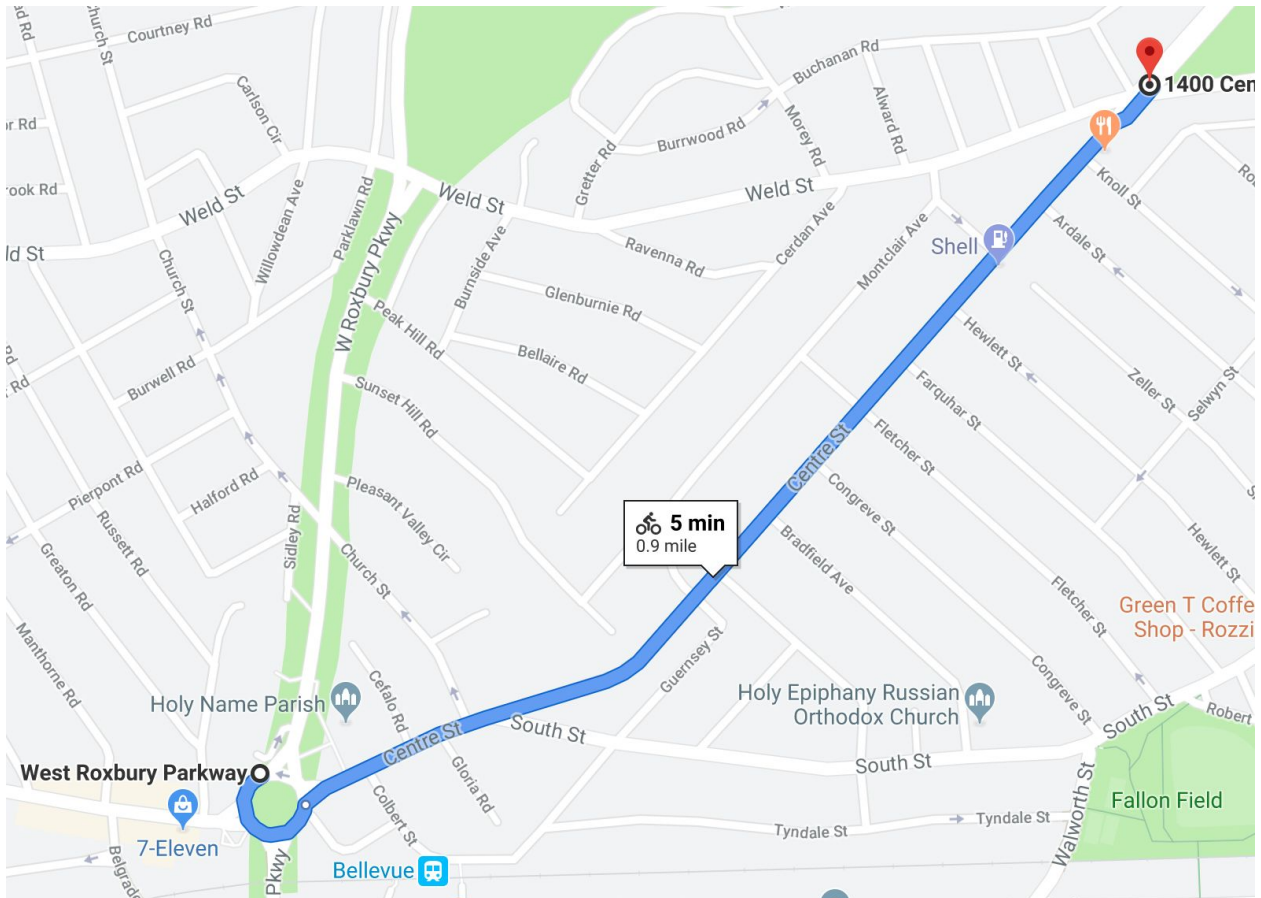


Centre Street Walk Audit

West Roxbury Parkway Rotary to Weld Street

May 2019



West Rox Walks

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Introduction

On May 11, 2019, the recently formed West Rox Walks community advocacy group conducted a walk audit of the section of Centre Street between West Roxbury Parkway and Weld Street in order to assess walking conditions and to develop a list of recommendations to present to group members, supporters, the Boston Transportation Department (BTD), and elected officials.

Who is West Rox Walks?

We are a group of residents committed to improving pedestrian safety, walkability, and promoting a better quality of life for our community. We first came together after an April 30, 2019 “Ped 101” presentation hosted by West Roxbury Main Streets and WalkBoston on walkability and pedestrian safety. We support the Vision Zero Boston goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries on our streets and believe there is a critical safety problem that must be addressed on West Roxbury’s “hub” streets. Our mission is to work together with our neighbors, BTD staff, and elected officials to show that real, measurable action by the City of Boston is needed to resolve critical issues now, as the projected and planned growth in our neighborhood and city will only exacerbate the problem.

Pedestrian Safety in West Roxbury

Unfortunately, vehicle crashes that result in pedestrian injuries are not uncommon in West Roxbury. A complete review of crashes in the area is beyond the scope of this report, but recent events include the following:

- 2015 – pedestrian suffers a severe traumatic brain injury at Hastings and Centre Streets
- 2016 – pedestrian injury at the intersection of Corey and Centre Streets¹
- 2017 – West Roxbury Main Streets submits recommendations to the BTD including putting Centre Street on a road diet.
- 2018 – pedestrian fatality at the intersection of Washington and Stimson Streets.²
- 2019 – pedestrian fatality at the intersection of Hastings and Centre Streets.³

In response to the two recent fatalities, WalkBoston⁴ recommended to immediately “put these arterials on road diets.” At this time, the City of Boston has not made significant changes, and West Rox Walks eagerly awaits the proposal of major street redesigns that include safety for all street users.

¹ Smith B. Pedestrian struck by car in West Roxbury. The Boston Globe.
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2016/06/18/pedestrian-struck-car-west-roxbury/YAi7ZyyOladfqKNmj3YSDK/story.html?event=event12>

²Sweeney M. Man struck and killed in West Roxbury. The Boston Globe.
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2018/11/07/man-struck-and-killed-vehicle-west-roxbury/IUa1znc4IFnNLfzat2ioO/story.html>

³McDonald D. Women struck by car in West Roxbury dies. The Boston Globe.
<https://www.bostonglobe.com/metro/2019/02/06/pedestrian-struck-west-roxbury-dies/pX5ozXQ5B1b6E3jFpYoanK/story.html>

⁴Hass D, Kearney B. Comments on West Roxbury crashes. WalkBoston.
<https://walkboston.org/2019/02/05/comments-on-west-roxbury-pedestrian-crashes/>

Walking on Centre Street (West Roxbury Parkway to Centre Street)

It is our good fortune to live within a spectacularly walkable and bikeable footprint rich with local businesses, recreation, dining, schools, houses of worship, and public transit — all in close proximity to each other and to our neighborhood’s housing. However, walking and cycling on Centre Street is not for the faint of heart (Figures 1 and 2). It is a wide roadway where drivers have a highway mindset, pedestrians are an afterthought, and the City of Boston’s 25 mph speed limit is commonly disobeyed. Many of our neighbors who walk in this area can describe a close call with someone driving a vehicle, and many drive in order to avoid walking or cycling. We worry pedestrians traversing this section of Centre Street may be injured if action is not taken.

The Walk Audit

With appreciated input from WalkUP Roslindale, 15 West Rox Walks supporters (Table 1) conducted a walk audit of the route presented on page 1. The participants, as well as other neighbors who provided input from their daily experience, were compelled by increasing concerns for the safety and quality of residential life along the Centre Street corridor. The goal of the walk audit is to define specific issues and propose actionable solutions. We are hopeful that proven traffic calming methods of improvement, in line with Boston’s Vision Zero policy, will be championed by our elected officials.



West Rox Walks supporters met for coffee and bagels and to discuss a plan prior to the May 11, 2019 walk audit.

Key Recommendations

Recommendation #1 - Make changes to the design of Centre St with the goal of lowering vehicle speeds to the posted 25 mph speed limit.

Centre Street is a neighborhood commercial street that connects West Roxbury Parkway, Veterans of Foreign Wars Parkway, and the Jamaica Way. Driving in excess of the 25 mph speed limit is common due to the current design of the street (Figure 3a). The City of Boston must adopt strategies that reflect the neighborhood and are in line with the City's Vision Zero policy. We call on the City to take the following actions:

- ***Decrease the width of traffic lanes*** from 11.5 feet to 10-10.5 feet (Figure 3b)
- ***Add larger black and white speed limit signs*** due to the ineffectiveness of current undersized yellow "Thickly Settled" 25 mph signs
- ***Install speed radar sign(s)*** near Fletcher Street to measure the speed of vehicles and discourage speeding
- ***Install traffic lane markings, buffers, and flex posts*** to limit vehicle traffic to one lane that enters and exits the traffic circle and slow drivers turning onto South Street from Centre Street as well as drivers moving from South, across Centre, to Church St.

Recommendation #2 - Improve crosswalk safety and increase number of crosswalks along Centre Street.

Given the similarities between the section of Centre of interest and other sections where serious pedestrian injuries have occurred, improving crosswalks is critically important for increasing safety, especially considering the number of families that walk across this section of Centre to access Fallon Field. We provide recommendations for most intersections that are in need of safety enhancements with a particular emphasis on the rotary and on crosswalks at Montclair Street/Guernsey Street and Fletcher Street:

- ***Improve crosswalk signals and timing.*** The crosswalk signal at Colbert Street is too short for pedestrians. The length of the walk signal should be increased to help cross this wide street (i.e. > 50 feet). A concurrent traffic signal that stops right-turning traffic briefly at South Street is also needed.
- ***Install rapid rectangular flashing beacons (RRFBs) at each crosswalk*** in the rotary and at the crosswalks at Montclair Street/Guernsey Street and at Fletcher Street. The crosswalk at Peak Hill Road is the only one on West Roxbury Parkway which is not at a traffic light and should be removed or better marked with a RRFB.
- ***Limit parking near all crosswalks.*** Parked cars near crosswalks significantly limit visibility. Curb paint and signs are needed to restrict parking near all crosswalks. Repositioning bus stops such that they are to the left of pedestrians as they enter

crosswalks will also help improve visibility. Currently, bus stops like Montclair/Centre are to the right of pedestrians as they enter crosswalks, while parked cars to the left limit the visibility of the pedestrian to oncoming traffic.

- **Limit passthrough traffic on Church Street and remove the crosswalk.** Commuters should not be allowed to drive through these new conduits that route traffic around the rotary. Consider additional signage that reflects driving restrictions through Church Street. Additionally, the crosswalk across Centre Street at Church Street is unsafe and should be either be enhanced with a flexpost island, an RRFB, or eliminated because it must cross three lanes of traffic. If removed, pedestrians can cross Centre at the South Street or Colbert Street intersections.
- **Add safe crosswalks to all crossing streets that do not currently have crosswalks:** Ainsworth, Bradfield, Congreve, Farquhar, and Hewlett Streets. Improve safety of each with RRFBs, or flexpost islands.
- **Install curb extensions and flexpost islands** for crossing at Montclair Street/Guernsey Street and at Fletcher Street.
- **Review the location of pedestrian crossing signs** at all intersections. At Montclair Street/Guernsey and Ardale, the location of the signs does not effectively communicate the need to drive cautiously at crosswalks.

Recommendation #3 - Improve cycling infrastructure by reconfiguring parking and travel lanes to allow for protected bike lanes.

Centre Street between West Roxbury Parkway and Weld Street is wide enough (Figure 3B) to support Better Bike Lanes — similar to the project BTDC completed on Columbus Ave. by the Ruggles T Station — without sacrificing driving lanes, or parking capacity. Protected bike lanes via use of on-street parking seems like the most affordable and simple solution that is supported by the West Roxbury Bicycle Committee, a chapter of the Boston Cyclists Union. Restriping of all bicycle lanes is needed immediately. Additionally, further development is needed to indicate the preferred bicycle traffic pattern when entering/exiting the rotary (e.g. channel bicycle traffic from rotary to sidewalk), and passing through the Weld Street/Knoll Street business section (Figure 4).

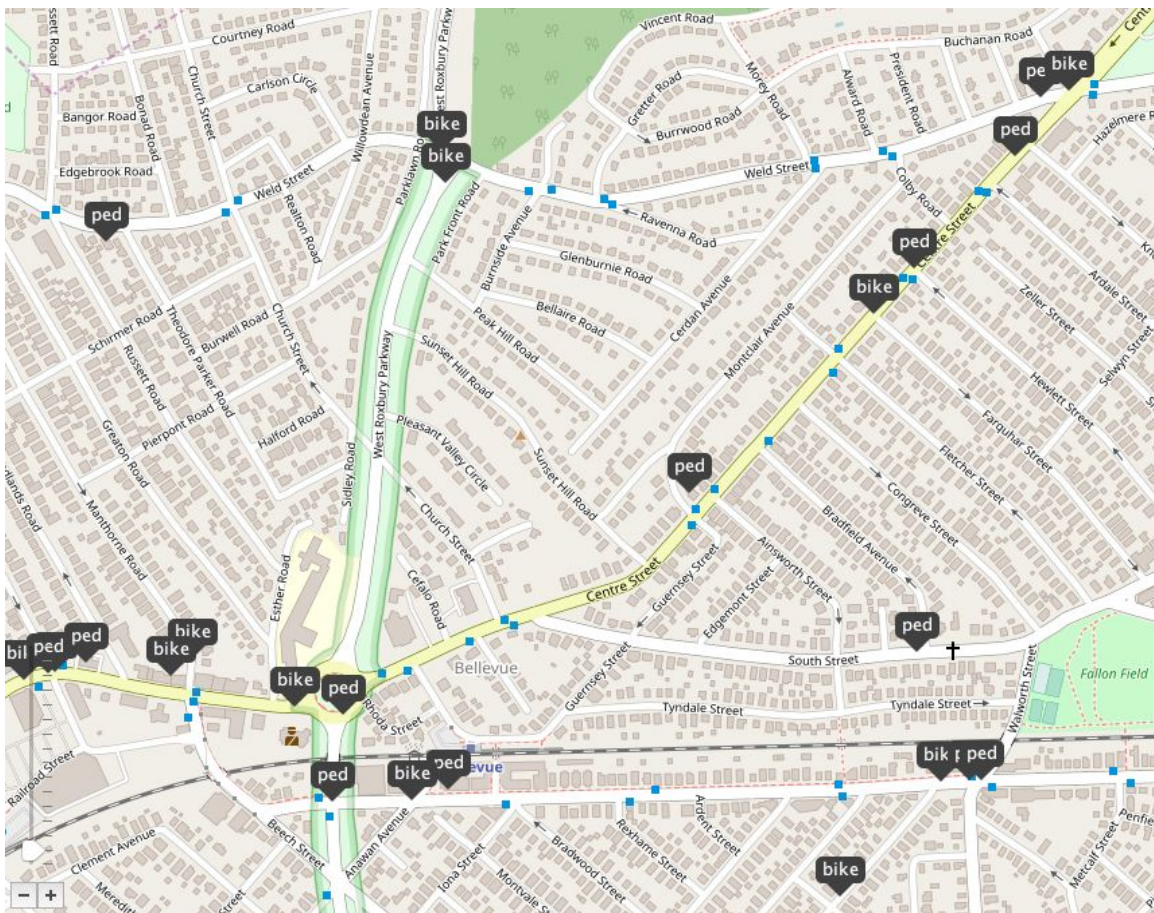
Recommendation #4 - Conduct a comprehensive study of the rotary at West Roxbury Parkway & Centre Street and of the Centre Street business district between Knoll & Weld Streets.

Due to the speed of traffic, multiple lanes in the rotary, and poorly marked crosswalks, the rotary is currently unsuitable for pedestrian crossing and requires significant changes. The use of RRFBs may be a simple, short-term tool to improve safety, but both vehicle traffic and pedestrian and cyclist flow require formal analysis by BTDC and WRMS in order to prevent serious pedestrian injuries and crashes.

The section of Centre Street between Knoll and Weld Streets has the potential to connect adjacent West Roxbury and Roslindale neighborhoods to a lively business district and to the Arnold Arboretum. Current challenges include poor visibility at Knoll Street due to adjacent angled parked cars, lack of a bike lane, merging of the street's vehicle traffic from two lanes to one, and the high speed of car traffic traveling from Jamaica Plain into West Roxbury. The complexity of these problems warrants further study by BTM and WRMS to increase the safety and economic success of this business district.

Figures and Tables

Figure 1: Pedestrian & cyclist incidents on and near Centre Street, 2002-2019.



Map of Centre St area showing traffic incidents involving pedestrians and cyclists from 2002-2019, including a pedestrian death at Centre and Guernsey in December 2008. *Source: MassDOT, Vision Zero Boston data set.*

Figure 2: Vision Zero Boston Safety Concerns



Crowd-sourced map of safety concerns (Centre St. shown in red) which highlight excessive vehicle speed, failure of vehicles to yield to pedestrians, and lack of bicycle infrastructure as primary concerns along the Centre St stretch. *Source: Vision Zero Boston safety concerns map.*

Figure 3: Current and Proposed Road Centre Street Road Design

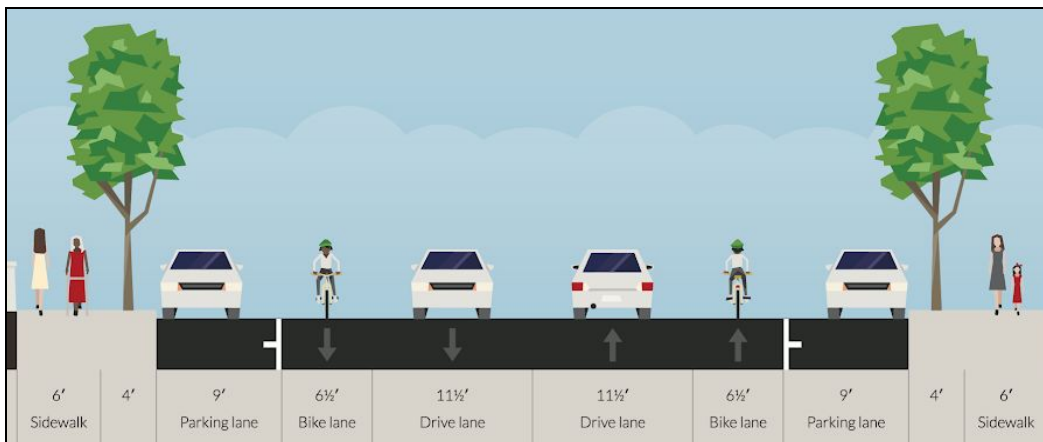


Figure 3A: Current layout of parking, bike, and travel lanes. Wide travel lanes encourage speeding and bicycle lanes are not protected.

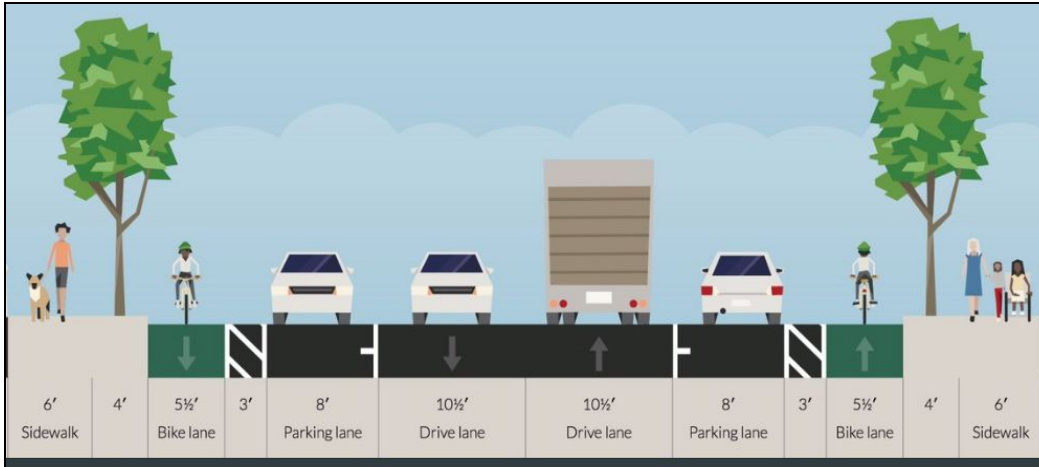


Figure 3B: Proposed layout of parking and bike lanes along Centre St between Holy Name and Weld demonstrating adequate room for parking protected bike lanes without significantly impacting parking. Width of travel lanes are reduced to discourage excessive speed. Centre Street is 53-54 feet wide which allows for a 10-11 ft. driving lane, a 7-8 ft. parking lane, and a 8-9 ft. bicycle lane and buffer.

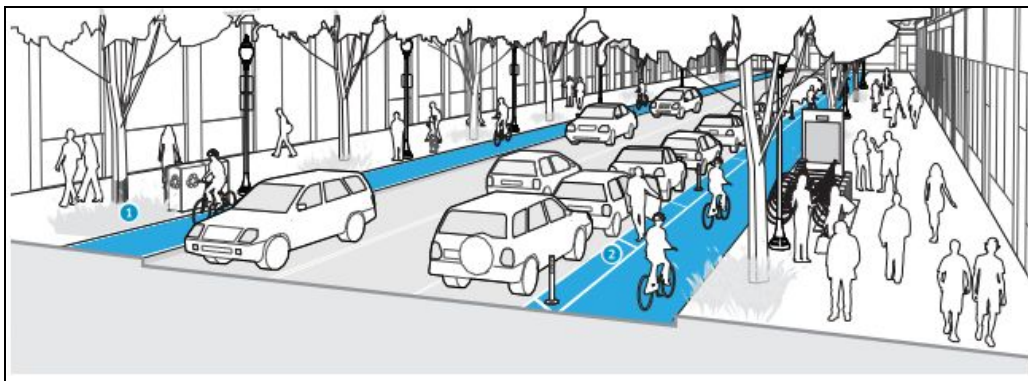


Figure 3C: Boston Complete Streets 2013 Design Guidelines show cycle tracks that are separated from travel at either 1) the level of the sidewalk or 2) adjacent to on-street parking.

Figure 4: Photos of Centre Street Intersections



Figure 4A: Centre St and West Roxbury Parkway Rotary



Figure 4B: Church St and Centre St opposite South St looking towards the Centre/West Rox Pkwy rotary



Figure 4C: South and Centre St looking toward Centre and Church St.



Figure 4D: Guernsey (left) & Montclair (right) from Centre St.



Figure 4E: Fletcher and Centre intersection looking south-westbound on Centre.



Figure 4F: Centre St at Knoll, looking south-west on Centre St.

Table 1: West Rox Walks Walk Audit Attendees and Supporters

Matt Allen
Bill & Haley Barrar*
Ruben Cagnie & Anna Picard
Dennis & Tara Carey
Doris Corbo*
Michelle & Tim Daniels
Julie & Mike Deforest
Elizabeth Gross
Chris & Kate Heaton
Claire Hogarty
Evan Judd & Schuyler Velasco*
Chris Kadamas & Kelly Karl
Masai King
Brandon Leyro & Jessie Cmaylo*
Tricia & Mike Power
Dale & Marlene Putnam
Larry Traverso & Joe James*
Will & Nora Vincent*

*Attended the May 11, 2019 walk audit