

Waban Area Council,
By

Sallee Lipshutz, President

