

November 12, 2015

Mr. Chis Osgood
Chief of Streets, Transportation, and Sanitation
Boston City Hall
1 City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201

Subject: Improvements to the Walter Street and Bussey Street Intersection

Dear Mr. Osgood,

Last week, the Longfellow Neighborhood Association (LANA) published a plan by the City of Boston Public Works Department, Engineering Division, Neighborhood Safety Improvements entitled “Walter Street at Bussey Street Sign and Pavement Marking Plan”, CIP 15-22 Sheet 13 of 44, dated 04/02/15. This was provided to LANA by Councilor Tim McCarthy. This was the first time that the neighborhood had heard that the intersection was to be rebuilt and the plans appear to be finalized and ready for bidding.

LivableStreets Alliance and many people in the neighborhood were dismayed that there had been no public outreach for this project, despite years of effort on the part of LANA and Councilors Tim McCarthy, Matt O’Malley, and former Councilor Rob Consalvo to have the intersection made safer. This high crash rate intersection is one of the most problematic City of Boston owned intersections in Roslindale. Making this intersection safe is a very high priority for many residents of Roslindale and West Roxbury who drive, walk, or bike to the Arnold Arboretum, Allendale Woods, Allendale Farm, Faulkner Hospital, and Hebrew Rehab. The neighboring residents have a deep knowledge of the problems caused by the existing conditions and wish to have their concerns acknowledged, their voices heard, and any proposed designs should reflect neighborhood concerns. Without a public process, this cannot happen, yet the Public Works Department repeatedly ignores this process, losing the opportunity to improve its designs through knowledgeable input.

The design shown on the drawing does not generally meet Complete Streets Standards and needs to be redesigned to accommodate all people not just those in cars. While the design shown on the drawing will help to calm turning traffic at the intersection, through traffic will speed along Walter Street as it does today despite the 20 MPH speed limit. 14,500 vehicles travel on Walter Street every day, yet people on foot are expected to cross without a walk signal. We understand that provisions are

to be made to allow future traffic signals and wonder if the reason they are not to be installed immediately is a low volume of people crossing on foot at a dangerous intersection. We also note the lack of a sidewalk on the northwest side of the intersection at Hebrew Rehab. There is no crosswalk across Walter Street to the north and the closest one to the south is ¼ mile away. We believe that if sidewalks and a signalized crossing are provided, more people will walk to the Arnold Arboretum, Hebrew Rehab and other area destinations.

The design shown proposes that cyclists share the road through an un-signalized intersection with cars traveling far above the speed limit. Designs such as this not only endanger people on bikes, but actively discourage people from riding bikes. This design does not meet the long term goals of the Boston Bikes Master Plan that shows exclusive bike lanes on Walter Street and conflicts with Boston Transportation Commissioner Gina Fiandaca’s statement during the City Council bike hearing in September that bike lanes would be added to Walter Street this fall. Signalizing the intersection, prohibiting permissive left turns from Walter to Bussey, prohibiting right turns on red, and running bike lanes through the intersection would make traffic movements more predictable and far safer for people on bikes.

After reviewing the drawing, we offer the following comments:

- **Add bike lanes in both directions on Walter Street.** Paint the northbound bike lane green through the intersection to help improve visibility of the lane.
- **Signalize the intersection.** Provide concurrent walk signal phasing and leading pedestrian intervals to improve safety for people crossing the street if the turning traffic is 250 vehicles per hour or less, if greater than 250 provide exclusive pedestrian phasing. If possible, during off-peak hours, when the turning volume is lower we would prefer to see the walk phase revert to concurrent.
- Add sharrow symbols to the left turn lane on Walter and add a bike box to help people on bikes making the left turn.
- Add a sidewalk on the west side of Walter Street within the project limits.
- Add a second crosswalk south of Bussey to improve convenience and safety for people on foot. This will increase the visibility of the intersection for people in cars and improve compliance by people on foot.
- Add “yield to pedestrians on turns” signage at all crosswalks.
- We recommend that crosswalk walk phases be automatic and timed to occur at intervals of 60 seconds or less to improve safety and compliance by people on foot.

- Prohibit right turns on red and prohibiting permissive left turns to make the intersection safer for people on bikes heading downhill on Walter Street.
- Redesign the curb extensions and or reconfigure the travel lanes on Walter Street to allow bike lanes to extend through the intersection. Note that the current design appears to have sufficient width between the curb extensions for this to occur.
- Include signage on Bussey Street within the project limits to keep people from parking cars on the sidewalks.
- Add sharrow symbols to Bussey Street within the project limits.
- Tighten the curb radius at the southeast corner of the intersection to help slow traffic making the right turn from Walter to Bussey. Note that trucks are prohibited from Bussey Street.
- Redesign the parking at the Arboretum entrance so that people in cars do not back up into the bike lane.

LivableStreets Alliance expects, and the residents of Boston deserve, an inclusive and transparent public engagement process from the Public Works Department. All street projects within the City should follow the Complete Streets policies of the City and be an active part of the solution to eliminate traffic deaths and major injuries in support of the City of Boston’s Vision Zero policy.

LivableStreets Alliance looks forward to working with the Public Works Department to remedy these issues not only at the intersection of Walter and Bussey Streets but on projects throughout our city.

Sincerely,

Mark Tedrow

Member, LivableStreets Alliance Advocacy Committee