



Longfellow
Area
Neighborhood
Association, Inc.

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May 16, 2016

Councilor Salvatore LaMattina, Chair
Committee on Parks, Recreation, and Transportation
Boston City Council
Boston City Hall, 5th floor
Boston, MA 02201

Re: Docket No. 0509 – Order for hearing regarding traffic calming and Vision Zero Boston
Written Testimony for Submission

Dear Councilor LaMattina:

I am writing on behalf of the Longfellow Area Neighborhood Association (LANA) in Roslindale's northwest corner, located near the Arnold Arboretum and Fallon Field, with brief comments regarding Docket No. 0509 on traffic calming and Vision Zero Boston. Thank you for holding this important hearing, to the lead sponsors Councilors O'Malley and Campbell, and to Councilor McCarthy for supporting our neighborhood's agenda.

LANA strongly supports the city's 'Vision Zero' and 'Neighborhood Slow Streets' initiatives and asks that they be expanded as quickly as possible to other residential neighborhoods including our own. In particular, the 1.25 mile-long Walter Street-South Street corridor is in significant need of traffic calming and pedestrian improvements. This is a winding stretch of densely-settled residential road that has become a high volume and high speed thoroughfare. It is one of the main access roads for all of southwest Boston to points north and south. Our neighborhood bears the burden of thousands of vehicle trips per day, many of which originate from outside our immediate area. A recent DCR-sponsored traffic study at the Walter-Centre Street intersection found over 14,000 daily vehicle trips there alone. The side streets running parallel between South-Walter and Centre Street also bear a lot of cut-through traffic and are ripe for simple interventions to stem the speeding there.

Traffic and speeding make neighborhoods less walkable. We know from research that walkability is a key factor in what makes an urban area livable and thriving. The Longfellow Area is blessed with a crown jewel of the city greenspace in the Arnold Arboretum close by. Yet residents who live a short walk away have difficulty safely accessing the Arboretum on foot due to the speeding vehicles and lack of safe pedestrian crossing points on Walter Street. The effect of limiting resident access to the Arboretum is detrimental to our neighborhood's quality of life. The Roslindale Village business district also abuts our neighborhood. The traffic situation and lack of pedestrian amenities limit walking access to those shops. This encourages those residents to either drive to the businesses which takes up value parking and adds congestion, or to forgo them altogether.

Currently, the Fallon Field playground is undergoing a significant reconstruction and will be unveiled as a state-of-the-art play area upon completion this fall. LANA is thrilled with this



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capital investment in our community and very thankful to the city for it. But we worry about the safety of children and families walking to and from this attraction. Our neighborhood also has two busy commuter rail stations. Daily, too many residents must dart across a break in the traffic on South or Walter Street simply to catch their train to work or head home at night. Never mind the danger to an able-bodied person in doing this, but imagine the risk to a senior or disabled individual who may need more time to cross a roadway. Walter Street winds almost three-quarters of a mile with one pedestrian crossing light at its very beginning and only one other crosswalk that is inherently unsafe due to poor sightlines. This corridor is overdue for temporary and long-term improvements to enhance its walkability and safety.

The Longfellow neighborhood is poised to be one of the city's most walkable residential areas. We have done our homework, organized our residents, held a community visioning session in April, and have specific plans and ideas to improve the Walter-South corridor and side streets. We believe we are a perfect candidate to participate in the Neighborhood Slow Streets program and similarly situated to the Stony Brook area in Jamaica Plain which is a current participant.

LANA asks that Boston follow the lead of neighboring communities like Brookline and Needham and aggressively implement road diets on our wide streets and install traffic calming measure like speed tables, radar signs, curb bump outs in the residential neighborhoods. Permanent changes in the infrastructure may be expensive but worthwhile, and temporary measures like bollards, cones, and planters are low cost and have proven effective in other cities. Our neighborhood would greatly benefit from such measures in addition to safe pedestrian crossing points with crosswalks aided by pedestrian crossing lights or flashing beacons.

LANA applauds the Vision Zero and Neighborhood Slow Streets efforts to date and respectfully requests aggressive action to expand their scope to additional neighborhoods like ours. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

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Cc: City Councilor Tim McCarthy
City Councilor Matt O'Malley