

**Waban Area Council Meeting
With Newton Highlands Area Council
Zervas Street Design
April 14, 2016
Meeting Minutes**

Waban Area Council: Andreae Downs, Sallee Lipshutz, Chris Pitts, Maureen Reilly-Meagher, Kathy Winters.

Newton Highlands Area Council: Srdj Nedeljkovic,

City Councilors: Deb Crossley, John Rice, Brian Yates

School Council Members: Steve Siegel, Diana Fisher-Gonberg

City of Newton: Tom Rooney, project manager, Alex Valcarce, Deputy Commissioner Public Works Dept.

Consultants: Joe Drown - Perkins Eastman – Architect; Stephen Farr and Jeff Bandini - Nitsch Engineering - Traffic Engineers.

Approximately 50 residents were also in attendance.

1. Alex Valcarce, Deputy Commissioner Public Works Dept. introduced the team working on Zervas street design.
2. **Street Design Options Presented by Consultants.** Stephen Farr and Jeff Bandini went over the layout of the streets. Stated that while the school design is complete, the roadway design is not. They want input. Presented three versions (available on the city and WAC websites). For purposes of their models, they assumed up to 170 extra cars with the increased enrollment at new school (that was assuming one car per student; should be far lower due to carpools, buses). All three options have blue zone cut into the curb (ie, widening the street at the blue zone).
 - Option 1 – extended blue zone close to intersection
 - Option 2 – blue zone extended to the south.
 - Option 3 – add a right turn lane near Beacon.

Steven explained that the intersection at Beacon and Beethoven will have improved cross walks. They will square off the cross walks as much as possible (to add ADA compatible curb ramps). Signal will have exclusive pedestrian phasing with increased timing for crossing (but not necessarily enough time to accommodate slow moving children). New light will be a smart light that responds to vehicle queues. New system is video detection which will detect cars up to 200 feet away. Timing mechanism will look to balance the flow of traffic in each direction. There will be emergency preemption for fire trucks.

Beethoven will be one way during pickup and drop-off. No entry onto Beethoven from Beacon. Buses will come in off Beacon Street into a one-way loop on the site through parking lot.

3. Resident Response/Questions About Options.

- Several residents expressed concern over safety of a right turn lane on Beethoven at Beacon; at the end of the meeting four residents left notes specifically opposing a right turn lane off of Beethoven at Beacon.
- Has Amy Circle been considered? Will new students from the east come west on Beacon and pull into Amy Circle to drop off their kids (the Zervas district will expand to the east)? No plans currently for Amy Circle.
- Will there be a right turn on red? No – there will be no right turn on red for any of the movements.
- Can crossing guard keep the light red in all directions for as long as it takes so that cars don't lose some of the green cycle waiting for kids to cross? No, because crossing guard likes to be in the middle of the crosswalk.
- Doing anything about choke point on Beethoven? No not doing anything about that.
- Using computer simulation? Yes. They can make that available.
- Have they done analysis on how the bus entrance/exits will affect the streets opposite (Paulson and Amy Circle)? There will be five buses. They have done analysis and they don't show any issues with the buses turning in and out.
- Will Beethoven be no parking on west side when it is one way? No. Is there parking there now? No, not during school hours.
- The additional 170 students where will they come from? The largest expansion is west of Walnut street (70 kids in that neighborhood) also south of Centre St. in current Mason-Rice and Bowen (some of those students would be bused).
- Question about how many cars are turning which way off of Beethoven at Beacon? They have detailed traffic counts and it was about 1/3 each way (right, straight, and left).
- How does changing the light timing reduce already existing congestion on Beethoven with the addition of so much new traffic? Current loops are substandard and timing is deficient. Those two changes will increase overall efficiency. Level of service (the number of cars that can clear the intersection) will be a little bit better. Still going to be bad.
- Police enforcement? When school opens there will be enforcement present constantly, but once it has been open for a while it will stop.

- Can something be done to enforce the one-way restriction more strictly?
4. **Stacie Beuttell from Walk Boston** – There are ways of generating additional support for walking to school. Walking school bus. There are concerns associated with widening streets, especially speeding. Consider whether it is worth it to widen streets just to alleviate traffic problems during short periods of the day (school drop-off and pick-up).
 5. **Jenn Martin, from Zervas PTO/Safe Routes to School.** Discussed their programs for promoting walking to school. They have a very active program and have a number of walking school buses.
 6. **Presentation by Srdj Nedeljkovic, President NHAC.** Discussed increased enrollment and where the students will be coming from. Discussed traffic study data. 84 cars using blue zone 7:45-8:30am. Went through various projections of increased traffic. Wait times will increase on Beethoven. Currently 105 vehicle trips for 312 students. Projection is that you will get 74 new auto trips for the increased students at new school. Possible priorities: Improving access, minimizing adverse effects of traffic on the neighborhood, reduce adverse effects of congestion on commuter routes.
 7. **Community Goals?** Andreae Downs asked residents to think about and articulate what the goals are for the street design. Residents responded with a number of goals and concerns, most of which focused on safety:
 - Allen Ave – at end of Allen at Beacon parents park to walk children to and from school. This constricts the entrance to the street and adds congestion on Beacon. Suggestion that here should be no parking signs. John Rice clarified that David Koses and JR were out laying out cones to show where no parking signs will be.
 - Continue focus on corner of Allen and Beacon, call attention to
 - 1) cars coming down Allen to get to Zervas,
 - 2) cars parked on Allen,
 - 3) cars heading east on Beacon are going too fast, speed limit after Chestnut is 35 MPH which is unsafe for kids and pedestrians,
 - 4) cars are parking on Allen right at Beacon, and
 - 5) children trying to cross Allen at Beacon to get to school.
 - Sean Roche TAG: Urges audience to consider what streets would like like with no compromise, just one goal – safety of kids, everything else is inconvenience. Many residents present expressed agreement with this approach.
 - Many residents expressed a preference for making it safer for kids to walk over making it easier for cars to drive to drop-off/pickup. Many residents were skeptical of the need for a curb cut to enhance the blue zone and attract more cars.

- Suggestion for crossing guard at Allen/Beacon and bigger school zone. JR said there will now be a school zone on Beacon that will start at Allen and Beacon and go to Cold Spring Park.
- Suggestion of crosswalk on Allen where the aqueduct crosses. Stop sign at the end of Allen onto Woodward.
- Suggestion that the right-hand turn lane may be safer because it may relieve the gridlock on Beethoven that causes dangerous driving behavior.
- Make the sidewalks wider to encourage walking rather than spend money on bumping in the curb.
- Has there been any thought given to how to make biking safer? AD – yes we looked to see if there was room for a bike lane on Beethoven and it was too narrow.
- Suggestion to make Beethoven and Allen one way all of the time.
- Suggestion to take the blue zone and make it a red zone. Have parents drop at Cold Spring and run buses or walking school buses from Cold Spring parking lot. .38 mile distance.
- Suggestion to have a dedicated drop off lane off of Beethoven onto school property. AD said they looked at that and they couldn't do it safely. Steve Siegel: as a design philosophy they are trying to keep cars away from front door of school.
- Srdj presented his proposal to close off Beethoven between Puritan and Beacon to all traffic except residents during pickup and dropoff. Improve pedestrian access through Cold Spring park, increase the availability of buses, no fees for buses. Money saved from not doing blue zone curb cut could be used for something else. We will get exactly what we plan for in terms of traffic.

8. **Decision Making Process.** John Rice asked Alex Varcace: how do these decisions get made? Alex explained that part of the process is design of the site, then other groups like DPW and the police department have a hand in the process. JR said he will get clarification about where the decision making happens. WHEN WILL DECISION GET MADE? Over next two months according to Alex.

Adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Winters

Addendum to Zervas Street Design Minutes, Prepared by Andreae Downs:

The minutes above represent a basic record of the comments expressed at the meeting, and do not convey the weight of the concerns expressed or areas where there appeared to be consensus. Councilor Andreae Downs, who organized and ran the meeting, has added below her overall impressions regarding resident feedback at the meeting.

Areas of largest consensus:

1. Meeting participants value keeping the kids safe near Zervas. That includes kids walking, biking, who might be made less safe in a right-turn-lane or bump-in scenario.
2. Meeting participants don't like the speed and unsafe/illegal behavior of drivers to/from and around the school. that includes speeding seen on Allan, Beethoven (in the off hours), Evelyn and Beacon.
3. Congestion in front of the school and amount of traffic on surrounding streets is unhealthy and unsafe.
4. Parents want/need a safe, convenient way to get kids to & from school.

Areas of some but not majority (spoken or written) consensus

1. Parents will still drive
2. Congestion should be mitigated first

Comments on other conditions (more specific)

1. Parking at corners and in the blue zone is contributing to unsafe conditions at intersections and along Beethoven during peak times.
2. Sight lines/Safety are an issue on Beethoven & Allan even without parking, in particular: cresting the hill on Beethoven and rounding the curve at Beethoven--both right before the school (after Puritan)
3. Left turning traffic (Beethoven to Beacon & Beacon to Allan) contributes to congestion.

Comments on solutions/proposed design:

(from the maps):

NO right turn lane--many reasons related to safety & the ineffectiveness of a "free right" during peak times while kids cross--four sticky note comments.