

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Water, Wastewater, Highway, Cemetery, Tree, & Facilities
Scott D. Charpentier, P.E., Director



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH

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**Traffic Safety Committee
Meeting minutes- November 15, 2023**

Committee Attendees:

Christopher Deacetis
Bryan Cole
Rachael Armstrong
William Pierce
Kate Girard

Other Attendees:

William E. Lyver, Jr., Chief of Police
Scott D. Charpentier, Public Works Director
Meghan Condon, Assistant Public Works Director

Meeting started at 6:00PM.

Bill Pierce read the remote meeting introduction and conducted roll call. All were present.

Provide dedicated traffic enforcement officers.

Chief Lyver requested the hiring of two additional officers to bolster traffic enforcement. These additional positions would allow dedicated traffic enforcement from 6am - 2pm and 12pm - 6pm, peak traffic hours. They would also provide more effective implementation of the Selective Traffic Enforcement Program (STEP) including improved handling of citizen complaints, requests for enforcement and being proactive in areas with a significant number of accidents. Accident data analysis would allow the additional officers to be present in areas where accidents are occurring regularly, at the time of day the accidents tend to occur as well as taking preventive measures based on the most common causes of the accidents. The 2 additional positions would allow for more dedicated traffic enforcement, unless a high priority call required their assistance elsewhere.

Bill Pierce agreed with the recommendation for more officers and asked if the department would need more vehicles. Chief Lyver said more vehicles wouldn't be necessary.

Chris Deacetis reiterated the need for more officers and added that based on his experience, dedicated traffic safety officers led to less traffic safety issues.

Rachael Armstrong also agreed that more officers were needed for enforcement and asked where the most accidents were happening in town. Chief Lyver listed the accident 'hot spots' in town as: Church St., Main St., Hudson St. and South St. Accidents in those areas tend to involve personal injury or significant property damage.

Bill Pierce requested ongoing accident data and Chief Lyver said he could provide it and explain it in more detail.

Bryan Cole asked for citation data for the next meeting and about current enforcement practices, specifically the effectiveness of radar sign boards. Chief Lyver said they have an

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immediate effect and people slow down, although they may speed up again soon after they pass it.

Kate Girard also expressed her support for more officers dedicated to traffic safety enforcement and said that there are towns similar in size to Northborough that already have them.

Approval of October 17, 2023 Minutes
Minutes were approved unanimously.

Discuss Citizen Inquiries

Bill Pierce and Chris Deacetis spoke up regarding the limitations of the committee due to MassDOT requirements and current state laws.

1. Heavy commercial vehicle exclusion for Summer St. - Scott Charpentier educated the committee on state requirements for HCVE. 5-8% of traffic on a requested roadway needs to be HCVs for a truck exclusion. Once that criteria has been met, an alternate route must be provided. If the alternate route is in another community, that community must give approval for the rerouting of trucks (and usually approval isn't granted). An engineering study is required to determine if a truck exclusion can be allowed. If the study determines it's allowed, the request goes to the Select Board to approve an application to MassDOT for a truck exclusion. If MassDOT approves the request, the Select Board implements it and signs are installed.

The CMRPC implemented traffic counts on Summer St. and it met the criteria for a truck exclusion. The alternate route would be to continue on Rte. 135 to Main St or vice versa. A truck's turning radius should allow it to turn onto Main St from Rte. 135 without crossing the double lines.

Bryan Cole asked if trucks were turning onto Summer St due to GPS directions and if other streets were impacted because of the GPS too. Scott Charpentier said that Lincoln St. probably had the same issue.

Kate Girard asked what impact the alternate route would have on the already congested center of town. Scott Charpentier said that the calculation of the impact was very complex involving traffic counts at several intersections so was unable to be implemented. Kate said she understands the concern of residents on Summer St but expressed her concerns about the impact of a truck exclusion on the center of town. Scott also mentioned that a tractor trailer making a right onto Main St. would have to do so from the left lane. Bill Pierce also expressed concern about a truck making a right turn from a left turn only lane, especially since cars in the right lane can make a left turn.

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2. HCVE for Rice Avenue between Whitney St. and Allen St. - CMRPC conducted traffic counts for this area and determined that it met the criteria for a truck exclusion. An engineering study was also completed. Scott Charpentier pointed out that all of the truck exclusions around Rice Avenue complicate a truck exclusion on Rice Ave. between Whitney St. and Allen St.

Chris Deceatis asked if slight geometric changes to the road might deter trucks. Scott Charpentier responded saying that lane narrowing or bump outs might deter repeat truck drivers. Bill Pierce reiterated the need for more enforcement on the Whitney St. bridge with the weight restriction.

Scott Charpentier will forward traffic counts, studies and alternate routes for both Summer St. and Rice Ave between Whitney St. and Allen St. so the TSC can see the impact on other roads in town.

No residents called in for public comment on these items

3. HCVE for Lincoln St. - Scott Charpentier said that trucks are using Lincoln St. as a cut through. He recommends traffic counts in 2024 on Lincoln St. and Pleasant St. for a potential HCVE to confirm that Lincoln St. meets the threshold. Bill Pierce advised to hold off until the next meeting for a recommendation on Lincoln St. traffic counts.
4. Jake Brake prohibition for Lincoln St. - Scott Charpentier mentioned that if Lincoln St. doesn't meet the threshold for a HCVE, the town can implement an engine brake restriction.
5. School Street sidewalk bridge condition - MassDOT requires sidewalks on bridges regardless if the sidewalk connects to another sidewalk. The School St. sidewalk's carrier beams have rusted through and the sidewalk needed to be closed, prohibiting pedestrian access. It is Northborough's responsibility to fix the sidewalk, so it remains closed for the time being. The vehicle portion of the bridge remains in good condition. To fix the sidewalk portion of the bridge, the entire bridge would need to be rebuilt. Given budget restraints, that's not a possibility at present.
6. 264 Whitney St. sidewalk condition - sidewalk drops away from the road grade and is undulating through the tree roots. However, the sidewalk goes nowhere and probably isn't worth allocating town money to repair.
7. Applefest Street Fair accessibility - Scott Charpentier informed the committee that some Applefest vendors placed their booths and wares along wheelchair accessible routes including one vendor partially blocking a handicap parking space. The event is private and not managed by the town. Residents who oversee the event were made aware of the inaccessibility to avoid it happening again. Kate Girard recommended that town management have access to the vendor layout ahead of

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time to ensure accessibility for everyone. Bill Pierce recommended that since vendors are set up on town property, to reinforce no vendor booths can be set up in accessibility routes as part of the permit process. Scott added that when the event managers go before the Select Board, they are reminded that accessibility must be maintained when vendor booths are set up.

8. Church St. guardrail request, horizontal curve north of Colby St. - Scott Charpentier explained that there's a utility pole on Church St., immediately after the curve on Colby St. when heading towards 290. Because the curb isn't significantly elevated and due to the curve of the road, a driver can drift toward the utility pole. The pole was taken out a few months ago, significantly impacting electrical systems and communication downtown. A resident requested a guardrail in front of the pole and curve. Installation of a guardrail requires a specific distance from the roadway edge and the face of the guardrail as well as a certain distance from the guardrail and the obstruction. The location of the pole and sidewalk allows for no room or geometric allowance to install a guardrail in front of the pole.
9. Crawford St. guardrail request, DCR property - while this area of Crawford St. warrants a guardrail, the layout of the road and surroundings doesn't allow for one. There's no shoulder and installation of a guardrail would encroach on DCR land, their floodplain and wetlands. Installation of a guardrail would entail a significant embankment construction project as well as compensatory flood storage mitigation.
10. Lyman Street horizontal curve sight distance sign request - a Del Webb resident asked both Northborough and Westborough to install a blind driveway or sharp curve sign on Lyman St near the over 55 community. The DPW determined, based on speed limit and length required for clear line of sight to make the turn safely, the area doesn't warrant a blind drive or sharp curve sign. Too much signage, especially when not warranted, falsely identifies hazards that don't exist and creates unnecessary signage clutter.
11. Stop sign request on Thoreau Road at intersection with Emerson Road - based on MassDOT guidelines, including: line of sight issues, an obvious major road/minor road intersection and frequent accident location that would be avoided by a stop sign (3 in one year, 5 in two years), none of the criteria are met at this intersection.

During this discussion, 4 way intersections with no stop signs in residential neighborhoods came up. There was a discussion of liability should an accident occur at one of these intersections since both directions have the right of way. Scott Charpentier said he would follow up in the MUTCD manual to see if there was any guidance or leeway in installing stop signs at these intersections.

12. Speed bump installation on "cut through" roadways, Winter Street – Scott

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Charpentier explained the differences in speed mitigation tools including: a speed bump (those found in a parking lot), a speed hump (used in a neighborhood road or access road, wider than a speed bump, 10-12 feet wide), speed table (longer and can accommodate both axles of a vehicle).

Speed humps or tables are the only options on a public way. The goal of a speed hump is to mitigate traffic to 15- 25 mph. They should only be used where the speed limit is 25 mph. They can be difficult for snow removal, can be an issue for emergency routing and egresses as well as public safety vehicles. Speed humps can also be very loud and entail drainage issues.

Chris Deceatis brought up the potential use of temporary speed humps that have notches for drainage and can be removed during the winter months. Scott Charpentier responded that a pilot program is probably warranted with temporary speed humps.

Review of Traffic Safety webpage

All emails and website inquiries or concerns submitted by residents are forwarded to both the DPW and the Police Department. If answers to submitted questions have already been posted on the Traffic Safety webpage, residents are directed to the page where their question is answered. The DPW will continue to direct residents to the Traffic Safety webpage but also inform them that the new Traffic Safety Committee is active. The DPW is also letting residents know when their request or concerns will be on the agenda for a Traffic Safety Committee meeting.

Committee members are encouraged to link the Traffic Safety webpage submission form on social media when appropriate and inform residents of the committee so that residents are able to tune in and participate in meetings.

Bill Pierce requested that the TSC mission statement be posted on the committee page as well as links to the DPW Traffic Safety webpage including the submission form.

Public comment

While the public was invited to participate, there were no callers.

Schedule future meetings

The next meeting is December 12th at 6:30pm.

Scott Charpentier will follow up on:

- Forwarding HCVE reports from Summer St and Rice Ave.

- Forwarding the guardrail spreadsheet (completed in 2016)

- Adding links on the Traffic Safety Committee page to the DPW Traffic Safety Page

- Will do in-depth look at MUTCD (Federal Highway Administration Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices) regarding stop sign warrants

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Motion to adjourn at 8:24pm by Bryan Cole, seconded by Rachael Armstrong, unanimously approved.

Meeting ended at 8:25pm.

Materials Used During Meeting
None