

**Summary of Public Hearing and Other input on
Beacon Street Bicycle Accommodations, Westbound from Marion Street to Westbourne Terrace**

**Brookline Bicycle Advisory Committee and Transportation Board
Public Hearing, Thursday, January 7, 2016, 7-9 PM**

Bicycle Advisory Committee members present: Bryan Decker, John Dempsey, Nathaniel Fink, Don McNamara, Kristin Schreiber, Cynthia Snow (chair), and Tommy Vitolo

Transportation Board members present: Chris Dempsey, Scott Englander, Joshua Safer (chair), Pamela Zelnick

Staff: Todd Kirrane, Transportation Administrator; Daniel Martin

Presentation of Project

Mr. Kirrane outlined the genesis of the project in the Bicycle Advisory Committee's *Green Routes Bicycle Network Plan*, based on the perception of the danger of this section of Beacon Street for cyclists. He detailed the computer analyses and the on-road trials that he, Mr. Martin and other staff members had conducted of this stretch of road and the intersections with adjacent roads. He outlined the proposed bicycle accommodations, a bicycle lane buffered on both sides to protect cyclists from moving vehicles on the left and from opening car doors on the right. This involves removing one vehicle travel lane. Two options were presented: one starting the bicycle lane at the Marion Street intersection; the other starting the lane a block farther along at Short Street. He noted that the project was expected to improve safety for pedestrians and motorists as well as for cyclists.

Public Comments

26 members of the public spoke. Of these, six are Town Meeting Members and all spoke in favor of the project.

Andreae Downs of the Newton Transportation Advisory Group, Mark Tedrow of Livable Streets Alliance, and Doug Johnson of the Boston Cyclists Union all spoke on behalf of their respective organizations in favor of the project. (In addition to these 3, 5 others were not Brookline residents but had cycled this stretch of Beacon Street and favored the improvements.)

Frank Caro spoke on behalf of Brookline Community Aging Network's Livable Communities and Age Friendly Cities Committees, favoring the improvements with the hope and expectation that having safer bicycle accommodations would reduce cycling on the sidewalk, a result strongly desired by these groups, which would also like to see a standing Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

Anne Lusk, a Brookline resident and researcher at the Harvard School of Public Health who has studied bicycle safety for 34 years, said that the appropriate and safe accommodation for this (and all) roads would be cycle tracks or bicycle lanes protected by some physical barrier from moving vehicles. She asked that consideration be given to putting the bicycle lane between the curb and parked cars to provide such a barrier and to eliminate the possibility of vehicles parking in the bike lane. Several other speakers agreed with her that this is the more desirable design for safe bicycle accommodations.

All those who spoke were in favor of bicycle accommodations on this stretch of Beacon Street—some with caveats, reservations, or particular concerns as noted below:

- One speaker who lives on this stretch of Beacon Street did not oppose the project but asked that the Transportation Board be sure to take into account the needs of the many residents in the large apartment buildings along the street for parking, pedestrian safety, and speedy service from fire and other emergency vehicles. She also asked that no trees be sacrificed to any safety improvements.

- Most cyclists said this is a very dangerous section of road; some have stopped bicycling because of the perceived danger of this and other roads in the region; some bicycle on the sidewalk; some try to avoid this section.
- A number of people indicated that pedestrian improvements are needed on this stretch of road; they were concerned that one set of the flashing pedestrian signals does not work and that even those that do work are too often ignored by both motorists and cyclists.
- Changing loading zones/times for businesses near the Marion Street intersection, including moving the mail box at the intersection, might help with double parking, which is a common problem now.
- The ban on double parking and parking in a bicycle lane (\$50 fine in Brookline) should be announced on signs and enforced by police to avoid having a new bicycle lane blocked by vehicles.
- Removing one vehicle travel lane is not expected to increase delays more than a few seconds; at present, because drivers perceive the road as narrow, cars tend to drive in staggered lines rather than next to each other in the two existing lanes.
- The intersection at Westbourne Terrace (with cars turning left from the inbound side of Beacon Street) was highlighted as particularly dangerous for cyclists and in need of modification or traffic calming.
- This section of road is always dark; lighting should be improved.
- The transition from the Marion intersection into the bike lane should be physically protected in some way to guide cyclists into the lane and prevent drivers from proceeding beyond the intersection before merging to the left into the single travel lane.
- A similar buffered bike lane in South Boston has become a *de facto* double parking lane; if that happens here, it would be very dangerous for cyclists.
- A bike box at Marion Street would allow cyclists to queue ahead of cars and make them visible as they transition to the bike lane.
- Bicycling should be encouraged for health and environmental reasons.
- Suggested alternatives for emergency vehicle access included controlling the traffic signals to clear the road in front of the vehicles, having a mountable curb between the travel lane and the bicycle lane, or making a bicycle lane adjacent to the curb wide enough to accommodate emergency vehicles.
- All eight speakers who specified a choice between the two plans expressed a preference for the option of having the bicycle lane start at Marion Street.

Written Comments

Written comments were received from 35 individuals before or after the public hearing.

Six Town Meeting Members sent written comments; five expressed support and one opposed the project out of concern that it would worsen traffic and that this would adversely affect the immediate neighborhood, which she represents.

One asked why the lane could not be extended to Washington Street (a block beyond Westbourne Terrace).

Generally, the comments were very similar to those expressed by speakers at the hearing.

Additional Input

In addition to the written comments provided in the compilation of comments, Rabbi Waldoks of Temple Beth Zion on Beacon Street attended the Bicycle Advisory Committee meeting on January 11th to voice his support for bicycle safety and express his concern that any design take into account the children and elderly and disabled attending services and school at the temple. He participated in a very useful and mutually beneficial discussion of how to design safe crossings of the bike lane and the possibility of a no parking/loading zone during peak usage times at the temple.