



March 3, 2020

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Office of Public Outreach
251 Causeway Street Suite 600
Boston, MA 02114
Email: mass.parks@mass.gov
Submittal portal: <https://www.mass.gov/forms/dcr-public-comments>

Re: Joint Comment Letter Regarding Safety Improvement Options
Centre St./Walter St. Intersection, West Roxbury/Roslindale, MA

Ladies and Gentlemen:

We write jointly on behalf of West Rox Walks and WalkUP Roslindale with comments regarding the options for intersection safety improvements for the Centre St/Walter St intersection presented at DCR's February 13, 2020 public meeting at Sophia Snow Place. The full presentation with the proposed alternatives can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/doc/centre-street-and-walter-street-intersection-improvements-meeting-presentation/download>.

Our groups are community-based, grassroots organizations made up of residents of West Roxbury and Roslindale sharing among our goals the improvement of pedestrian safety and walkability in our neighborhoods by advocating for proven, common sense improvements to street and intersection design. Both of our groups have hundreds of supporters within our communities. Additional information about our respective groups can be found at the end of this letter.

With respect to the three safety improvement options presented by DCR at the meeting, **our groups strongly prefer Design Alternative 1**: the T-intersection **without** the right-turn slip lanes. Design Alternative 1 is the safest design alternative for pedestrians, as well as cyclists, transit riders, and motor vehicle occupants, with the qualification that our groups recommend certain critical changes to this design alternative that we describe below.

Design Alternative 2 is not preferred due to its inclusion of a two-lane slip lane for motor vehicle occupants turning right from Walter onto Centre. The Federal Highway Administration [describes](#) right turn slip lanes as "generally a negative facility from the pedestrian perspective due to the emphasis on easy and fast motor vehicle travel." Given the location of the intersection, as adjacent to a senior living facility, a rehabilitation facility, a church, and a daycare, as well as the Arnold Arboretum, a popular neighborhood and regional destination, as well as on a street – Centre Street – known for excessive vehicle speeds (posted speed limit 25 mph, 85th percentile

40 mph), resulting safety improvements must prioritize safety over motor vehicle speeds. Design Alternative 2 does the opposite and must be rejected.

Design Alternative 3, the Roundabout Alternative, is also not preferred because it similarly seeks to maintain unsafe motor vehicle speeds, and also due to the multiple-threat risks for pedestrians at 3 of the 4 crossings in the design. This design provides an unnecessary risk for pedestrians and cyclists, and again ultimately prioritizes motor vehicle speeds over the safety of all intersection users. Rotaries/Roundabouts at nearby Murray Circle and Centre/West Roxbury Parkway are already known to be difficult crossings for pedestrians and cyclists (see logged comments in the [Boston Vision Zero concerns map](#)) and this design would simply add another similarly difficult set of crossings to an already problematic stretch of road.

Finally, while Design Alternative 1 is our preferred option, we have the following recommendations to ensure this design provides our communities with safe and welcoming travel infrastructure for all users that slows motor vehicle traffic and promotes alternative modes:

- A single right turn-only vehicle lane onto Centre St from Walter St is strongly preferred to shorten the crossing for pedestrians and cyclists. We note with dismay that the prior 2015 design alternatives for this intersection showed such a two-lane (one straight-left-right, one right-only) approach for Walter Street. We find it inexplicable and frankly deeply disappointing that, despite the drop in motor vehicle volumes over the last several years that DCR presented at the February meeting, we are seeing more intersection space being given to turning motor vehicles.
- All motor vehicle travel lanes in all directions should be not more than 10'6" in width. This is sufficient for both ambulances and buses to operate safely. No design alternative should be promoting 11' motor vehicle lane widths given what we know about the manner in which wider lane widths induce motor vehicle speeding and endanger all street and intersection users.
- The Route 38 MBTA bus stop should be on the far side of the intersection in both directions to decrease delay to bus transit riders due to the traffic signal proposed for this intersection. We recommend that these relocated stops each be configured as a floating bus stop, where the curb at the bus stop is bumped out, and the bike lane goes behind the bus stop (i.e. between the bus stop and the sidewalk). This reduces instances of the bus blocking the bike lane while also reducing delay for bus riders.
- Separate bicycle and pedestrian areas need to be included through the entire intersection in all directions. This may mean pulling the intersection a bit northward to accommodate the movement for cyclists coming down Walter Street from Centre Street.
- Pedestrian/bicycle mixing areas should include clear and intuitive striping and signage to ensure both pedestrians and people on bicycles understand the area is shared-use and bicycles should yield to pedestrians.
- All medians should be constructed with curbing and landscaping to provide real refuge points for pedestrians and cyclists. Painted medians are not sufficient.
- The walk phase for crossings should be timed to allow completion of a full crossing in the time given.
- That the most recent presentation was held at Sophia Snow Place is no accident. We understand that the residents and staff there have been long-running advocates for much better walking connections from their collective home to the Arboretum and other destinations in the area. We were encouraged that DCR and its consultants recognized

how bad this intersection currently is for all users, especially those walking, cycling, and taking transit, and urge that Design Alternative 1 be further improved to make it as safe and comfortable for those modes as possible.

We appreciate your consideration of our comments and recommendations and look forward to working with you and all of our neighbors and stakeholders to improve this dangerous intersection for all street users.

Sincerely,

Ricardo Austrich, Resident @ 843 South Street, Roslindale
Lisa Beatman, Resident @ 180 Mount Hope Street, Roslindale
Rachel Blumberg, Resident @ 15 Newburg Street, Apt. 2, Roslindale
Ben Bruno, Resident @ 27 Colgate Road, Roslindale
Lucy Bullock-Sieger, Resident @ 33 Brookdale Street, Roslindale
Steve Gag, Resident @ 631 South Street, Roslindale
Liz Graham-Meredith, Resident @ 6 Crandall Street, Roslindale
Matthew Lawlor, Resident @ 15 Basto Terrace, Roslindale
Margaux Leonard, Resident @ 35 Harding Road, Roslindale
Mandana Moshtaghi, Resident @ 12 Arborough Road, Roslindale
Robert Orthman, Resident @ 31 Mendelssohn Street, #2, Roslindale
Rebecca Phillips, Resident @ 10 Tappan Street, Roslindale
Adam Rogoff, Resident @ 28 Ashfield Street, Roslindale
Adam Rosi-Kessel, Resident @ 36 Taft Hill Terrace, Roslindale
Rachele Rosi-Kessel, Resident @ 36 Taft Hill Terrace, Roslindale
Laura Smeaton, Resident @ 61 Cornell Street, Roslindale
Mark Tedrow, Resident @ 21 Conway Street, Roslindale
Greg Tobin, Resident @ 1 Sheldon Street, Roslindale
Nick Ward, Resident @ 35 Harding Road, Roslindale
Alan Wright, Resident @ 98 Birch Street, Roslindale
Evan Judd, Resident @ 12 Sunset Hill Path, West Roxbury
William Vincent, Resident @ 16 Sunset Hill Path, West Roxbury
Elizabeth Gross, Resident @ 23 Sunset Hill Road, West Roxbury
Bill Barrar, Resident, 80 Montclair Avenue, West Roxbury

About WalkUP Roslindale

WalkUP Roslindale, which takes its name from the international movement to foster “Walkable Urban Places,” is a collaborative group of residents dedicated to making Roslindale the most walkable neighborhood in Boston. We advocate for a dynamic, livable streetscape and we support positive changes to our public and private built environment that strengthen walkability and other forms of active mobility as means toward better personal and public health, safety, social capital, economic development, and environmental sustainability. We are led by a steering group of about thirty residents and have nearly 1,000 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 support of our steering group members (indicated above) resulting from our mission and principles.

About West Rox Walks

West Rox Walks is a group of West Roxbury residents committed to improving pedestrian safety, walkability, and promoting a better quality of life in West Roxbury. We support the Vision Zero Boston goal of eliminating traffic fatalities and severe injuries on our streets and believe that data-driven improvements to street design is a key component of meeting that goal. More information about West Rox Walks and our supporters can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/westroxwalks/>. While our organization has many supporters within our neighborhood, please consider these comments as representing the support of our steering committee.