



TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Selectmen

FROM: John Coderre, Town Administrator

SUBJECT: Traffic Update and Recommendations

DATE: January 22, 2021

Over the last several months, Town staff have been contemplating the best way to manage ongoing traffic concerns throughout Northborough including most recently in the Bartlett Street area. The following short, mid, and long-term solutions will address both the current trucking difficulties, as well as provide an outlet for residents to voice their opinions on remedies for these problems in the long-term. We have compiled this recommendation for the Board's consideration.

First and foremost, we want to give the Board and residents a few updates as it pertains to various related traffic requests with respect to crosswalks, sidewalks, and other concerns throughout Northborough.

- Citizens have requested the installation of additional safety measure for the Main Street crosswalk near Maple Street. The Town's initial request to MassDOT to allow installation of rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB) was denied. A reconsideration request was made and is currently being evaluated by MassDOT.
- The South Street crosswalk near Northgate Road has been a location of concern for a number of years. Additional advance warning signs were previously installed and most recently the Town's first RRFB warning system.
- Speeding concerns have been expressed periodically in neighborhoods that are being used as cut-through. Northborough Police mobilized battery operated speed activated signs to assist in response to these concerns.
- A dangerous curve exists on Davis Street near the intersection with Otis Street as well as one on Otis Street at the Smith Pond Dam Bridge. Additional directional chevron signs have been installed to warn drivers of the roadway geometry.

In the short-term, staff will continue to answer residents' questions and keep in direct contact with all businesses along Bartlett Street. We have established relationships with all these

businesses and feel that our ongoing communications directly with them is the most efficient way to handle complaints and enforcement concerns. The businesses have been receptive to our requests and recommendations thus far, and we would like to maintain that positive and constructive dialog moving forward. In addition to maintaining those affiliations, we also want to provide a transparent outlet for residents to ask questions and get feedback regarding their traffic concerns including the ongoing communications between the Town and businesses along Bartlett Street. We would like to propose an online Traffic Page, that will be hosted on the Town's website. This page will allow for residents to submit questions, concerns, and reports directly to town staff. These requests will be disseminated to the appropriate professionals, and all inquiries and responses will be posted directly to the Traffic Page of the website within a set timeframe to be determined. Enforcement concerns will be accepted as well and have a means of direct reporting the Northborough Police Department.

The current method of disseminating information via email to a list of recipients has been successful in the short-term, but it is not a permanent nor logically sustainable solution for handling these concerns. Publishing a link on the Town's webpage with all requested information and responses will make it more transparent and accessible for all residents of Northborough, rather than just the few that email specific departments. It will also allow for more collaboration between staff and continuity of responses in the event that a staff person on the email thread is unable to respond in a timely manner.

In addition to creating a dedicated webpage that allows direct interaction between residents and staff, we also propose to the Board that all inquiries regarding mid to long-term traffic solutions and matters be directed to the Master Plan Implementation Committee. The Northborough Master Plan was completed last year, and an implementation committee was established to organize and develop action plans to apply the recommendations in the Master Plan. This will require thorough discussions about a range of issues included in the plan, one of which is traffic. The outlet that is being routinely discussed by some residents in the form of a Traffic Committee already exists in the Master Plan Implementation Committee. It is precisely the charge of the Implementation Committee to consider a range of projects and/or policies related to the Master Plan itself. Included in the Master Plan are long-range considerations to traffic, not only in the Bartlett Street area, but throughout Northborough. It is our recommendation to the Board that requests to discuss traffic solutions be funneled through the Master Plan Implementation Committee, rather than through an independent Traffic Committee which will only increase the demand for staff and resources which are already strained.

Lastly, it is likely that projects or action plans will come through the Master Plan Implementation Committee which may have costs associated with them. We anticipate a range of projects will be recommended by the Implementation Committee with varied costs, some of which may qualify for CPC funding, and others which may not. In order to plan for these possible projects and their costs, we propose putting a placeholder in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for FY2023/2024 to begin addressing any recommendations that may come as a result of the Implementation Committee's work. We remind the Board that the CIP is flexible and if an urgent need arises out of the Implementation Committee's work, this placeholder can be modified as needed.

This comprehensive recommendation to the Board addresses all the requests that have been made by residents thus far with respect to traffic and safety in the Bartlett Street area. This recommendation does not limit the Board to just issues in the Bartlett Street area, but rather, allows the Master Plan Implementation Committee to take an inclusive approach with respect to traffic throughout town. In addition to a town-wide review of traffic concerns, we are also providing an immediate outlet for residents to continue voicing their concerns to staff and a medium through which to transparently disseminate information not just to a select few in the Bartlett Street area, but to any resident with access to the Town's webpage. Finally, we hope that the placeholder on the long-range Capital Improvement Plan reflects our commitment to honor recommendations that come from the Master Plan Implementation Committee, which will be shaped by Committee members and residents throughout Northborough.