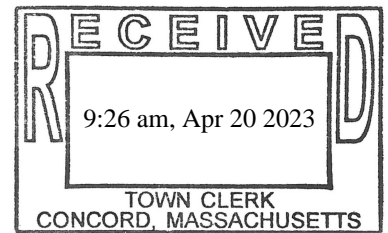


TAC Minutes 3-14-2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JLJYW-mOxoE>



**Concord Transportation Advisory Committee Minutes
March 14, 2023
Concord, Massachusetts**

Members Present: Laura Davis (Chair), Phil Posner, Mark Gailus, Dan Schragger, Nick Pappas (who joined at around minute 20 of the meeting)

Also Present: Erin Stevens (Senior Planner Transportation and Mobility), Terri Ackerman (Select Board liaison), Stephan Bader.

The meeting was held remotely on Zoom.

*

Mr. Posner agreed to prepare minutes of the February 28, 2023, TAC meeting for approval at a future meeting. Mr. Gailus agreed to prepare minutes of this March 14, 2023, TAC meeting for approval at a future meeting.

*

Chair Report:

At the February 20, 2023 Concord Select Board Meeting, Ms. Davis and Ms. Stevens provided updates regarding the TAC's work.

The updates included: Results of outreach at the summer 2022 Sidewalk Sale, the upcoming Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Study, the planned TAC site visit to the Library pedestrian crossing at Sudbury Road, the Route 2 Crossing Study, and a brief overview of the new Massachusetts vulnerable road user law that goes into effect on April 1, 2023. The TAC's discussions of parking minimums and winter maintenance were mentioned.

The Select Board expressed strong support for the Comprehensive Transportation and Mobility Study. The SB appreciates the complexity and the importance of the TAC's work. The SB expressed support for the Route 2 Crossing safety study, especially in light of the new residents at the Best Western facility. The SB

expressed interest in the TAC examining speed limits given changed Massachusetts laws, and sources of funding for local public transit.

Ms. Davis and Ms. Stevens met with Director of Public Works Alan Cathcart and Town Engineer Steve Dookran. Discussion included the process for planning and funding projection for the Pavement Management Program. There is a dire need for funding. The pavement condition index (PCI) for Concord's 108 miles of roads is currently 65% and the target is 80%. State Chapter 90 funding has been level funded for a decade. At a State Joint Transportation Committee Chapter 90 funding hearing attended by Ms. Davis, communities testified that road construction costs have increased by 65% while the Chapter 90 funding has remained level. Funding from the Town falls short of meeting the amount required to meet the desired maintenance target.

Also discussed at the same meeting was the TAC's role in developing policy and helping guide the selection of new projects, as a necessary complement to Public Works' focus on the maintenance of existing infrastructure and the design and execution of projects that have been decided upon. Specific mention was made of the benefit of having a comprehensive sidewalk plan developed, so that when requests are made for specific locations they could be fit into an overall plan.

Mr. Posner asked whether the variety of user vehicles was mentioned at the State Chapter 90 hearing, and whether Public Works mentioned how many miles of sidewalks Concord has. Ms. Davis said the hearing just focused on the funding gap and that she would inquire as to the miles of sidewalks.

Mr. Schragger asked whether the PCI is expected to go up as failed streets are rebuilt. Ms. Davis related that Public Works described how the quick decline of roads that are not maintained in a good condition leads accelerated failure, requiring total rebuild. For this reason, in addition to replacing failed roads which is costly, it is highly advantageous to also try to keep non-failed roads from entering the stage of rapid decline and failure. Ms. Stevens added that Town Engineer Dookran has introduced a preservation method for coating roads in good condition which can extend their lifetime by years.

Mr. Schragger asked what is the Town's participation compared to the State's in the funding of roads maintenance. Ms. Davis said this would be a good question

to ask Mr. Cathcart and Mr. Dookran when they are invited to a future TAC meeting.

Ms. Davis said that a Road Program for repair and rebuild is published every two years. It provides a list of roads are to be repaired or rebuilt, but the TAC can provide input on features to be included for as specific rebuild, for example, such as crosswalks, sidewalks, etc. The TAC should look at road projects for the upcoming season.

Ms. Davis attended a workshop hosted by MassBike about the new vulnerable user State law, including discussion about uniform signage for safe passing, speed limits, and how the DOT wants to move away from the current 85% rule for setting speed limits which can actually raise speed limits.

*

Staff Report:

Ms. Stevens provided an update on the Comprehensive Transportation Study. The RFP went out on March 6. There have been 21 requests for the RFP document. One question about possibly extending the deadline, which may be possible to do by a week or so – to be determined.

Ms. Stevens gave an update on the Bike Share. Two proposals were received for this year's Bike Share. We are expecting to start by April 1 or possibly a week later. We have not signed a contract yet but have a good proposal. It may be possible to expand Bike Share in the near future.

Ms. Davis asked if there is a launch event planned for the Bike Share. Ms. Stevens said there would be after we have a start date and have perhaps been able to expand the Bike Share.

(TAC member Nick Pappas joined the meeting at this point.)

Ms. Davis suggested putting a launch date on the calendar, possibly a weekend, and asked who we might want to participate. Mr. Gailus mentioned the West Concord Advisory and Cultural Committees and the Economic Vitality Director, as well as possibly putting an announcement in the Concord Bridge newspaper. Mr. Posner suggested the Bruce Freeman Advisory Committee and the West Concord committees.

18 years is the minimum age to use Bike Share, but Mr. Schragger said that in any case the presence of all types of cyclists, young or old, could enhance the launch event.

Mr. Pappas wondered how to get some actual bike rental customers there.

Ms. Stevens said it was important to set a date so both the launch event and the Bike Share program in general could be effectively advertised.

Mr. Schragger suggested the weekend immediately before Patriot's Day when there would be visitors to Town.

Ms. Stevens said the Bike Share will have two locations: West Concord and Concord Center Visitor Center.

Mr. Pappas suggested having someone ride the train to Concord and then rent a bike to highlight multimodal transportation.

Mr. Schragger suggested possible news coverage by Chronicle.

Ms. Davis suggested Friday 4/14 or Saturday 4/15.

Mr. Pappas suggested inviting the War on Cars individuals.

Ms. Stevens said there will be 5 bikes at each of the two locations, plus two adaptive bikes.

*

The West Concord Advisory Committee meeting the previous week was attended by Mr. Posner who provided an update. The WCAC is interested in working with TAC on West Concord Village, focusing on sites identified in a site walk that occurred last year. For instance, the bridge over the Assabet River on Main Street, and the connection between the gas station lot by the curve on Commonwealth Avenue and Kenny Dunn Square. They would like to have discussions and partner mostly on pedestrian walking safety and parking. They would like to have a joint site visit with the TAC. In addition to the above two locations, Mr. Posner also suggests the crosswalk used by children to cross Route 62 at West Street on Main Street, which could qualify for the Safe Routes to School program.

Mr. Pappas suggested that the TAC's role is to look comprehensively at the whole of Concord before making recommendations. The TAC should listen but not decide how that input gets integrated and carried forward.

Ms. Davis suggested that as with the Library crossing, the TAC's visits to particular sites could inform discussions of what designs are possible, what are appropriate for Concord, what are acceptable tradeoffs, desire for and methods of traffic calming., what is appropriate for village centers vs. other neighborhoods, routes to school or train or other places.

Mr. Posner noted that different funding sources might be available for different types of locations in terms of grant money. For example, Safe Routes to School could provide grant money for the West Street pedestrian and cyclist crossing of Route 62.

Mr. Schrage raised the question of how to compile a list of potential sites townwide, broadly including parts of the Town that do not have an active locally focused committee.

Mr. Pappas agreed that funding is very important and said the TAC should help the Town identify that there is a need for long term funding, specifically for safety improvements. The TAC should develop criteria for prioritizing projects, while leaving the design to professionals.

Ms. Davis mentioned the existence of various guidelines and requirements for designs. She repeated her earlier comments that Public Works has the two goals of (1) maintaining the infrastructure that we have already and (2) executing projects that have been selected. In contrast, selection of projects is a matter of policy and is citizen driven. Mr. Pappas agreed and repeated that prioritization and establishing the criteria for prioritization are clearly the TAC's role.

Ms. Davis said it is also a task of the TAC to assist helping to evaluate tradeoffs such as whether or not to have speed bumps, bump outs, etc. with regard to what our community wants. The TAC can start this by getting out into the field and having conversations about places that have been requested. This can serve as a pilot leading to a more comprehensive way of looking at things.

Ms. Stevens noted that the Comprehensive Transportation Study will cover a lot of this. We have requested that it provide best practices guidelines specifically for Concord.

Mr. Gailus agreed it is important to take a comprehensive townwide view, and that the Study will help with that. He agreed that attention to what funding sources are appropriate to different places is important. He stated that when the TAC looks at places of perceived or demonstrated safety problems the TAC can take the role of stepping back and looking at these in the big context in parallel with Town staff who also have must look at them in a big context. He mentioned the importance of flexibility and thinking in applying best practices, and the value of moving back and forth between low level specifics and the big level picture.

Responding to Ms. Davis's question about next steps with the West Concord Advisory Committee, Mr. Posner suggested continuing the conversation, looking at the list of hot spots identified by the WCAC, and perhaps at some point considering a particular site that the WCAC might want prioritized.

Mr. Gailus asked Ms. Stevens how the TAC might best collaborate with Town staff such as the Safety Committee to collect public concerns about safety at various locations. Ms. Stevens mentioned that there are multiple known issues that have been discussed by staff. Some even had plans drawn up but did not receive grants. She said it would be good for the TAC to consider them. She would like to review the WCAC list to highlight for the TAC a few that might be greater needs and more actionable. For some sites, plans for proposed changes may already exist.

Mr. Pappas suggested that the TAC formally take ownership of the list of 50 safety improvement projects that came out of the Complete Streets Study, and for instance look at some projects, identify advocates, and try to develop some selection criteria. Ms. Stevens said there are definitely advocates, and there is often a need to wait for funding. Mr. Gailus suggested looking at the list, and then seeing what reasonable next steps might emerge.

*

Ms. Stevens said that the Library Crosswalk Site Visit would take place on April 4 at 8am. This will be a scheduled TAC meeting. Ms. Davis said this was an

opportunity to visit the location of a known safety concern and evaluate it in the larger context as well, including how we deal with requests like this, address safety concerns, prioritize, determine what design elements are appropriate in a historic district. She asked who should be invited.

Mr. Pappas asked whether the crosswalk was in the Historic District.

Mr. Gailus suggested that while leaving solutions to the professionals, the TAC can contribute observations as to what problems exist and what might be causing these problems, and also hear from people who see problems or have experienced problems. He said Library staff should be invited. If the Library staff gather reports, it would be useful to record details like time of day, direction the pedestrian was crossing, and where the offending vehicle came from. He noted that best practices are constrained by finances, historic preservation, utility poles, etc. He suggested trying to get the clearest picture of what is there and what seems to be wrong with it, then allow experts to propose changes that might help.

Mr. Schrage asked how the TAC can impact the process if the problems are identified and the rest is left to the professionals. Does the TAC just expedite the funding?

Mr. Pappas said the Main and Walden project demonstrated the effectiveness of clarifying first what the problem is and what the goal is. It was powerful that the Historic Districts Commission ended up stating the goals of pedestrian safety and slowing traffic. Concerning the Library crossing, how the parking lot is used and how this affects the Library crosswalk is important.

Ms. Davis asked whether the crosswalk is in the Historic District and whether crashes been reported. Desired outcomes include identifying what is the problem and what people would like to see at this location.

Ms. Davis said Invitees should include Historic Districts Commission, Friends of the Library, Select Board, Library Corporation, Library staff, Emerson Umbrella, potentially Parent Teacher Group especially Alcott and HS, Town Engineer Steve Dookran or other Town staff.

Ms. Stevens suggested adding Recreation staff. She said Library Circulation may have a list of people reporting safety incidents.

Mr. Posner suggested adding the Police Department. He emphasized the value of gathering information from people who work, live, or spend their day near a location of concern.

Ms. Ackerman agreed that the Police and the Traffic Management Group should know of these concerns

Mr. Bader, 7 River Street, suggested adding the Town's Library Committee, perhaps Concord Academy, and especially the neighbors.

Ms. Davis suggested adding the Council on Aging and the Commission on Disabilities.

Mr. Gailus pointed to some characteristics of the Library crossing site that might contribute to "visual overconfidence" on the part of motorists.

These could include the "straight shot" nature of Sudbury Road, absence of parked cars most of the time on most of the street, and clear straight sidewalks on both sides that might send a false message that there are no pedestrians present. There are two crossing signs each way, which may be distracting. If a motorist --when they come upon the first sign -- looks for someone near the second sign their view of the sidewalk at the crossing is obscured. Double signs serve a clear purpose if you cannot see the second sign at the same time, but something different may happen at this site.

Ms. Davis suggested use of the AARP walkability template or something similar. Mr. Pappas said it would be valuable to record what people observe at the site. Mr. Posner agreed the AARP Walk Audit would be a good tool. Ms. Stevens said arrangements could be made to continue to collect data after the site visit.

*

Ms. Stevens provided an update on the Route 2 Crossing Study. The draft survey document will be sent to the TAC members later for individual comment. The Study is divided into (1) crossing Route 2 at Route 62, (2) crossing Route 2 at ORNAC (Old Road to Nine Acre Corner), and (3) crossing of ORNAC.

Questions include: Do you feel safe crossing Route 2? How do you rate the conditions of the sidewalks? What are the conditions while crossing? How do you

rate the lighting? How often do you use it? Where are you going? Would you feel more comfortable crossing if it was safer? There is a space for added comments. Rating scales are 1 to 5 with descriptions.

Ms. Davis asked about Emerson Hospital users who may not live in Concord. Ms. Stevens said copies of the surveys would also be distributed at Emerson Hospital.

Mr. Pappas and Mr. Schragger noted how trees obscure the roads in the draft survey photos.

Ms. Davis asked suggested collection demographic information if possible to assist in later analysis.

*

Mr. Posner gave an update on Safe Routes to School. Federal DOT funding is implemented by MassDOT through a contractor. Its goal is to enhance safe biking and walking by school children, through schoolchildren's participation in activities, programs, and education. In Concord International Walk, Bike, and Roll Day will be held the first week of May. In the past we had three separate days, one for each of the Primary Schools. We partnered with the Police Department, and also had Bike Rodeos to teach basic cycling skills. This year there will be a Bike Rodeo with the Concord Preschool at Ripley School (date to be announced next week), as well as a second Bike Rodeo in the summer. The program is a collaborative effort of the School Department, Police Department, Public Works, Transportation Planning, parents and other adult volunteers. The hope is to encourage children to opt out of individual car trips, opt out of the school bus, and walk and bike to school safely. Mr. Posner mentioned national statistics that show effectiveness in changing traffic patterns and improving health outcomes and educational outcomes. More program steps performed at the local level means more points in the program which can translate to more funding grants for different types of projects.

Ms. Davis inquired what might be asked of the TAC.

Mr. Posner said that at some point it would be useful to do a walk and bike audit step in the program in which Schools, Public Works, Police, the TAC, the Select Board focus on say the Willard School. An an engineer from MassDOT's consultant

would do an audit and observe around the school in terms of safety for pickup and dropoff, and make recommendations related to bottlenecks, safety, or other issues they identify.

*

Related to Trolley Transit Funding, Ms. Davis said that she and Ms. Stevens had received a letter from Rep. Carmine Gentile's office. This letter was submitted in support of a comprehensive trolley plan to help prepare us for Rev 250, from the delegation representing Lincoln, Lexington, and Concord, and was signed by Sen. Barrett and Reps. Gentile and Cataldo. A decision on funding through the State budget process is pending.

Ms. Stevens said Concord unfortunately did not receive a trolley funding grant from FLAP (Federal Lands Access Program) National Parks' funding. Other funding sources being pursued include the Massachusetts Transportation Bond Bill. Our ask from the FLAP grant was substantial and the total amount of available funding for Massachusetts was relatively small. Ms. Stevens is working on plans for wayfinding signs which would, for example, direct those arriving in Concord on the MBTA commuter line to various points of interest in Town. The planning utilizes a 2013 study of wayfinding in historic areas in Concord.

Ms. Davis said TAC future discussions will focus on other Rev 250 transportation options (perhaps with a known decision on State funding), as well as ways to fund public transit broadly.

The next TAC meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 11 at 7pm.

The site visit to the Library crossing will be April 4 at 8am.

Public Comments:

Ms. Ackerman: She appreciates the TAC considering transportation holistically and looking at sites all over Town. Annual Town Meeting on April 30 is a good place to distribute the Route 2 Crossing survey. Ms. Ackerman strongly agrees with Mr. Pappas that, looking at the 50 safety projects from the Complete Streets Study, the TAC should take up the task of developing criteria and then prioritizing for streets, crossings, and transportation in general.

Mr. Bader (7 River Street) commented that, relative to qualifying for the Safe Routes to School Program, the Library crossing is used by students after school and might be part of students' route back to home. Mr. Posner agreed and said it was worth discussing with the program people. Mr. Gailus asked about tutoring programs taking place at the Library, and whether any were run by the Town.

*

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous vote at 9 pm.