Town Council Committee on Public Works Meeting: Summary

November 20, 2017 – 7:15 PM
Town Hall, Administration Building, 149 Main Street, Watertown, MA

Present

State Elected Officials
State Representative Jon Hecht
State Senator William Brownsberger

Town of Watertown Attendees
Superintendent Gerald Mee, Matthew Shuman and Dennis Sheehan, Department of Public Works (DPW)
Gideon Schreiber, Community Development & Planning

Town Council Public Works Committee Members
Councilor Aaron Dushku
Councilor Susan Falkoff
Councilor Tony Palomba

Additional Town Councilors
Council President Mark Sideris
Councilor-elect Anthony Donato
Councilor Lisa Feltner
Councilor Angeline Kounelis
Councilor Ken Woodland

Project Team Attendees
Rich Benevento, Bill Mertz, Michael Pompili, and Kristopher Surette, WorldTech Engineering (WTE)
Nancy Farrell and Sarah Paritsky, Regina Villa Associates (RVA)

Public Attendees
A list of public attendees can be found at the end of this document.

Materials (also available on project website)
Introduction

Councilor Aaron Dushku, Chair of the Town Council Public Works Committee, began the Mount Auburn Street agenda item at 7:15 PM. He introduced Committee members and Councilors Tony Palomba and Susan Falkoff, members of the project team, Watertown staff, and other elected officials. Councilor Dushku explained that the project aims to reevaluate the way Mount Auburn Street is designed to make it friendly for multimodal transportation within the constraints of the roadway, while traffic increases and population grows. He believes the project staff has been responsive to criticism and comments. He asked attendees to hold their questions until the end of the presentation. Councilor Palomba asked the presenters to identify any updates or changes that came from public since the previous meeting in June 2017. Councilor Palomba noted that there is a website for the project where people can sign up for updates. He introduced Kristopher Surette, WTE, who asked which participants were present at the June meeting; many raised their hands. K. Surette reviewed the presentation agenda.

Purpose of Meeting – Why are we here?

K. Surette said the presentation was intended to provide an update on implementing enhanced bicycle accommodations along Mount Auburn Street, gather feedback on the proposed bicycle accommodations, and identify areas where additional analysis is needed.

Project Recap/Updates

K. Surette reviewed several follow-up stakeholder meetings that the Town initiated since the June 2017 Committee meeting: with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT), the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA), Cambridge DPW, and the Watertown Fire and Police Departments. K. Surette encouraged attendees to visit the project website for information, including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), where they can submit comments and questions (which the team responds to) and sign up for updates. He summarized the comments and website traffic and said a postal mailing was sent to project abutters notifying them of this meeting.

Design Updates

K. Surette described the updates to the conceptual layout, including changes to the cross sections and analysis of bus stop locations and the impacts of each alternative. The team began a preliminary layout of alternatives to evaluate whether each would fit in the right-of-way, and also meet other transportation needs in the corridor.

Project Limits/Segments

K. Surette explained the corridor has been divided into four segments. He described the conditions and current design for each segment (refer to the presentation for details):
1. Patten Street to Walnut Street (road diet not feasible)
2. Walnut Street to Dexter Avenue
3. Dexter Avenue to Arlington Street (Coolidge Square)
4. Arlington Street to Cambridge city line

Road Diet\(^1\) Concept

K. Surette said the road diet recommendation is predicated on efficient traffic flow of approximately 17,000 vehicles and 5,000 bus passengers per day. A road diet requires us to improve capacity and operations at signalized intersections, provide turn pockets at unsignalized intersections, and minimize delays or stopping in the remaining legs. If these conditions are not met, a road diet is no longer feasibility. K. Surette explained that this methodology guided the team’s recommendations for the various roadway segments.

Lessons Learned

K. Surette said there was a joint Public Works and Safety Committee meeting on June 12, 2017 to discuss the lessons learned from the recent reconstruction of Arsenal Street, including the implementation of a two-way separated bike facility on that corridor. Lessons included the importance of parking in commercial areas, bicycle and pedestrian conflicts at bus stops, minimizing queuing behind turning vehicles, emergency response times, and the impacts of snow and ice.

Revisit Design Recommendation

K. Surette reviewed the recommendations from the June 2017 meeting. He explained that the team had promised to further investigate separated facilities on north side of Mount Auburn Street between Walnut Street and Dexter Avenue. On the south side of that segment (eastbound), the team agreed to provide a buffered bike lane on the street side of parking.

Overview of Bicycle Lane Options

K. Surette discussed the benefits and challenges of various bicycle lane options. He reviewed photos of buffered and parking-protected bike lanes in Cambridge. He summarized the benefits of bike lanes with painted roadside and door zone buffers, and described a diagram that demonstrated how cars can move to the side of the street (into the buffered bike lanes) to allow emergency vehicles to pass through. He reviewed the challenges of buffered bike lanes including conflicts between vehicles and bicyclists due to the lack of a physical barrier.

K. Surette explained that parking-protected bike lanes remove conflicts between bicycles and traveling vehicles as well as vehicles making parking maneuvers. Also, delivery vehicles cannot block the bike lane. There are operational and safety issues, including vehicles parking in the buffer and conflicts at bus stops between buses and bicyclists. K. Surette described maintenance issues related to automated trash pickup, specialized equipment required for street sweeping and plowing and additional staff and service contracts required to operate the equipment. He said the parking protected bike lanes may require more frequent

\(^1\) A road diet is a transportation technique for reducing the number of lanes on a roadway while maintaining traffic capacity.
parking bans for snow removal and could create two piles of snow – one next to the parked cars and one at the curb line. The project team spoke with Cambridge DPW about their operations; one suggestion was to anticipate snow removal when snow exceeds six inches, as snow sometimes needs to be trucked off the corridor.

**Analysis of Bicycle Facilities**

**Mount Auburn Street – West of Coolidge Square**

K. Surette presented the analysis of the separated bike lane for the north side of Mount Auburn Street west of Coolidge Square (segment 2). The team updated the cross section to provide 2-foot shoulders and a 2 to 3-foot buffer between the bike lane and the road. The analysis identified that a consistent grade at driveway crossings cannot be provided. It would feel like a rollercoaster ride as bicycles would transition down and up due to frequent driveway openings. From an operational standpoint, buses would have to stop in the travel lane, because floating bus stops (where bike lanes pass behind the bus stop) are not feasible due to space limitations. K. Surette warned that there would be reduced driver anticipation or recognition of bicyclists at side streets and driveways due to poor sight distance.

He concluded that a separated bike lane on the north side of the street is not feasible and violates the project’s established road diet policy due in part to the need for buses to stop in the lane to load/unload passengers, and the frequency of the bus, which would cause significant operational delays. Therefore, the team analyzed the feasibility of a buffered bike lane. Flexible posts in the buffers could be considered in the future. He highlighted some of the pros and cons of buffered bike lanes and described how shoulder widening at bus stops would allow buses to get out of the travel lane to load/unload passengers, bicyclists to pass buses, and remove conflicts between bicycles and pedestrians.

On the south side of Mount Auburn Street, the team considered and subsequently added an additional buffer to address the concern that bicyclists would be too close to vehicles. Therefore, two buffers would be provided, one between the bicycle lane and travel lane and one between the bicycle lane and parking aisle (door zone). Vehicles making parking maneuvers would still have to cross the bike lane. A physical barrier cannot be provided. K. Surette noted that the effective width of the bike lane (bicycle lane plus buffer widths) would be 9 feet.

**Mount Auburn Street – Arlington Street to Cambridge city line**

K. Surette explained this analysis was predicated on providing separated bike facilities in both directions along Mount Auburn Street from Arlington Street to the Cambridge line. The design proposes curb bump-outs to allow the grade transition from the street to the elevation of the bike lane/sidewalk. At the Tufts Health Plan building, there could be a floating bus stop allowing the bike lane to pass behind the bus stop. He described some concerns that emergency response officials shared regarding maneuverability of emergency response vehicles. Emergency responders expressed concerns about one travel lane in each direction (with parking on both sides), and curb bump outs at driveways, which could create pinch points along the corridor. Because of these considerations, the separated bicycle lanes in both directions were deemed not feasible, but a combination of separated and buffered facility options will continue to be explored.
Intersection Treatments

K. Surette described the various intersection treatments that the team is considering for the corridor: bike boxes, signage (instructing turning vehicles to yield to bicycles), and striping at signalized intersections; and pavement markings at unsignalized intersections. K. Surette explained that a separate bicycle phase at signalized intersections is not feasible due to unacceptable increases in delay and reduction in level of service for vehicular traffic, buses, and pedestrians.

Recommendations

K. Surette summarized the team’s recommendations for the corridor:

- Mount Auburn Street from Walnut Street to Dexter Avenue:
  o North side – buffered bike lane alongside curb (where there is no parking)
  o South side – buffered bike lane on the traffic side of parking (featuring a buffer on each side of the bike lane)
- Arlington Street to Cambridge city line:
  o Eliminated option of a separated bicycle lane on both sides of the roadway
  o Investigating a combination of separated/buffered options

He described conceptual renderings in front of the Hosmer School.

Next Steps – Where do we go from here?

K. Surette said the team’s next steps include developing a concept for the Coolidge Square area, and then finalizing the cross section from Arlington Street to Cambridge. The team anticipates a mid-January meeting to discuss the design. The team will also analyze the Common Street/Parker Street area to evaluate future operations of the Common Street intersection. Based on the recommendations and outcome of the next meeting, the team will develop draft corridor-wide roll plans that will be posted to the website in February. In February or March, the team will host an open house to discuss the draft corridor-wide roll plans.

This project is slated for construction beginning in fiscal year 2022. K. Surette shared some key contact information, including the project website (www.MountAuburnStreet.com) and e-mail address (Team@MountAuburnStreet.com).

Discussion

Councilor Dushku invited the Committee members to speak first. Councilor Falkoff said she found the road diet concept confusing and asked K. Surette to explain it further. Councilor Falkoff suggested making the slide more understandable. **Response:** K. Surette said the corridor is currently two lanes in each direction. To accommodate all users (drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users), a road diet would reduce the number of vehicular lanes to make space for accommodations for other users, while maintaining traffic. If the team is unable to improve capacity at signalized intersections, provide left-turn pockets, or minimize delays, then the road diet does not work.

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2 Responses that were added to the meeting summary, but not verbalized at the meeting, are italicized.
Councilor Palomba asked about multimodal needs since the road diet slide only mentions capacity for vehicles and buses. **Response:** Michael Pompili, WTE, said the team is trying to balance the needs of all users on the corridor by providing a road diet that provides bike facilities and improves transit, while also keeping traffic moving efficiently. A road diet works efficiently when the vehicular volumes are between 16,000 and 19,000, depending on the operations at individual intersections along the corridor. In places where an acceptable level of service for vehicles and buses cannot be achieved, the team will not recommend the road diet, hence the segmentation of the corridor outlined in the presentation.

Councilor Falkoff asked why left turn pockets are recommended on a majority of, and not all, side streets and if “creative” solutions such as changing side streets to one-way operation were evaluated. **Response:** K. Surette said some side streets have utility poles or trees that pose geometric limitations that prevent a left turn pocket from fitting. In other locations, the demand didn’t warrant having a left turn. M. Pompili said the team looked at changing Parker Street to one-way away from Common Street. Currently, the traffic signal operates inefficiently, so if Parker Street is removed from the intersection, more green time can be given to Mount Auburn Street to improve traffic flow. The project team has received public comments through the website about concerns in the neighborhood, so the team is now looking at keeping Parker Street two-way. M. Pompili added that the left turn pockets also impact bike accommodations, and avoiding obstructions is a lesson learned from Arsenal Street.

Councilor Dushku said he understands there is disappointment about the infeasibility of separated bike lanes between Arlington Street and the Cambridge city line. He referred to a slide that mentions the maintenance of on-street parking and stated that there is no parking on the north side of Mount Auburn Street. **Response:** K. Surette said there have been public comments indicating an interest in providing parking on both sides of the street. Councilor Dushku said he doesn’t think any parking should be added and he has shared this opinion before. M. Pompili explained that funeral homes currently use the right travel lane as parking, but with the road diet, that would no longer be an option. The Coolidge Square area has several funeral homes and other businesses that need parking. This discussion will be continued at the Coolidge Square meeting in January 2018.

Councilor Kounelis thanked everyone for attending and said some of the area merchants want more specific details on the existing number of parking spaces and anticipated number of spaces. **Response:** The team will provide details on the existing and proposed parking spaces at the next meeting.

Councilor Dushku introduced Nancy Farrell, RVA, to moderate the public comments. N. Farrell said that in response to a request at the previous meeting, the team posted the presentation to the project website in advance of the meeting. She said the team attempts to respond to each comment as quickly as possible. She opened the floor to the public.

Councilor Feltner said she and the community are very upset. She asked how abutters were defined and believes more people should be notified. She believes there are lots of changes, mostly affecting her District B. She asked the traffic experts to look at Watertown Square holistically with the community path. She said her neighborhood is often cut off and she doesn’t see a holistic bike plan. She shared concerns about turning Parker Street one-way, traffic on Irving Street, grass strips at bus stops, and the removal of parking on Mount Auburn Street. She said there are protected bike lanes on Commonwealth Avenue and she believes there are no concerns about snow removal. She sees sidewalk potential at Common Street.
and Phillips Street. She described parking issues at Marshall Street near local businesses and a crosswalk adjacent to a church at Palfrey Street. She suggested a timed signal at Irving Street to remove cut-through traffic and believes the light on Common Street isn’t needed and should be kept at Parker Street. She said she is frustrated and angry, and will submit more remarks following the meeting. She described concerns about elderly and visually impaired pedestrians. Councilor Dushku said it is difficult to respond to each of her concerns at once. Councilor Feltner requested more innovative thinking and better communication.

Response: Ms. Farrell said the mailing went to everyone on Mount Auburn Street. Property and business owners on Mount Auburn Street between Patten Street and the Cambridge city line were invited to attend the meeting and sign up for the project email list. In addition, an email was sent to the Mount Auburn Street, Arsenal Street Corridor Study, and Watertown Square Project mailing lists, along with Town postings. The team will review the Councilor’s other comments in detail when they are submitted. The Mount Auburn Street project is being developed in coordination with the Watertown Square project as well as the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation’s (DCR’s) Mount Auburn Street/Fresh Pond Corridor Study and the Watertown Community Path.

A meeting participant asked how many lanes will go through Coolidge Square and if there will be parking on both sides of the road. Response: K. Surette said the configuration within Coolidge Square has not been determined yet. M. Pompili said the current concept includes a left turn lane and two through lanes in the eastbound direction at Arlington Street, and a left turn lane and single through lane in the westbound direction. The team is updating traffic data along the corridor to refine the concept. The participant said there is very little parking, and since many stores do not have back loading docks, trailer trucks sometimes park in the street. He added that the timing and street lights do not work. Response: The project team understands these parking and loading concerns and will consider them when designing the layout at Coolidge Square.

Alicia Franke-Rivera, a Mount Auburn Street resident, asked if the design is based on today’s traffic data and how it accounts for changes between now and 2022. Response: M. Pompili said the team has been collecting data since 2007 and is still collecting data continuously to account for changes. The design does consider future volumes, many of which have been stagnant or decreasing. The data will be posted to the website. Once the team has buy-in on the lane configuration, it will update the traffic model. M. Pompili referred to the road diet handout available at the meeting and on the website.

Ron Timperio, a resident of 765 Mount Auburn Street, asked the team to consider moving the bus stop that crosses his driveway to Cottage Street. He said it can be hard to get into and out of his property. Response: The team agreed to follow up with the MBTA.

Joan Reurs, a resident of Marion Road, asked if any comparative studies have been done of the effects of changes on Belmont Street. Response: K. Surette explained that the team is considering lessons learned with regards to medians, parking layout, and traffic signal design. J. Reurs encouraged the designers to take a hard look at spillover traffic. She said first responders have expressed concern about single lanes in the event of broken down vehicles. Response: The team has evaluated existing and future traffic volumes and believes there will not be any diversion in the section where one lane is recommended. The team will continue to coordinate with Watertown Fire and Police about emergency vehicle access.
Mohammed Tahmili said he owns a bakery in Watertown Square. His drive from the Mass. Pike on Galen Street to the bakery takes 10 minutes at 6:00 AM, but at 8:30 AM or 9:00 AM it can take 30 minutes to travel less than a mile. He is worried about the impact of reducing lanes on his commute. **Response:** One of the primary goals of the project is to improve traffic flow on Mount Auburn Street, and the planning does take into account current and future traffic volumes. There is more traffic at rush hour, but the project should make progressing along Mount Auburn Street more efficient in general.

Sheila Fay, a member of the Watertown Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee (WBPC), said she owns a business in Coolidge Square. She asked if leading pedestrian intervals (LPIs) that were implemented in Cambridge can be considered to make it safer for pedestrians and bicyclists to travel through intersections. **Response:** K. Surette said the project will maintain exclusive pedestrian phases, so there is no need for an LPI. If concurrent pedestrian phasing is considered, LPIs will be included. In addition, leading bicycle intervals (LBIs) will be evaluated at signalized intersections on Mount Auburn Street as the design progresses.

Kirk Kaloustian, a resident of Mount Auburn Street, shared his concerns about residents who need to pull in and out of their driveways. During snowstorms, access gets narrower, and it takes longer to access the street. He is worried about this becoming more challenging if there is only one lane of traffic, noting that he currently has a 50 percent chance of getting an empty lane. **Response:** The reduction in roadway width will make it easier, not more difficult, to exit residential driveways. Currently, if a vehicle stops to let a resident out of a driveway, there is the chance of another vehicle not stopping in the adjacent travel lane. Reducing the roadway width will also reduce the number of lanes of traffic a vehicle exiting a driveway or side street needs to contend with, particularly in taking left turns. Traffic signals along the corridor will provide safe gaps for driveway and side street traffic to enter Mount Auburn Street. The bike facilities and buffers are also features that will make it easier to pull in and out of driveways. Currently, on the north side, vehicles back directly out into a travel lane. With the bike lane and buffer, there will be 7 to 8 feet of additional space to pull out before entering the travel lane.

Libby Shaw, a resident of Templeton Parkway and member of Trees for Watertown, said when Complete Streets was first introduced, Watertown held a workshop, encouraged by MassDOT, to introduce the concept to the community. She said she was surprised that Complete Streets does not include trees, which she believes are very important. She said Mount Auburn Street has dozens of trees, some of which are beautiful. She explained how trees impact quality of life for pedestrians and bicyclists and slow car traffic. If existing trees are damaged or removed, she thinks it will have cumulative impact on the community. She believes Arlington and Somerville residents are unhappy with their state-funded Complete Streets projects. **Response:** K. Surette said there was discussion of shade trees at the meeting in June. The team is recommending that the Town maintain curb lines to take into consideration the shade trees behind the curb line.

Ethan Davis, chair of the WBPC, said there are competing interests and he believes Mount Auburn Street is the backbone of Watertown. He believes that limiting the speed of cars will help all users and increase safety and a sense of community, while improving the pedestrian experience and business districts. In an effort to help accommodate all users, E. Davis suggested limiting the speeds of cars for safety and sense of community, pedestrian experience and business districts. Councilor Falkoff asked how much control the Town has over speed limits, as Mount Auburn Street is a state route. **Response:** M. Pompili said
controlling speeds is one of the goals of the project, and narrowing the roadway to one lane will reduce traffic speeds. He said speeds are governed by MassDOT. The default is 30 miles per hour (MPH), and changes require a detailed speed study.

Councilor Falkoff said it seems like the project is trying to do too many things with Mount Auburn Street. She worries a road diet and bike accommodations are more than what is possible. Councilor Dushku explained that there are four sections, each with a different prescription based on the needs in those places. Bikes can’t be prioritized in places with such high automobile traffic. Response: The project team is evaluating each segment of the corridor and has recommended different layouts based on traffic volumes, land use, and other qualities. A road diet works well with bike accommodations since it provides additional space for non-motorized users of the street.

Sen. Brownsberger said he is a “survivor” of the Trapelo/Belmont Street project in Belmont. He said he understands how hard this stage of the project is, and he thinks holding public meetings and continuing to work through the issues is the best thing to do. As a driver, pedestrian, bicyclist, and bus rider of the Trapelo/Belmont Street project, he believes the road will, overall, be vastly improved. He agrees with the approach to make the appropriate change in each place. Removing extra room from the roadway segment where cars are speeding is key to slowing traffic and improving safety. He said putting bikes next to traffic can be preferred, as cycle tracks can be scary due to low visibility at side streets. Sen. Brownsberger said the legislature gave towns the ability to set the speed limit at 25 MPH; Belmont has taken advantage of that. He said he worked with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to fund the Trapelo/Belmont Street project, and it rose to top of the list because of public engagement. He said he looks forward to helping get this project funded. Councilor Dushku said there have been many meetings and will continue to be more between now and March during this phase. Response: The project team is grateful for the Senator’s support and will continue to create opportunities for public outreach and incorporate feedback throughout the design and construction process.

Sinead Barry-O’Brien suggested adding a timeline to the website, as she did not realize construction would not begin until 2022. She referred to a set of traffic lights opposite a church at Cottage Street and mentioned that funeral homes block the entire area. There is not supposed to be parking on the corner, but there is, which can make it very unsafe to make a left turn. She asked that this be considered prior to the next presentation in January. Response: Under the current concept, Mount Auburn Street near the Cottage Street intersection will be reduced to one lane in each direction. Parking will be added along the north side of Mount Auburn Street in this area to accommodate demand for Sacred Heart Parish and area funeral homes, which currently occupy the westbound right travel lane of Mount Auburn Street. The design will include curb extensions at the corner of Cottage Street and other selected intersections to prevent illegal parking close to the intersection and improve sight distance for vehicles exiting Cottage Street and other side streets. In addition, the crosswalk will be relocated to the intersection with Cottage Street and the intersection will be signalized. This will improve safety for pedestrians and improve access to and from Cottage Street.

Harold “Tony” Physic, a member of Watertown Police Department, expressed his own views, not those of the Department. He traverses the streets and believes traffic calming and reducing lanes from two to one is a good idea, but he suggested keeping in mind that the Police need to travel at faster speeds to respond to an emergency. Cars will often stop in the travel lane instead of moving into the bike lane,
which blocks emergency vehicles. He is glad to see the bump outs. He thinks Coolidge Square will be a huge problem due to the merchants and funeral operators, and believes one lane will create traffic. He said the project team is working diligently for the Town and to ensure public safety concerns are taken into consideration. An accident would require shutting down Mount Auburn Street in both directions.  

Response: The proposed buffered bike lane concept provides additional space adjacent to the travel lane to allow vehicles to pull over and allow an emergency vehicle to pass. In addition, all traffic signals along the corridor will be upgraded with “optical emergency preemption” technology that prevents conflicting traffic from blocking an approaching emergency vehicle. The design team will work with emergency responders to ensure incidents can be handled as they are on other two-lane arterials in Watertown such as Main Street, Pleasant Street, and Watertown Street without shutting down the entire roadway. The design team will also be working with merchants and funeral home operators in the Coolidge Square area to optimize on-street parking and provide sufficient roadway space for funeral homes along the corridor.

Dennis J. Duff, a resident of Spruce Street, said that because federal funds were used previously or could be used on this project, the road might need to allow trucks. Response: M. Pompili said there is currently a truck restriction on Mount Auburn Street, and only local trucks are permitted. The project will not change the restriction, and signs will be improved as part of the project. D. Duff asked if there will be indentations for buses to pull in. He was an MBTA rider for 25 years and never saw buses pull to the side of the road near Star Market. He said he is disappointed about adding or subtracting specific traffic lights, including the light at the west side of Boylston Street. Response: M. Pompili said there is heavy traffic at Boylston Street due to the nearby Hosmer School. There is a signalized pedestrian crossing near Oakley Road, but the traffic signal will improve efficiency and provide a better crossing location for students. D. Duff said he believes the signal would penalize Spruce and Lincoln Streets and he worries about queues blocking side streets. If there’s a queue there, he won’t be able to exit his driveway. Response: M. Pompili said the team has conducted traffic counts at Boylston Street and, based on the information, is not worried about queues blocking side streets. “DO NOT BLOCK INTERSECTION” signs and markings will be provided at the intersection if warranted.

Mike Athannas, a Mount Auburn Street business owner, said he is disappointed about squeezing traffic down to one lane because there is currently very high traffic. He asked if there are studies done on the traffic spillover to the side streets. Response: M. Pompili said there are studies, and based on the existing and future traffic volumes, there will not be any diversion in the section where one lane is recommended. He said capacity is controlled by signalized intersections, and Mount Auburn Street is effectively a single lane road at intersections because cars turning left block one of the through lanes now. Left turn lanes will be provided at signalized intersections and key unsignalized intersections, effectively keeping the current two lanes of travel. Traffic generated from additional residential and commercial developments in Watertown is captured in the analysis. M. Athannas said the website said is difficult to use, view graphics, and provide comments. Response: N. Farrell offered to discuss fixing any issues with the website and share print materials. M. Athannas said most of the presentation is about bicyclists but other modes should be considered. Response: N. Farrell said there is a lot of information and other issues will be discussed at meetings in January and February. M. Athannas said Belmont Street is a disaster, and he is worried about snow removal. Response: The team is considering snow removal in its evaluation of bike facilities.
Marilyn M. Pettito Devaney, who is a member of the Governor’s Council, said she thinks the people who spoke made good points. She is concerned about quality of life and believes the town has been destroyed by developments. She agrees with Officer Physic about concerns for Fire and Police Departments. She said people on side streets have trouble leaving. She referred to the 17,000 vehicles statistic and asked where the 30,000 cars going through Watertown Square are going. She thinks there is too much proposed for one street. **Response:** The team will continue to coordinate with the Watertown Fire and Police Departments. Traffic in Watertown Square is dispersed to Main Street, Arsenal Street, North Beacon Street, Charles River Road, and Galen Street, in addition to Mount Auburn Street. Comparison of historic traffic data collected throughout the Town has showed that despite increased development in recent years, traffic volumes have stagnated or even decreased. However, the project design does assume future growth in traffic volume. Data on traffic will be provided on the project website and will be presented again at the next meeting. The roadway will only be narrowed where efficient traffic operations can be maintained with the proposed design.

Erica Dorenkamp, who lives near the Hosmer School, said she agrees with M. Devaney and she has had trouble exiting her road. She is in favor of the one-lane section and road diet because she thinks it will slow the traffic down. She is worried about biking on the street. She said the snow removal is not the greatest; snow is not shoveled in front of the field so people will walk in the bike lane. **Response:** The project team appreciates the support and is considering snow removal in its evaluation of bicycle accommodations and other corridor design elements.

M. Devaney said that when there are federal funds, projects need to be built according to the federal agency. She expressed concern about the removal of parking. She served on the Commission on Disabilities and believes wide sidewalks aren’t needed. She said under the street, antiquated pipes, need to be replaced. **Response:** The team will keep these comments in mind as it designs the project. All projects must be built to the proper current design standards, regardless of the source of funding; however, receiving Federal funding will not require removing all on-street parking. As discussed at previous meetings, the Town has been working with National Grid to ensure that their infrastructure needs are met prior to construction. The Town also has ongoing sewer and drain investigations along the corridor. A significant portion of the drainage system in Mount Auburn Street will also be reconstructed as part of the project.

Councilor Dushku thanked everyone for their comments and invited closing remarks from the Committee on Public Works. Councilor Falkoff said the community will need to live with change. Councilor Palomba thanked Senator Brownsberger for his points and said there are significant issues that need to be addressed. At the beginning of the meeting, he asked if the presenter could point to where recommendations have taken into consideration the comments made previously. He would like the next presentation to reflect the comments and changes, even if they are not worthwhile. He would like to see that each comment is responded to. He understands that the team will not recommend a road diet that cannot meet the specifications of 17,000 vehicles and 5,000 bus passengers. He reinforced that the community is exploding in development and new residents. The Assessor said Watertown is “hot” and will continue to be for the next five years, which will add traffic to the community. The Town needs to do something to accommodate the traffic. He asked the team to take the project more slowly and answer some of these questions. He reiterated his request to see the comments responded to. **Response:** Based
on this comment, the team has included responses to each question/comment throughout this meeting summary where possible at this time. As stated above, the project design assumes future growth in traffic volume. Data on traffic will be provided on the project website and will be presented again at the next meeting. The roadway will only be narrowed where efficient traffic operations can be maintained with the proposed design.

Councilor Dushku said the road is not currently safe for cyclists and pedestrians in many places. He said there are high traffic speeds and there is already a transportation problem. He said Watertown is booming, and will continue to grow. The Town needs to consider what transportation will look like in the future and with this fixed road width, he said the Town simply cannot continue to accommodate growing traffic volumes. He said that we must design our roads to also accommodate modes with less demands on the space and he fears this could be a missed opportunity if we do not. He said that he understands that some constituents won’t ever ride a bike; he and his wife drive to work and understand the frustration of increased traffic –but that some might ride their bikes if it was safer. The WBPC looked at the designs and wrote a letter with recommendations after the June 2017 meeting. In a responsive fashion, the project team approached the WBPC and Committee on Public Works with three scenarios, they analyzed the options, and shared them at this meeting. Councillor Dushku did see reference to previous suggestions in the presentation and the explanations of why some are and aren’t possible. In reference to those explanations, he said that this meeting will be seen as a setback of sorts for the cycling community but that we all need to remain focused on respecting the quantitative data and analysis to make our decisions. He said the team should not slow down, but rather should keep moving forward in this responsive manner. He said that this process is one that requires compromises and that when everything doesn’t go our way, we can’t just “throw the baby out with the bathwater.” Response: The project team concurs with Councilor Dushku’s statement.

Councillor Dushku concluded the meeting at 9:03 PM.

Public Attendees

Andreas Aeppli
Heather Angstrom
Mike Athannas
Sinead Barry-O’Brien
Paul Bedrosian – Bedrosian Funeral Home
Andy Campagna
Karen Chenausky
Nancy Chenausky
Raffi Chilingaryon
Jason Cohen
Michelle Cokonougher
Bruce Coltin
Ethan Davis – WBPC
Marilyn M. Pettito Devaney
Kelly Donato - ZBA
Erica Dorenkamp

Dennis J Duff
Courtney Dwyer – MassDOT
Sarah Eckstein
Johanna Erickson – Concerned Citizens Group
Sally Eyring
Sheila Fay – WBPC
Alicia Franke-Rivera
Elliot Friedman
Tricia Hopkins – WBPC
John Hostage
Kirk Kaloustian
Valerie Kaloustian
Anthony Kelly-Donato
Lira Ketchum
Ernesta Krazkiewicz
Mark Krazkiewicz
Missak Ourfalian – Massis Bakery
Sarkis Ourfalian – Massis Bakery
Officer Harold “Tony” Physic
Jill Reurs
Oliver Rick – WBPC
Barbara Ruskin
Libby Shaw – Trees for Watertown
Ed Siranosian
Kathy Siranosian
Andrew Smith
David Stokes
John Straus
Mohammed Tahmili – Tabrizi Bakery
Tegin Teich
Elodia Thomas
Penny Timperio
Ron Timperio