



A Call to Action to Make Roszie the Most Walkable Neighborhood in Boston

BY EMAIL ONLY

November 18, 2015

Department of Conservation and Recreation
Office of Public Outreach
251 Causeway Street, Ste. 600
Boston, MA 02114
Email: Mass.Parks@state.ma.us

RE: Centre Street Corridor Study, Boston — Public Comments

Dear Sir or Madam:

I write on behalf of WalkUP Roslindale with comments regarding the Centre Street Corridor Study and the presentation shown to the public at a meeting on November 10, 2015 at the St. Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church in Roslindale.

WalkUP Roslindale, which takes its name from the international movement to foster “Walkable Urban Places,” is a collaborative group of residents informally founded in June of this year to make Roslindale the most walkable neighborhood in Boston. We advocate for a dynamic, livable neighborhood and streetscape. And, we support positive changes to our public and private built environment that strengthen walkability as a means toward better public health, safety, social capital, economic development and environmental sustainability. In our first four months we have already built up a core group of about 30 people and almost 300 additional supporters. More information about WalkUP Roslindale and our initiatives can be found at walkuproslindale.org. We recognize that no single group of people can be said to speak for our entire neighborhood – instead, please take these comments as representing the collective, specific viewpoint of our steering group members (indicated below) and offering what we see as the analysis that results from [our mission and principles statements](#).

With respect to the Centre Street Corridor Study, our concern is primarily pedestrian safety and access as well as the importance of accommodating and encouraging bicycle travel on this congested roadway. Making it easier for people to walk or bike rather than drive will alleviate traffic and pollution, and all data point to a future where people engage in more active transportation. On this note, the intersection of Centre Street and Walter Street requires particular attention and significant redesign. The data presented to the public—which we note is likely artificially low because it relied solely on State Police information and did not include data from the City of Boston or insurer databases - show this intersection has the second-highest crash rate in the entire study area, significantly higher than any other intersection except Murray Circle. The data confirm the anecdotal experience of Roslindale residents of the dangers present at this intersection for all users.

The BETA Group, Inc. consultant team presented three re-design options for the public to consider for the Centre/Walter intersection. Of the three designs presented, we believe Traffic Concept 1 brings the most benefit.¹ The inclusion of a traffic signal is a must, as recommended by the consultants. A roundabout at this intersection as presented in one proposal should be a non-starter as it will endanger cyclists and make pedestrian crossings perilous while doing little to improve the traffic flow. Concept 1's pedestrian crossings are shorter and do not require the multiple stages of Concept 2. This intersection is abutted by two day care centers, senior housing, a rehabilitation complex, and a hospital in addition to residential homes. It is imperative that all these individuals have a safe and easy crossing to the Arboretum and Allandale Wood's green space and elsewhere. Concept 1 best accomplishes that goal.

Concept 1 is also preferable to Concept 2 for vehicles turning right from Walter Street onto Centre Street. The angle of the right-hand turn in Concept 2 will encourage vehicles to speed through the intersection, endangering the safety of pedestrians and cyclists there. Concept 1 requires vehicles to make a ninety-degree right-hand turn and, in contrast to Concept 2, will discourage vehicles from cutting that corner at high speeds. Concept 1's design is also preferable for vehicles turning right from Centre Street onto Walter Street to discourage motorists from speeding around the corner, which Concept 2 would encourage.

A significant omission from the entire plan for the Centre Street corridor is a focus on cyclist safety. Centre Street is one of two main arteries from southwest Boston to Jamaica Plain and points north. We know the number of city residents commuting via bicycle continues to increase. Anecdotally, in our neighborhood, we know many residents—including many who have attended the public meetings on this project—who commute on their bikes daily and currently shy away from using Centre Street due to its very unsafe design for cyclists. This fact skews the data the BETA Group collected about cyclist demand. Centre Street must provide a safe cycling environment that protects cyclists from adjacent vehicles traveling well above the speed limit. The final design for this corridor must incorporate a buffer between cyclists and those vehicles. Additionally, specific to the Centre/Walter intersection, cyclists on Walter Street must be protected from cars as they turn onto Centre Street—that end of Walter Street has a steep incline that puts cyclists at a disadvantage going uphill relative to cars accelerating uphill there.

We also encourage DCR and the consultant team to meet with their city counterparts to ensure that any redesign at the Centre/Walter intersection is consistent with city planning for the Walter/Bussey intersection, which we understand is also undergoing a redesign process. Our neighborhood has waited a long time for these changes and we need to make sure they all work together. In the same vein, DCR should coordinate with the city to ensure proper landscaping at the Centre/Walter

¹ We have attached the three concepts presented at the DCR public meetings for this intersection as an appendix to this letter for convenient reference.

intersection to match the surrounding green space and prevent a visually unappealing wide expanse of asphalt and concrete.

We echo the concerns of other residents about rampant speeding on Centre Street. The current proposals do little to calm traffic on this road. The design calls for the installation of Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) on Centre Street at the crosswalks. We fear drivers will ignore these RRFBs and still put pedestrians at risk trying to cross four lanes of traffic. Although RRFBs may be effective on less-traveled roads, in this dense, high-traffic corridor they may be insufficient to slow down traffic and make pedestrian crossing safe. We ask that DCR come back to the community with a more expansive plan to deploy measures to calm the traffic and protect pedestrians crossing Centre Street. Particular attention should be paid to the crosswalk in front of the Faulkner Hospital and bus stops on Centre Street.

Finally, we understand that DCR will not implement the improvements under discussion in this study soon as much of the work awaits the completion of construction at the former Casey Overpass. In view of this delay, DCR should take interim immediate steps to repaint traffic lines and engage in other proactive traffic calming measures such as addition of flexi-poles and lane-narrowing, to make the affected area safer for bicyclists, pedestrians, and automobiles until the full redesign can be completed. These measures will save lives and should be implemented sooner rather than later.

We very much appreciate your careful consideration of our comments and would be happy to discuss any questions you may have on them.

[This page ends here. Signature appears on following page.]

Sincerely yours,



Adam Kessel

Resident @ 36 Taft Hill Terrace, Roslindale, on behalf of
WalkUP Roslindale Steering Group, including

Ricardo Austrich, Resident @ 843 South Street, Roslindale
Steven Gag, Resident @ 631 South Street, Roslindale
Liz Graham-Meredith, Resident @ 6 Crandall Street, Roslindale
Diane Johnson, Resident @ 3 Ramsdell Avenue, Roslindale
Sarah Kurpiel Lee, Resident @ 65 Cornell Street, Roslindale
Matt Lawlor, Resident @ 15 Basto Terrace, Roslindale
Monika Montrymowicz, Resident @ 11 Haydn Street, Roslindale
Robert Orthman, Resident @ 69 Walter Street, Roslindale
Rebeca Phillips, Resident @ 10 Tappan Street, Roslindale
Adam Rogoff, Resident @ 28 Ashfield Street, Roslindale
Rachele Rosi-Kessel, Resident @ 36 Taft Hill Terrace, Roslindale
Greg Tobin, Resident @ 1 Sheldon Street, Roslindale
Alan Wright, Resident @ 98 Birch Street, Roslindale

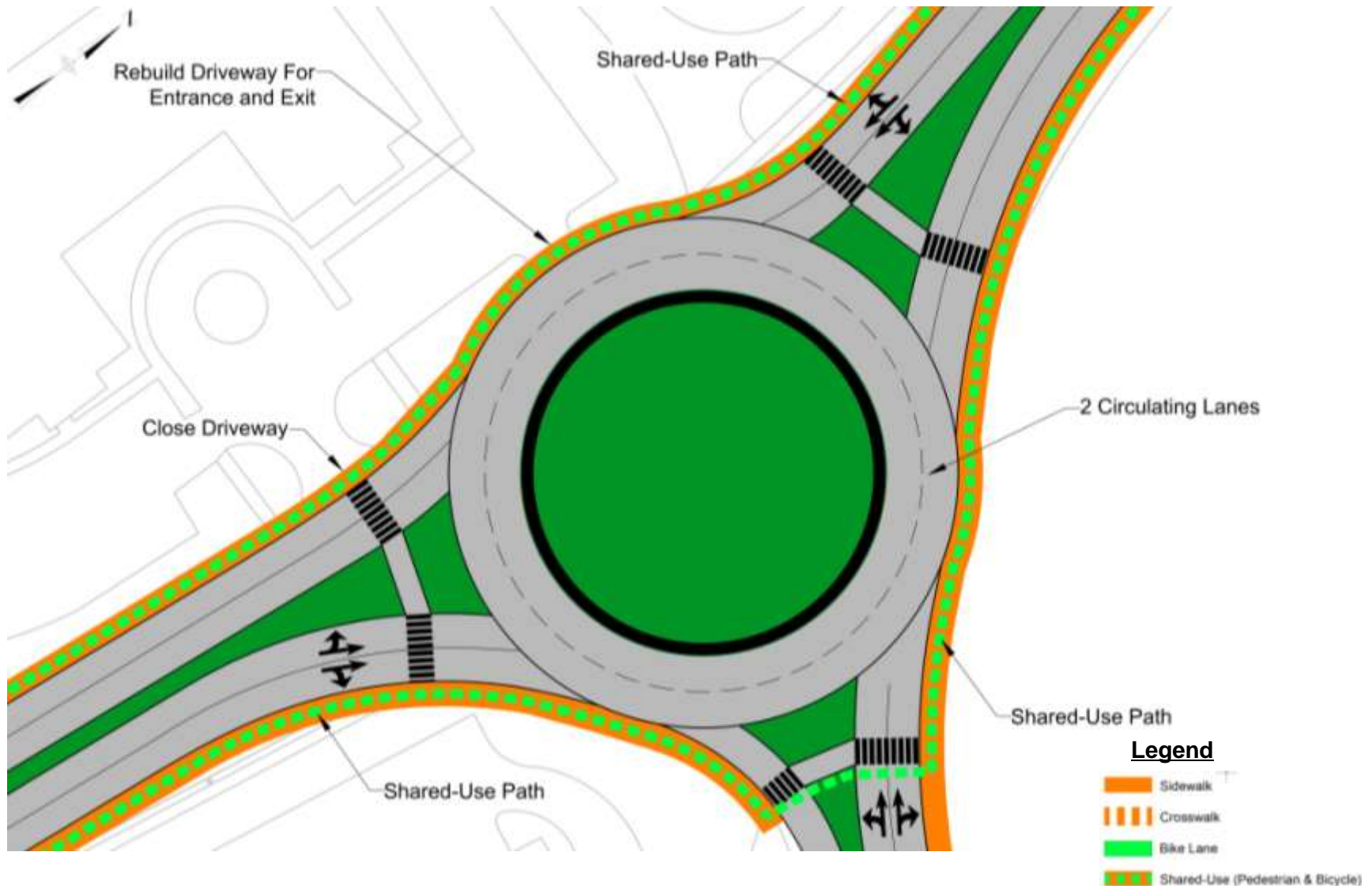
Copy to:

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Mr. Chris Osgood, Chief of Streets, City of Boston (chris.osgood@boston.gov)

Walter Street

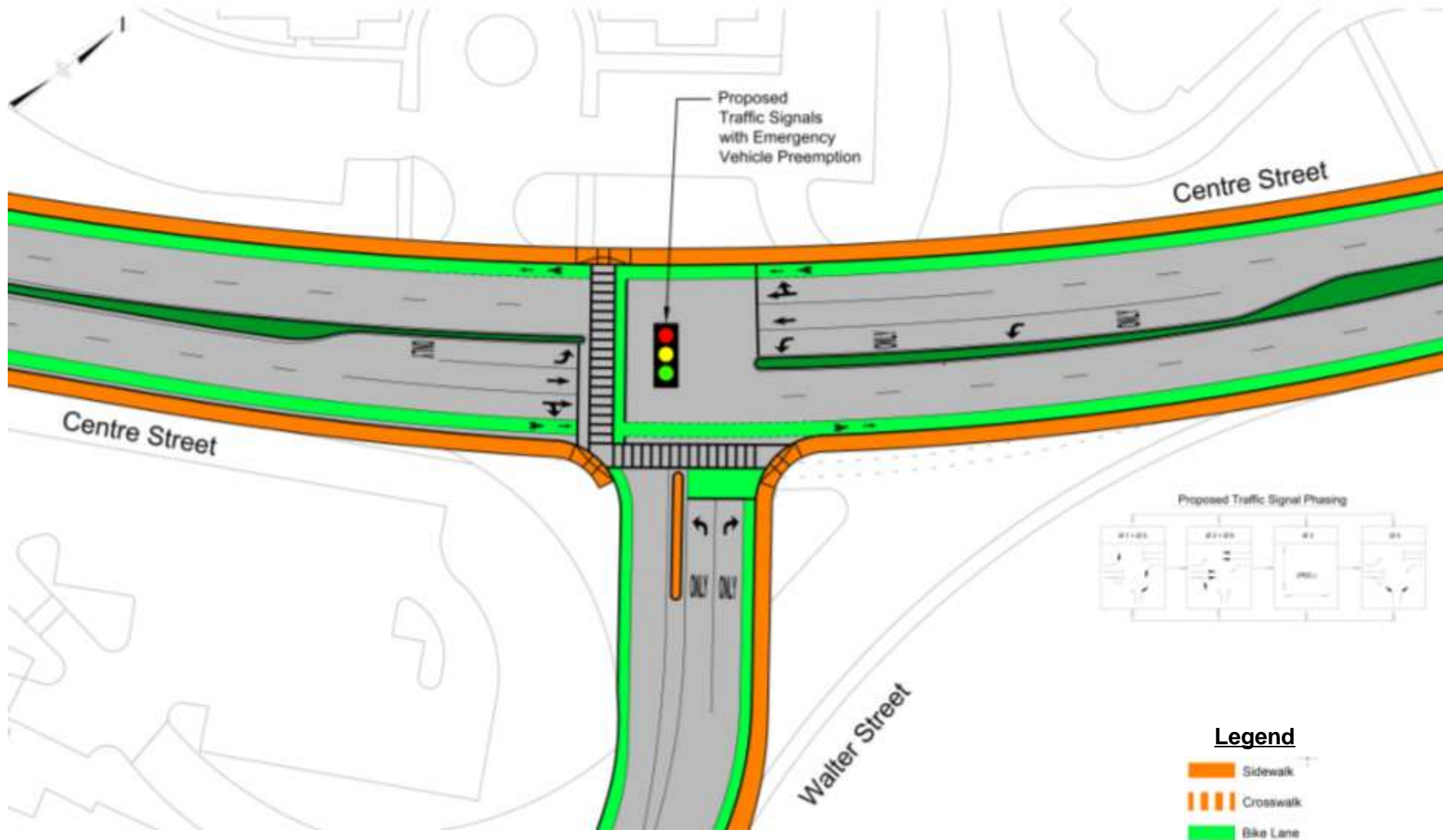
Appendix to WalkUP Roslindale DCR
Comment Letter re Walter/Centre

- **Roundabout Concept**



Walter Street

- **Traffic Signal Concept 1**



Walter Street

- **Traffic Signal Concept 2**

