

City of Salem
Joint Meeting of the Traffic and Parking Commission and Bicycling Advisory
Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 26, 2022

A joint meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission and Bicycling Advisory Committee was held remotely on Wednesday, January 26, 2022 at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021.

Present: Traffic and Parking Commission Chair Tanya Shallop, Commission Vice Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commission Lt. David Tucker, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, and Assistant Transportation Director Christina Hodge. Bicycling Advisory Committee members present were, Matt Caruso, John Wathne (Chair), Colleen Downie, Josh Gillis, Michael Williamson, Connor Ryan, Alex Maranto, and Eric Papetti (serving on both the Commission and Committee) as well as Senior Planner Tom Devine. Lydia Hausle of Toole Design was also present. **Absent:** None

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm by Traffic and Parking Commission Chair Shallop. Bicycle Advisory Committee Chair Wathne explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting. The Chairs determine Mr. Wathne will lead tonight's meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Wathne opens the floor to public comment, but there is none.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

North Street Safety Enhancement Project

Chair Wathne introduces Lydia Hausle from Toole Design, who is here to present on the North Street Safety Enhancement Project.

Ms. Hausle introduces herself and provides a process recap for the project, noting the project area is North Street from the town limit at Peabody on the north, all the way down to, but not including, the North Street bridge on the south. Ms. Hausle provides a project timeline beginning in 2010 with audits, reports, and initial plans. In July 2020 there was a public workshop, a project website launched, and a range of engagement meetings occurred, all of which informed several design iterations. Ms. Hausle explains that the work was planned for 2021, but that because National Grid was planning on construction in the near future, it was deemed appropriate to delay. Ms. Hausle informs those previous materials are publicly available at <http://publicinput.com/northstreet>

Ms. Hausle discusses the need for the project, which is primarily safety related, as there have been over 185 crashes over a five year period, max speeds of 79 miles per hour, and connectivity issues. North Street is one of only a few streets that connects North Salem to the rest of the city and the commuter rail station. Ms. Hausle also notes that there are long distances between the crosswalks. The area would benefit from improved visibility and safety measures. In response to questioning by Mr. Caruso, Ms. Hausle and Mr. Kucharsky indicate speeds were captured with inconspicuous devices on utility poles rather than radar feedback signs. The data was collected in the vicinity of McGlew Park along North St.

Ms. Hausle summarizes the outreach process, which included an online mapping activity, five public meetings, a door to door business survey, and two multi-week public comment periods. Based on the outreach, there is support for measures to slow down traffic, support for additional crosswalks, as well as concerns about loss of on-street parking, and mixed feelings regarding separated bike lanes. Twelve businesses responded to the survey, and it was determined that 55 percent receive deliveries several days a week, 64 percent receive deliveries on-street, 82 percent of employees park in a parking lot, and 64 percent of customers park in a parking lot.

Regarding the design iteration process, Ms. Hausle explains that the priorities are safety and accessibility, as well as addressing as many community concerns as possible. She adds there was a focus on utilizing materials and methods for quick implementations, while maintaining vehicular access and capacity. Additional goals include regularizing spacing between cross walks and bus stops, preserving as much on-street parking as possible, maintaining all handicap parking spaces, and using parking policy to help encourage turnover and loading availability in areas where business are clustered. Ms. Hausle indicates the proposal was based on one of the three concepts presented in Fall 2020, and that the project elements include visibility enhancements (daylighting intersections), a new crosswalk with a pedestrian activated signal, realigned intersections, traffic calming chicanes, protected bike lanes (posts with modular curb base), and bus stop access improvements (level platform enhancements).

Mr. Wathne references the chicanes as speed deterrents, and asks if they will be an issue with traffic backing up during busy times. Ms. Hausle explains that they should work to slow maximum speeds during low volumes, and should not have an impact on traffic during busy times. Ms. Hausle indicates there will be a new crosswalk at the Cressey Ave/Garden Terrace intersection with North Street, which should help fill the largest gap. Due to grading differences and other physical constraints, Ms. Hausle explains that this was the only crosswalk proposed at this time.

Next Ms. Hausle discusses realigned intersections at School Street/Orne Street, and at Liberty Hill Avenue/Symonds Street, the latter having three crashes last year due to sight line issues, including a pedestrian being struck in the crosswalk. The intersections are offset on North Street, but not enough to discourage quickly moving through the intersection. The goal is to pilot a redesign in the near term with the hopes of finalizing something permanent. The redesign seeks to make through movement slower and more intentional using signs, cones, and tape in early spring 2022. Ms. Hausle indicates the City

will collect data and observations which will inform the final design. The pilot and data collection will be designed to answer three questions: does the design make drivers move more slowly and deliberately; how the design should be changed based on results; and whether the redesign has any effect on traffic patterns.

With respect to parking regulations, Ms. Hausle indicates city staff is identifying existing ordinances that need to be either rescinded or altered. At a future meeting traffic and parking staff will present proposed regulations to the Commission. Ms. Hausle discusses the cross walk a bit more, and notes there will be no change to the number of lanes. Bus stops will be reduced to eight with more regularized spacing, and the proposed design reduces parking spaces from 114 to 71, with no change to the five existing handicap accessible spaces. Ms. Hausle adds that the proposal will add 1.65 miles of bike lanes to the city's network. Construction is estimated to take one to two weeks, with most work occurring at night.

Ms. Hausle presents a quick walk through of the whole plan for the corridor, identifying parking shifts, bus stops, lane shifts (chicanes), handicap accessible spaces, and realignment areas with bump-outs. The largest change to the initial proposal is between Osborne and Foster, where Ms. Hausle explains handicap spaces needed to be preserved and the businesses in this area wanted to preserve parking on both sides, which presented difficulties to maintaining separated bike lanes. Therefore, the bike lanes in this section bump out briefly and become more standard bike lanes before returning to being protected.

Vice Chair Papetti states that only including one new crosswalk is not in keeping with the input from the meetings and suggests that any new crosswalks need to be designed using the most innovative and best possible safety standards such that no additional flashing beacons are required for them to be safe. Mr. Papetti notes some ideas could include a center refuge island, higher quality paints, etc., but that he did not see any of that proposed here.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that there were several constraints that informed the decision to implement a more tactical approach and reiterates Ms. Hausle's explanation of grade issues limiting the one crosswalk for now. He notes this does not preclude other locations forever, but there are constraints present at this time for this project. Mr. Kucharsky states they are still looking at striping enhancements as well.

Vice Chair Papetti says he appreciates the work put into the project but suggests this is not an acceptable level of design given the two years of design and additional months afforded by National Grid's delays. Vice Chair Papetti argues that eliminating protected bike lanes in the Foster Street area in favor of door-zone bike lanes is disappointing and represents a decision to prioritize parking over bikers' lives. Mr. Papetti also states he is curious if there is a backup plan if National Grid delays further. He indicates his understanding is that National Grid would have to return the street to whatever condition it is in at the time of doing their work, and that given that, he does not understand why this proposal was ever delayed in the first place.

Ms. Downie states she is excited to see the improvements at the Symonds Street and Liberty Hill Avenue intersection as a frequent pedestrian in the area, noting she has had to backup to avoid drivers regularly. She also says she is excited about the potential for a blue bike station there. Ms. Downie also offers that the walk light that used to allow for all directions to walk at once felt a lot safer, and that now the walk signs are just directional and cars do not always abide by them. Ms. Hausle notes that others have mentioned preferring exclusive phase crosswalks as well, and that while the proposed design is intended to tighten the intersections and slow traffic, she will note the preference.

Commissioner Swartz discusses the loss of parking and asks if there is data broken out by block on the changes. Ms. Hausle indicates she can obtain that for the Commissioners and Committee members. Mr. Swartz notes that most of the parking on the side with businesses seems to be preserved, and Ms. Hausle concurs.

Chair Shallop notes that at the previous presentations there was great data and information about who was parking where and what spots were being underutilized, and she questions whether it is necessary to introduce the unprotected bike lanes to save four spots along one side. She states she would love to see the design returned to the earlier iteration with continuous protected bike lane along the corridor. Chair Shallop acknowledges this is a busy area, but suggests there is ample parking, particularly since many businesses on the south side have parking lots.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that one of the challenges here and driving forces behind this configuration is the existence of handicap accessible spaces on both sides of the street. He further explains that because of the timing, staff and Commission were not aware the request had come in for one of them, but it was approved by council, and created a design challenge. Mr. Kucharsky suggests they can take another look at the area, but states it was one of the tougher constraints they dealt with which was not known at the last presentation. Ms. Hausle informs the Commission that city staff conducted outreach regarding moving the accessible spaces to manage the shift better, but her understanding was that folks were strongly in favor of keeping them where they were. Mr. Kucharsky also states that a parking utilization study also helped inform the design decisions.

Mr. Caruso recalls that prior to being on the Bicycle Advisory Committee he knew little about traffic calming, and he distinctly remembers when measures were put in place on Broad and Jackson Streets, he thought they were crazy and was resistant to change. Now, however, he recognizes and understands the benefit, and suggests part of the challenge is getting the public to look at these changes from a new perspective and have an open mind.

Mr. Wathne asks if the handicap spaces need to be on the curb line, and whether the sidewalks are already at the minimum width. Ms. Hausle confirms that both are the case and adds that this is one of the narrowest sections of the corridor, tantamount to trying to fit ten pounds into a five-pound bag. She explains that the designs as is have travel and parking lanes reduced to minimums, and even then, it would not be possible to keep the parking and separated bike lanes on both sides.

Vice Chair Papetti notes that at this section there is a two- or three-foot grassy verge or median, so while it may not be realistic to think of resetting the curb by spring, he suggests it could be realistic to look at resetting a small portion of curb over the next year in such a way that provides enough space for the protected lane and maintaining handicap parking spaces. Ms. Hausle indicates she would have to check with the city, and Mr. Kucharsky states that engineering will be involved and review options.

Commissioner Swartz states that with respect to the handicap accessible spaces, to remember that we are discussing permanent long-term solutions, and that these spaces may not be here indefinitely, whether it is because a person recovers, moves, or other circumstances. He asks if there could be any contingencies in place for them disappearing. Ms. Hausle explains that no contingencies have been built in, but that prior plans with parking just on one side were developed and could be revisited if necessary.

Vice Chair Papetti argues that the need for separated bike lanes is not something we require an experiment to know the answer to, and that everyone knows it is the only solution. Mr. Papetti states there is zero chance that a separated bike lane is a bad idea, and opines that despite everyone knowing it, people are dragging their feet because it is politically difficult to get done. Vice Chair Papetti submits that the designs have backslid in the last few months and expresses disappointment.

Chair Wathne opens the floor to public comment.

Samuel Mercanti of 130 North Street introduces himself and explains that he and his wife recently invested a lot of time and money to start a coffee shop at 130 North Street, and noticed the designs have a spot in front of their shop going away. Mr. Mercanti contends this would be a death sentence for their business, as they rely on that one spot for people to park quickly for pickups. Ms. Hausle confirms the address being 130 North Street and takes note.

Kay Walsh of 13 Appleton Street introduces herself and expresses concerns regarding the unprotected stretch of bike lanes. Ms. Walsh states she does not support doing a partially great job on something so important. She states that if the plans were to go as proposed she would be very concerned. Ms. Walsh asks if signs would be put up to signal to cars to watch for bikers, and to let cyclists know that they are not protected for that stretch. She warns against creating a false sense of security for over a mile and then having a fifty-foot section where someone can get seriously injured.

Christy Evans of 1 Harrod Street introduces herself as living in the Mack Park neighborhood, and she states that at the intersection of Mason Street onto North Street there is an incorrect sign referencing an illegal left turn. Mr. Kucharsky explains that there is a left turn restriction in place there and there is signage, but that the signage incorrectly reflects 24 hours of no left turn restriction, whereas the ordinance indicates the restriction only during peak hours. Mr. Kucharsky states the correction will be part of a package of proposed amendments to the Traffic Ordinance and will also include adjusted hours to

reflect gathered data. Once in place, new information/signage will be added to specify when a left turn is prohibited.

Vice Chair Papetti suggests looking at other ways the signals could be reprogrammed, or that more may be done, because he claims it is impossible to make the left turn from Mason onto North because of traffic conflicts regardless of what the ordinance states.

Ms. Evans concurs with Mr. Papetti that it can be dangerous and that she has nearly been hit. She also references the park area, noting it can be difficult for children to cross and often feels unsafe. Ms. Hausle explains that it was a location where they previously hoped to add a crosswalk, and there were debates about specific locations. Ultimately, however, Ms. Hausle explains that due to grade changes, it would require a much larger reconstruction project including regrading of the street itself to accomplish it. Ms. Evans hopes it can be looked into again.

Mike Becker of 19 Parlee Street introduces himself, and states he is calling in reference to 107 and 130 North Street. Mr. Becker commends Ms. Hausle on the section that does not eliminate parking. Mr. Becker asks if the parking assessments take October into account. Regarding the handicap accessible spaces and Commissioner Swartz comments of them potentially being temporary, Mr. Becker confirms that one of his neighbors utilizes one of the spaces and is not going anywhere, and that the newer one is associated with a recent home purchase and that they are unlikely to leave anytime soon as well. Mr. Becker indicates his wife is opening a hair salon at 107 North Street but that it has been delayed due to the pandemic. He notes, however, that at some point it will open and the parking in that area is already saturated. Mr. Becker states that so many spaces are being lost with the proposal that it will be brutal for her business, as well as others, such as the new coffee shop at 130 North. Mr. Becker suggests losing parking up by the cemetery is less impactful than losing it in the more saturated area. Regarding the business survey, he states that neither he nor his wife received one.

Anne Sterling of 29 Orchard Street introduces herself and states that at last night's North River Resiliency meeting they were discussing the greenway plan from Peabody to the MBTA station. Ms. Sterling acknowledges that the plans stop at the overpass but asks if the plans will dovetail with one another. Mr. Kucharsky states they are looking into that, and that the next agenda item is to bring in consultants to kick off the study looking at the connector.

John Klein of 118 North Street introduces himself as a member of the household that utilizes one of the handicap parking spots, and states he is grateful that Ms. Hausle found a way to accommodate, and that he acknowledges that it is not an ideal solution. Mr. Klein warns Commissioners Swartz and Papetti about using words like "convenience" when referencing handicap parking spaces and reminds them that the decisions to create them are not made lightly. He adds that they are also not issues that are going to resolve themselves, and that he has no intention of moving.

Cat (no last name given) introduces herself as a business owner on Buffum Street, and she states it is often dangerous to cross the street. She expresses concern regarding the unprotected portion of bike lanes, noting that the ones in the rest of the city are often ignored by motorists. The commenter contends that unprotected bike lanes are not bike lanes at all. She states that if you would not let a ten-year-old child ride in that area solo then it is not considered safe. To take 1.65 miles of actual bike lanes and break them up further is disappointing, and she argues it will ruin the city.

Kirt Rieder of 15 Warren Street introduces himself and indicates he cycles this route on his way to the Danvers bike trail often. Mr. Rieder states he supports a lot of Toole Design's approach to this corridor, but he does echo concerns that better protection for cyclists is crucial. He also indicates he would like to see more efforts beyond flex posts. Mr. Rieder acknowledges that the plan is for a tactical approach before more permanent improvements and opines that the improvements at Broad and Jackson will be beneficial. Referencing the area between Osborne and Foster, he notes there are four good sized trees on that block, and he would like to ensure that any work done does not impact the root zone. Mr. Rieder submits that "no net loss of parking" should not be the metric by which we measure the success of this proposal, but that there must be balanced improvements between cyclists and drivers.

Melissa Stockbridge (no address provided) introduces herself and states she is surprised not to see any kind of adjustments to lighting to slow down traffic, particularly on the stretch coming in from Peabody. Ms. Stockbridge notes many instances where she was almost side swiped or hit trying to get out, and that she certainly does not want to be hitting anyone herself. She asks if there are any other plans for quieting the street other than narrowing it. Mr. Kucharsky explains that tactical, paint, and vertical elements will be used to test out designs as done in other locations. Ms. Hausle explains that for speed reductions paint, visual narrowing, and flex posts will be used in addition to road shifts and chicanes. Ms. Stockbridge suggests speed bumps in the straight away areas, and Ms. Hausle explains they were not included because North Street is a primary road used by emergency vehicles which had difficulty with raised features.

Patrick Hagan of 159 North Street introduces himself and expresses concerns regarding the street narrowing and ability of emergency vehicles to pass easily. He asks if any studies have been done assessing emergency vehicle access. Ms. Hausle states that no actual study has been completed, but that analyses were done regarding locations where cars can pull over in the event of emergencies on a block-by-block basis. Mr. Kucharsky also confirms that proposed plans were shared with both police and fire departments. He adds that flex posts can also be run over when needed, and that they have conducted turning counts to ensure large vehicles can make all turns. Mr. Hagan asks how the new design will work with trash pickup, which can already be challenging due to space constraints. Ms. Hausle explains that education will be a big piece of the changes, as there are norms today that will need to change with the new designs. She notes the hatched areas on the plan that are areas of space not intended to be used for anything specific but can be used for a range of things including trash pickup. Ms. Hausle adds that mailers with diagrams will be sent out to show where to put bins and orient residents to something a little new and different.

Dana J Quigley of 182 North Street introduces herself and states it is already difficult backing out of her driveway, and says she is concerned that now there will be a bike lane that narrows at the end of her driveway. She asks why there is no proposal for resident permit parking along North Street in the areas losing too many spaces. Ms. Quigley also discusses the crashes on North Street, noting she has called the police on approximately 17 accidents in her five years living here. Ms. Hausle states that in terms of mitigating crashes, mitigating speed is one of the primary methods, as people will have more time to react. She also suggests that visibility will be improved, and that hatched areas will give some breathing space to allow for seeing greater distances.

Edward Daigle of 40 Tremont Street states he is excited about the proposal as it will make more places pleasant to visit by bike. Regarding the unprotected stretch of bike lane, he indicates he would strongly prefer those be protected, even if it means losing a few conventional spaces, and that he hopes there is a way to accomplish that while still maintaining the handicap accessible spaces. Even if the lane is painted, he worries that commuters will treat it like a slip lane or temporary parking.

Phillip Johns of 6 Southwick Street introduces himself and states that this might be a missed opportunity to not look at the overall design of the entry into Salem. He states it is unfortunate that it will have to be revisited again to deal with lighting, plantings, signage, etc.

Edith Johns of 6 Southwick Street introduces herself as a cycling commuter into downtown Salem, and she echoes the concerns regarding the unprotected section. She acknowledges the competing challenges between the trees, cyclists, handicap parking, and regular parking, but she stresses that what we are planning is not just infrastructure, but lifestyle and cultural change for the City for the future. Ms. Johns asks that we not lose sight of what we are building so as not to regret it in the future. Regarding current infrastructure, energy use, and mobility, she argues we must take their redesign seriously and consider how we live.

Carissa Vita of 122 North Street introduces herself and suggests this is a great start. She expresses concern regarding loss of parking for existing businesses, particularly the block including 130 and 132 North Street. She also thinks there needs to be a better plan regarding recycling and trash removal, as it can already be challenging.

Paul Campagna of 180 North Street introduces himself and suggests a majority of the accidents coming down Symonds Street occur because there is no stop sign, and that there needs to be more markings for one ways and do not enter signs. Mr. Campagna expresses concern regarding the loss of parking on Liberty Hill Avenue, as he will be losing three spots he currently utilizes regularly. He adds that he has a handicap daughter and that one of the handicap spots is theirs, but that they barely use it because of how dangerous North Street is. They no longer park there, and there was once instance he recounts where a car hit his house. Mr. Kucharsky states they will examine the proposal with this new information.

Vice Chair Papetti clarifies that he did not intend to suggest that handicap accessible spaces were a convenience. He states he fully supports keeping them and explains that he was referring to non-handicap spaces in his prior statements.

North Street Connector

Chair Wathne introduces the topic and introduces consultants Sasha Wood and Bob Parsons of Tetra Tech to speak about the North Street Connector project. He explains that the city received a grant to look at how to improve connections around the North Street Bridge. The goal is to allow the commission and committee members, as well as the public to discuss what they'd like to see.

Mr. Parsons introduces himself, and Mr. Carroll from engineering speaks about the grant, noting that it is a Mass Works grant, which the city applies for periodically. The plan is to leverage development occurring around the city and use the grant funds to hire Tetra Tech to move forward with a study.

Mr. Parsons explains the shared path connection feasibility study will examine the area from Franklin Street to the intermodal station, and the feasibility of a multi-use path. The goal is to improve bike and pedestrian access to the intermodal station and Downtown. Project tasks include meeting with city staff and stakeholders, collecting data and confirming land ownership, reviewing rail crossing requirements for pedestrians and bikes, document existing obstacles, identify nearby facilities and improvement projects planned within the area, and ultimately develop up to two concept plans with the necessary permits for each and a draft study for city review. Mr. Parsons states the project timeline begins with a Winter 2022 kickoff, concept development through Summer 2022, and a finalized feasibility study by Fall 2022.

Chair Wathne states that the intermodal station is the hipbone of the whole area, particularly for cyclists, as all spokes come together here. He asks that the consultants keep in mind all the other paths coming in as there is a lot going on and it is a busy intersection.

Vice Chair Papetti expresses excitement to see this begin, and he suggest considering defining the schedule a little more precisely, and to tighten it up to think about how the end of the process will align with the type of funding that might need to be pursued.

Commissioners and Committee members continue to discuss the project scope, and the importance of seeing how all the projects in the area tie into one another.

Chair Wathne says it would be helpful to have an overall integrated diagram of everything else we are aware of coming in, and how the projects and spokes will interact.

Mr. Parsons said it would be great to show all the projects touching the area, and that it will be part of the work and scope moving forward.

Chair Wathne opens the floor to public comment.

Christy Evans of 1 Harrod Street introduces herself, and states that this area can be quite dangerous for bikers, as well as parents with strollers. She also suggests looking into an artistic light installation for under the bridge to make it more appealing and safer as well.

Edith Johns of 6 Southwick Street asks if the plans will help connect the bike path with the North Street area and Harmony Grove Road, and Mr. Carroll confirms that is the plan.

Chair Wathne closes the public comment period and thanks both Toole Design and Tetra Tech.

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION OR COMMITTEE

None

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next regular meeting of the Traffic and Parking Commission is scheduled for February 9, 2022.

The next Bicycling Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 2, 2022.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

None

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Swartz the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:17 PM.

On a motion duly made by Committee Member Caruso and seconded by Committee Member Ryan the Bicycling Advisory Committee meeting was adjourned at 8:17 PM.