

Transportation Advisory Committee

Activities in 2005

Submitted to: Arlington Board of Selectmen

By: Transportation Advisory Committee

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2005 Report of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to the Board of Selectmen

The goal of the Transportation Advisory Committee is to improve the quality of life in Arlington by increasing safety for all modes of transportation. We try to accomplish this while balancing safety with mobility, economics, the environment, and public health. In this effort, the TAC and key departments of the Town, Police, Public Works, and Planning, work very closely together in a supportive relationship.

1. Major Long Term Activities in 2005 (each continuing into 2006)

Mass. Ave. Corridor

We are pleased that our contributions in defining the Mass Ave Corridor Project in 2002, working with town officials, are expected to yield federal funding under the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The initial funding is approximately \$1.6M, which will enable the Town to initiate work on the project. The project has been divided into three phases by the Massachusetts Highway Department – the first phase will extend from the Cambridge line to Pond Lane; the second from Pond Lane to Water Street, and the final from Water Street to Grove Street. Scott Smith is the Working Group Leader for this effort.

Downing Square

Downing Square is the difficult to negotiate six-way intersection of Park Ave, Lowell St, Park Ave Extension, Bow St and Westminster Ave. The TAC, working with neighbors, has examined possible improvements to this area and the roadways leading into it. An experimental design, using paint, sandbags, and a temporary raised crosswalk, was proposed in the spring with installation completed in the fall. Data was collected during the experiment and a survey of residents was conducted before the experiment was dismantled. Working with DPW, specific recommendations will be made in 2006 as a result of the knowledge gained from the experiment. Elisabeth Carr-Jones is the Working Group Leader for this effort.

East Arlington Parking Study

The TAC, with the assistance of engineering students from Tufts University, studied parking behavior in a major section of East Arlington and conducted two public meetings with residents. With the support of the Board of Selectman, residents were surveyed on possible policy options. TAC will continue to work with the neighborhood to develop a consensus for action. Scott Smith and Jeff Maxtutis jointly led this effort.

Arlington Schools

In conjunction with the Dallin school reconstruction, the TAC reviewed the area at and around the school and recommended transportation safety improvements. These improvements include crosswalks, handicap ramps, sidewalks, and traffic signs. With the support of the abutters, the TAC also recommended the conversion of George Street to a public way in order to improve traffic circulation and allow the installation of a sidewalk. Further work to improve safety around the schools is continuing under the leadership of the School Committee as the "Safe Transportation to School" project. Jeff Maxtutis was the Working Group leader for the Dallin effort, and Scott Smith is the TAC representative to the Safe Transportation to Schools.

Symmes Transportation Issues

Early in 2005 at the request of the Board of Selectmen and the Arlington Redevelopment Board, a working group of the TAC was formed to support the Redevelopment Board's Special Permit process for the Symmes project. The TAC provided an independent review of the potential transportation issues for Arlington and made an extensive set of recommendations that were adopted in the Special Permit. Ed Starr was the Working Group Leader for this effort.

Intersection of Rt. 60 and Mass Ave

A study was initiated in late 2004 to find inexpensive ways to improve the Mass Ave, Pleasant Street and Mystic Street intersection. In early 2005, several different signal arrangements were analyzed, indicating the possibility of minor performance improvements with only timing adjustments. The effort was put on hold in the spring because of the possibility that significant funds might soon arrive through the Mass Ave Corridor funding, It is now clear that this intersection will be in phase two of Mass Ave Corridor and major improvements are a few years away. Therefore the work has resumed in 2006. Ed Starr is the Working Group Leader for this project.

2. General Projects

Crosswalks

Critical crosswalks have been designated based upon traffic volume, visibility, and pedestrian use. In 2005, additional thermoplastic was applied to crosswalks on Arlington's major roadways, including Mass Avenue, Pleasant Street, Mystic Street, Medford Street, Broadway and Park Avenue.

Outreach

The TAC again had an informational table at Town Day and a website (<http://tac.Arlington.ma.us>) maintained by Alan Jones that continues to be a resource for Town residents. Public meetings are often held when beneficial to the conduct of specific projects.

Others

In addition to the above activities, the TAC analyzed and completed recommendations for 20 individual requests as indicated in Table 1. These projects ranged from straightforward situations to those with significant complexity such as the crosswalk on Massachusetts Avenue at Library Way.

As we entered 2006, there were 18 projects under study, including the major projects in Section 1 above.

3. Membership

The TAC was established by the Board of Selectmen in the spring of 2001 to advise the Selectmen on transportation matters for the Town, and to work cooperatively with the Police, Public Works, and Planning Departments, each of which are represented on the Committee. Citizen Members of the Committee during 2005 were: Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Joseph Cahill, Ralph Elwell, Jeff Maxtutis, Charles Pappas, Michael Rademacher, Scott Smith (Vice Chair and Secretary), and Edward Starr (Chair). Town Staff members are Lt. James McHugh, John Sanchez, and Kevin O'Brien. Jack Hurd was the liaison for the TAC to the Board of Selectmen.

In 2005, an additional Member-At-Large was added to the Committee. After interviews, Joseph Cahill was nominated for this position and voted by the Board. In addition, three non-voting Associate Members were accepted by the TAC in 2005: Guillermo Bahamon, Erik Moore, and Howard Muise.

4. Summary

The TAC continues to be concerned by the limited Town resources for roadway and sidewalk improvements, and by limited Police resources for traffic enforcement. The staff of the Traffic Division was substantially reduced in fiscal year 2004 and has not been replaced. Traffic enforcement is a very important part of maintaining the quality of life in Arlington. Drivers need to approach Arlington with the thought, "I'll be careful here because they enforce the law." It takes sustained enforcement to attain this mental attitude, and the benefits are increased public safety and quality of life. Arlington was on this path before 2004, but has not been since.

We gratefully acknowledge contributions from the academic community to TAC projects, including the Harvard School of Public Health (walking/bicycling) and Tufts University School of Engineering (East Arlington Parking Study).

Finally, we wish to thank the Board for its continued support in our work, which usually requires balancing between narrow and broad interests. Often there is no solution that will please everyone. This is a slow process that hopefully leads to an improved quality of life for our citizens.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Starr – Chair

TABLE 1: Projects That Were Analyzed and Recommendations Submitted by the Transportation Advisory Committee in 2005 (Working Group Leader indicated)

- Churchill Avenue** - Michael Rademacher
- Symmes Transportation Special Permit**– Ed Starr
- Webster and Phillips Ave** – Scott Smith
- Crosswalk at Mystic and Summer** – Ed Starr
- Crosswalk upgrade at Summer and Victoria** – Ed Starr
- Park Ave. Fog Lines** – John Sanchez
- Crosby and College Stop Signs** – Jim McHugh
- Multi-Use Enhancements** – Dr. Anne Lusk (Harvard School of Public Health)
- Thorndike Field Safety** – Howard Muise
- Sunrise Assisted Living Crosswalk** – Ed Starr
- Hawthorne and Cedar Stop Signs**– Jeff Maxtutis
- Fisher and Fayette Safety** – Joe Cahill
- Library Way Crosswalk Safety** – Mike Rademacher
- Winslow and Mystic** – Scott Smith
- Wright/Huntington/Berkeley** – Guillermo Bahamon
- 264 Mass Ave** – Scott Smith
- Park Ave Crosswalk** – Ralph Elwell
- Highland between Mass and Gray** – Erik Moore
- Quincy Street Safety** – Elisabeth Carr-Jones