

**City of Salem  
Traffic and Parking Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, April 27, 2022**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, April 27, 2022, at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, and as amended by Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022.

**Present:** Commission Vice Chair Eric Papetti (acting Chair), Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commissioner Jaime Garmendia, Commission Lt. David Tucker, Assistant Transportation Director Christina Hodge, and Traffic and Parking Staff Russell Findley **Absent:** Commission Chair Tanya Shallop

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by acting Chair Papetti. Mr. Papetti explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Acting Chair Papetti opens the floor to public comment.

Lily Daigle of 48 Tremont Street introduces herself, and comments on the general state of traffic on Tremont Street, which she states has both speeding and volume issues, and a lack of enforcement. Ms. Daigle indicates she lives across from Mack Park, and that the situation is dangerous for children. She states she is baffled the City has not taken any action or done more to improve the safety and enforce laws.

**NEW/OLD BUSINESS**

**Director's Update**

Mrs. Hodge indicates she is filling in for Mr. Kucharsky and explains that work is still underway at the Museum Place Garage, with some necessary repairs occurring on the fourth floor. Mrs. Hodge also explains the third floor of the garage has been closed because there was an unfortunate parking garage death in Boston near government center recently, and OSHA rapidly changed regulations in response. She informs the public and Commission that the third floor is closed because of these new regulations for safety, specifically requiring there be a floor between any construction and parking. Regarding the South Harbor Garage, work is continuing with renovations and creation of a visitor center and public bathroom.

Mr. Garmendia notes he was in the museum recently and heard from tenants they have been having issues with vibrations from the construction to the point where merchandise is falling over. Mrs. Hodge says she will relay to staff and see if anything can be done.

Mrs. Hodge also notes that staff are working with the Mayor's office to expand the Blue Bikes program, and they have applied to a community connections grant that is still pending. The hope is to add some new locations, potentially up to seven.

Mrs. Hodge informs the Commission there are no updates on the recent pedestrian crashes/incidents in the City. Commission Lt. Tucker states that none of the incidents were fatal, but that the most recent serious one on North Street has someone in serious condition. Charges have been filed against the driver in the Loring Avenue incident, as well as the incident on Norman and Washington.

Mrs. Hodge reminds everyone that the comment period for the traffic calming projects presented at last meeting are still open for comment for the remainder of the week. They will be taken into consideration and staff will regroup with Neighborways and have discussions with neighbors prior to any implementations.

### **Tremont Street at Grove Street/Tremont Street at School Street**

Acting Chair Papetti explains that staff and consultants from BETA will present on their review and evaluation of existing conditions at the two intersections, and that these are preliminary discussions meant to solicit feedback, and further opportunities to comment will follow. Mrs. Hodge further clarifies there are no design solutions being presented, although there are some suggestions for minor improvements. There are surveys for both locations and once feedback is received work on the design alternatives can begin.

Justin Curewitz introduces himself as an engineer and consultant from BETA and presents an overhead map of the study location. Mr. Curewitz notes both intersections are under stop-control and describes the existing conditions. The Tremont and School Street intersection is a T-intersection with School Street under stop-control. There is an unsignalized crosswalk across School Street and a signalized one across the east leg of Tremont Street. Mr. Curewitz explains there are no curb ramps provided for either crosswalk and discusses the on-street parking, which is available on both sides of Tremont Street west of School Street, as well as on the east side of School Street. Mr. Curewitz indicates there is truck exclusion signage posted for School Street, but there is no regulatory restriction posed in the state database. Regarding the intersection at Tremont and Grove Street, Mr. Curewitz describes it as a T-intersection under all-way stop-control, however, there are no "ALL WAY" plaques currently installed, which is required by MUTCD. Mr. Curewitz explains that sidewalks are available on both sides of all roadways, but there are no crosswalks or curb ramps. On-street parking is available on both sides of Tremont Street east of Grove Street, as well as on both sides of Grove Street.

Mr. Curewitz notes that many vehicles have been observed rolling through the stop sign at School Street and discusses some of the confusion certain drivers have ascribed to the intersection regarding visibility. He discusses the lack of ADA accommodations to get across the intersections, as well as the lack of signage and outdated signage, including a School Zone sign that is no longer relevant. Mr. Curewitz identifies similar issues at the

Grove Street intersection, including substandard stops and lack of safe pedestrian crossings. Regarding crash history, it would appear large trucks have difficulty at this intersection, particularly making any turns. Mr. Curewitz emphasizes the need for all-way stop signage at the intersection for clarity.

Mr. Curewitz discusses traffic volumes data collected at both intersections, with turning movement counts collected on November 4, 2021, from 7am to 6pm. Peak hours were identified as 7:30-8:30am and 4:45-5:45pm. Automatic traffic recorder counts ("ATR") were collected at three locations for the 48-hour period from November 3-4, 2021. Mr. Curewitz explains that Tremont Street had 9,000 vehicles per day, while School Street and Grove Street had 4,650 and 3,540 vehicles per day, respectively. Mr. Curewitz presents further traffic analyses as well as the results of a multi-way stop control warrant analysis based on MUTCD Section 2B.07. Acting Chair Papetti notes for the public that the MUTCD slide appears to omit the fact that the criteria being discussed are to be considered, not required for an all-way stop. He also notes that further considerations are listed in the manual that are not represented on the slides. Acting Chair Papetti asks why those additional three considerations were not part of the analysis. Mr. Curewitz acknowledges the additional criteria. Acting Chair Papetti states he would like the public to know this is not a black and white issue and that there is a considerable amount of judgment by traffic engineers. Based on the criteria presented, Mr. Curewitz contends that both intersections only meet one of the warrants. Mr. Curewitz explains this does not mean the multi-way stops need to be removed, but rather, it is a gauge and piece of information that can be considered when determining how to improve the intersections. Mr. Curewitz next presents a traffic signal warrant analysis based on Chapter 4 of the MUTCD, which shows that the School Street intersection meets one of the three criteria. Mr. Curewitz presents summary findings, noting that for the School Street intersection there have been nine crashes in the five-year period 2016 to 2020. The crash rate is below statewide and MassDOT District 4 averages, and Mr. Curewitz suggests a multi-way stop may not be warranted, but a traffic signal is warranted based on the Warrant 2 Peak Hour criteria. Mr. Curewitz explains the Grove Street intersection saw eight crashes over the same five-year period which is also below statewide and district four averages. He contends that most crashes occurred as a result of the multi-way stop, and that analysis suggests the multi-way stop may not be warranted, nor would a traffic signal be warranted.

Regarding next steps, Mr. Curewitz explains interim improvements will be evaluated with a focus on short-term, low-cost solutions, mostly limited to signage, striping, and accessibility improvements. After that, preliminary design concepts for long-term improvements would be introduced, such as a potential roundabout at the School Street intersection or signalization with tightened geometry. Potential considerations for the Grove Street intersection include realignment of Grove Street and removal of the all-way stop control.

Acting Chair Papetti reminds the public that there was a viral video that reached national prominence, which was a live stream of drivers running the stop sign going southeast on Tremont toward Grove Street. Acting Chair Papetti suggests this is an example of where we need to think deeply as a commission in how we discuss safety and build a coalition of

people in the City who are able to talk about safety in smart way. Acting Chair Papetti states there are deficiencies in the way the City has directed this analysis to be done. First, he notes that MUTCD is the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, a federal document that dictates how to justify putting in various traffic control devices. Acting Chair Papetti indicates the manual has been described as deficient document in the most recent bipartisan infrastructure bill and by FHWA and regarded as an obstacle to creating safe streets in the U.S. He states while we are obligated to abide by the requirements laid out, he objects to the use of the MUTCD as a mechanism for evaluating the safety of our streets. As an example, Acting Chair Papetti notes the MUTCD suggests the crosswalk to the market is not warranted, because an insufficient number of people have been hurt or killed at the intersection, turning a blind eye to the context and community need. He adds that the FHWA is planning major changes to the MUTCD and that the current document should not be held in any reverence.

Commissioner Garmendia notes the current edition of the manual is from 2009 and agrees with Acting Chair Papetti that it is due for a re-write. Mr. Garmendia notes that there have been numerous comments on the lack of attention to pedestrian and bike safety in the current iteration of the manual, and that it is important to focus on those things as we approach solutions to our streets and infrastructure. Commissioner Garmendia indicates another deficiency of the requirements in the manual is that requirements based on number of pedestrians or bikers ultimately fail when pedestrians and bikers feel too unsafe to travel certain places they would otherwise need or choose to travel. Often, he notes, if people do not feel safe walking or biking, they will drive instead and add to traffic congestion thereby creating an additional problem instead of solving the original one. Mr. Garmendia suggests the data and analysis are a good a necessary first step, but that additional considerations are required for proper street re-design and improvement.

Acting Chair Papetti clarifies that these concerns are not just for this specific project, but they are general with respect to any reliance on the MUTCD for safety improvements.

Commissioner Swartz indicates he travels on Tremont Street often, and that if the stop signs on Tremont Street were eliminated, people will likely move through the area faster than otherwise. He notes there are various hills and visibility issues for pedestrians that could be exacerbated by the eliminated of stops. Mr. Swartz suggests that whatever the ultimate solution ends up being that it considers pedestrian safety, particularly with respect to crosswalks, visibility, and accessibility. He acknowledges there needs to be a solution, but that it will require some more thought.

Mrs. Hodge confirms the area requires some updates, regardless of the MUTCD debate, and that she does not want the failures of the MUTCD to taint the presentation. She notes there will be a need for both quantitative and qualitative analysis, community feedback, and judgment from engineering and policymakers.

Acting Chair Papetti states he appreciates the comments and work done, and that he believes we are heading in the right direction looking to make improvements. He notes additional considerations should be taken for levels of service, or "LOS", which is a metric

that measures the amount of vehicular delay and compares it to a free-flowing traffic condition like you would find on an interstate highway. Acting Chair Papetti explains this is another metric that is widely acknowledged to be deficient, and while it must be considered to some extent, it should not be a main focus. Additionally, acting Chair Papetti notes he did not see any pedestrian or bicycle counts, and that he did not see any speed data either with respect to these intersections. Mr. Curewitz states the data is available, noting there were no pedestrians at the intersection of Grove Street, and there were between two and three pedestrians crossing at School Street and the east leg of Tremont Street during peak hours. Regarding bicycles, Mr. Curewitz states they were negligible, fewer than 10 during an eleven-hour count. Mr. Curewitz indicates the average speed on Tremont Street was 31MPH, and the averages for Grove and School Street were about 30MPH during the day. Acting Chair Papetti asks for the location of the counts and Mr. Curewitz identifies them on the map.

Acting Chair Papetti opens the floor to public comment. He also notes public comment was submitted via email from Barbara Lewis at 81 Tremont Street, stating that she and her husband have lived on Tremont Street for over 30 years and that in the past ten have had a car totaled while parked on the street, a tenant has had a car totaled, and neighbors have had several vehicles damaged. The comments from Ms. Lewis indicates the incidents mostly occur at night and a result of speeding and running stop signs. Ms. Lewis' email notes that when she told a police officer, his response was, "what do you expect, you live on Tremont Street".

Drew Edmonton of 48 Tremont Street introduces himself and suggests the reason people go through the stop signs is that people expect to be able to travel at speeds upwards of 30MPH in an area signed for 25MPH. Mr. Edmonton asks that we not prioritize the needs and speeds of single occupancy cars, as he has felt unsafe even crossing the street to get to the park. He notes that the unsignalized crosswalks are dangerous as drivers rarely stop. Mr. Edmonton hopes that whatever improvements are implemented work to reduce average speeds, and notes that there is no enforcement currently. He states he would be open to speed bumps, as well as buildouts to protect cars better. Mr. Edmonton also notes the City's bike master plan calls for dedicated bike lanes on Tremont Street from Mason to the Peabody line, so this could be an opportunity to encourage alternate modes of travel on the street. He also suggests there are low pedestrian and bicycle counts because it is terrifying to be a pedestrian or cyclist in the area.

Lily Daigle of 48 Tremont Street thanks the commission for making space for public comment and for the thoughtful feedback and thoughts. She echoes the importance of any solution being pedestrian centric, and not focused on cars. Ms. Daigle states the area was not designed with pedestrians in mind, and the inability to cross and safety issues are why there were minimal or no pedestrian counts. She suggests it is important to reimagine the area putting the City's values forward with designs focused on cyclists and pedestrians. Ms. Daigle states it is terrifying to cross the street to access Mack Park or the Harmony Grove Cemetery. She notes it is important to also focus on ADA compliance and look to making sure there are curb cuts and ramps that are sufficient. Ms. Daigle raises concerns that eliminating a three-way stop will increase speeds on Tremont Street, and while she thinks

something must be done to improve the safety of the area, she does not believe removing the stop signs is the answer. She emphasizes that speeding is a major issue on the street and that the community and neighborhood safety must be prioritized. Ms. Daigle also suggests that prior comments regarding pedestrians' perceptions of car speeds being skewed were rude, as it still feels safe regardless of whether the actual speeds are not as high as they feel.

Catherine Seiferth of 18 Buffum Street introduces herself and suggests the comments regarding pedestrian perceptions of speeds, and the purely quantitative analysis were dismissive of the resident concerns in the area. Ms. Seiferth notes the police department has no interest in enforcing traffic regulations, particularly speed, and that in her six years living here she has never seen anyone stopped in her neighborhood for speeding. She states she was also shocked to hear the MUTCD is from 2009, as many safety criteria were updated a few years ago and that an 11-year-old standard seems outdated.

Ward 6 Councilor Megan Riccardi of 23 Orchard Street introduces herself states she is excited to see these intersections getting attention, particularly the intersection at School Street because of safety concerns, as it is a scary intersection for drivers and pedestrians alike. Councilor Riccardi notes the issues include speeding and cars not stopping at the stop signs. She also indicates the neighborhood is very connected, and that one change can have cascading effects. Councilor Riccardi describes Tremont Street as a mini entrance corridor that is heavily used and getting additional traffic due to recent changes in surrounding streets. She asks that the area be looked at holistically and suggests there are not enough crosswalks in the area, let alone safe crosswalks. Ms. Riccardi states that the only way she feels safe going to the park with her daughter is by car because of how dangerous the street feels, which she says is wild because they live in the neighborhood. Based on how wonderful the park is and how many activities and community opportunities there are, Councilor Riccardi argues it should be more accessible and easier to get to for pedestrians and cyclists safely. Councilor Riccardi also notes that the stop sign on Tremont Street was not always there, and perhaps the confusion surrounding its introduction years ago is part of why people do not always stop, and she wonders if there might be a different solution for the intersection. She also suggests restrictions on right hand turns from Grove Street onto Tremont Street, as it is a very sharp turn. Councilor Riccardi explains this is also a school bus stop for many children, and there should be safe accessible crosswalks.

Commissioner Swartz suggests having traffic data presented in a method similar to the GIS presentations from Traffic and Parking staff Mr. Findley, as he found them very helpful and easy to digest. Acting Chair Papetti also suggests staff create design standards for how consultants present data to the commission and public to come up with a way that is consistent and makes it easy to compare various issues and areas regardless of which consultant being utilized. Acting Chair Papetti asks what the timing would be for next steps.

Mrs. Hodge explains the engineering survey for both locations, and that the design process will begin shortly after with consideration of public comments and feedback from the Commission. BETA will come up with concepts for review, which would ultimately be

presented to the Commission and public for feedback. Mrs. Hodge states she does not have a specific timeline for the process currently.

### **Franklin Street/Moulton Avenue/Orchard Street/Osborne Street**

Mrs. Hodge explains that Rosie Jaswal is in attendance, who is a consultant with Toole Design that will review the existing conditions of this intersection, which is very complex. She states there are some high-level concepts that will be presented, but that the main goal is to receive feedback on what people would like to see out there before any engineering design begins.

Ms. Jaswal introduces herself and explains she is a senior engineer with Toole Design working on traffic calming for this intersection. Ms. Jaswal indicates the purpose of the project is to reconfigure the intersection using quick build materials such as paint and vertical barriers like flex posts. The goal is to improve safety by slowing speeds, clarify operations, and provide safer pedestrian connections. Ms. Jaswal describes the existing conditions of the intersection as unsignalized, with stop controls for Moulton Street and Orchard Street. She notes that Orchard Street is a one-way toward the intersection, and that the intersection itself is a large concrete area. There are no stop signs currently for Franklin or Osborne Streets. Ms. Jaswal states the major movement is from Franklin to Moulton Street, with lots of speeding. Traffic counts are presented, showing more than 70% of drivers speed on Moulton and Franklin, and they have daily volumes of 807 and 899, respectively. Osborne Street sees 294 cars daily, and Orchard Street sees 98. Ms. Jaswal explains data was collected in July 2021.

Ms. Jaswal reviews one potential option, which would involve split intersections to create more perpendicular approaches from each street. This would simplify operations and reduce conflicts, and create better visibility, particularly for cars coming from Orchard Street, which often cannot see cars coming from Moulton Street. The approaches from Osborne and Orchard would be stop-controlled under this option, and the stop sign at Moulton would be removed. Ms. Jaswal acknowledges that one disadvantage of this option is that a large curb extension would need to be placed in front of a residential property.

A second option is introduced, which would entail an all-way stop. Ms. Jaswal explains this approach would tighten the intersection and require all vehicles to stop before proceeding. One benefit is a smaller curb extension adjacent to residential properties, but Ms. Jaswal indicates a disadvantage is that it could be challenging to see all other stopped vehicles from certain approaches.

Ms. Jaswal presents a third option, which introduces a mini roundabout in the middle of the intersection. She indicates this approach would slow all movement down and better facilitate turns from Orchard Street. This option does, however, remove some parking in front of residential property and may require more specialized materials.

Regarding next steps, Ms. Jaswal explains that the City will engage with abutting property owners, and more detailed designs would begin for any preferred options. Any

implementation would be scheduled after further design feedback and approvals and based on available funding.

Commissioner Garmendia states he appreciates the first option the best, and notes that large curb bump-outs could be utilized for something like a parklet. He also states the roundabout option is interesting, and that he recognizes their use in certain locations in the city has appeared to be helpful.

Acting Chair Papetti asks about the stop sign installed recently to try to address some of the issues, and whether it has worked at all. Lt. Tucker states he has not received any negative feedback. Mrs. Hodge confirms the Traffic and Parking Department has not received any feedback from residents either.

Acting Chair Papetti asks Ms. Jaswal to quickly show the three options again, and she does.

Acting Chair Papetti opens the floor to public comment.

Councilor Riccardi explains she is a resident of the one-way section of the street that is in question, and that she goes through this intersection multiple times a day. She states she is curious about other resident comments and suggests the stop sign that was recently added was a wonderful addition and has helped with safety, as has the crosswalk to help get to the park. Councilor Riccardi suggests a bump-out between Osborne Street and Franklin Street, as the area is a large expanse of concrete that can be confusing for drivers. She raises concerns about loss of parking for residents in options one and three and asks that the issue be considered. She also notes that a lot of the speeding happens not in the intersection, but approaching it, particularly near the park, and that she thought this project would narrow the approach to the intersection more to calm some of the speeding issues on Franklin Street.

Liz Bradt of 22 Larchmont Road introduces herself and states she uses this intersection to get to her veterinary practice for 18 years, coming in from Moulton Street. She states she is surprised she has not had a head on collision because cars come speeding from Franklin Street and come onto the narrow Moulton Street. Ms. Bradt states the road is too narrow to have sidewalks on both sides, and that she avoids walking on Moulton because of safety concerns. She supports the all-stop and roundabout options, and states that she does not want to see free-flow vehicles from Franklin to Moulton.

Commissioner Swartz suggests that any interim solutions also keep in mind what kind of long term more permanent solutions might be appropriate.

Commission Lt. Tucker speaks to the speeding issues, primarily in the afternoon, and suggests looking to see if anything can be done farther down Franklin to mitigate speeding. He states the current crosswalks are okay but not great, and there might be some spots that would benefit from flashing beacons. Lt. Tucker states he likes roundabouts, but recognizes they work in some areas and not others. He also expresses support for any kind of extension of the corner at Franklin and Osborne Street.

Acting Chair Papetti suggests also examining ways of having bump-outs without losing parking, as areas where that has been implemented have gotten positive feedback from residents.

### **Request for Accessible Space to be Rescinded**

Acting Chair Papetti notes this request came in from Councilor Dominguez, per Section 50A, to rescind the accessible space at 14 New Derby Street.

Mrs. Hodge explains that at one point there was a shoe retailer in front of the space that catered to individuals requiring orthopedic shoes, he and needed the accessible space for clients. It has been brought to staff's attention that City Councilor Dominguez believes the space may not be needed anymore.

Acting Chair Papetti notes that typically when we get these requests, they come from a Ward Councilor, and they usually are found in a residential space that a person utilized and has either moved away or no longer needs the space for some reason. Acting Chair Papetti states this is in a business district rather than a residential zone, and, given that no additional information was provided with the request, he is hesitant to evaluate the request.

Commissioner Garmendia states that in general, if discussing a business district, he would like to see some information about usage/utilization of the space, and impact on nearby businesses. He notes the spot is right next to the fire department, and it may be the only accessible spot in the immediate vicinity. Mr. Garmendia suggests there could be a benefit to having it close to a public service, and that this should be examined.

Commissioner Swartz states he searched prior to the meeting and was unable to find another accessible space in the area, just the ones across the street reserved for Walgreen's customers. Mrs. Hodge confirms it is one of the only accessible spaces on the street in the area. Commissioner Swartz indicates he would be curious about usage data as well. Commission Lt. Tucker states anecdotally that he has seen the space used but that he does not have a count. Acting Chair Papetti indicates he has been in the area and seen people without stickers/permits parking in the space and suggests better enforcement might be needed if the accessible space remains.

Commissioners note that Councilor Dominguez should be present and provide more information before they are able to act on such a request, and they decide it would be better to postpone any further discussion.

**Motion and Vote:** Commissioner Garmendia motions to continue the discussion of the accessible space at 14 New Derby Street to a future meeting when Councilor Dominguez can present more information. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. The vote is four (4) in favor and none (0) opposed. **The motion passes.**

**OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

None.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE**

The next meetings are scheduled for May 11th and May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 6:00PM.

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

*On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commissioner Garmendia, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:05 PM.*