

Town Council

Town of Watertown

Committee on Public Works, Meeting March 7, 2011

Report: March 22, 2011

The Committee met March 7th at 7:30 pm in the Watertown Savings Bank Room at the Watertown Free Public Library. Present were: Susan Falkoff, Chair; Steve Corbett, Vice-chair; Vincent Piccirilli, Secretary; DPW Superintendent Gerald Mee; Steven Magoon, Director of Community Development & Planning; and James Fitzpatrick, Michael Pompili, and Rich Benevento from WorldTech Engineering. Also present were Councilors Angie Kounelis and Cecilia Lenk, State Representative Jon Hecht, and about 25 members of the public.

The purpose of the meeting was for the DPW and their design consultant, WorldTech Engineering, to present the Mt Auburn St Corridor Study. This is the Phase 1 Feasibility Study & Conceptual Design for Mt Auburn St as described in the April 13, 2010 Committee on Public Works report. The study is available on the Town website www.watertown-ma.gov in the Document Center under Community Development and Planning.

Mr. Mee began by describing that the traffic study was commissioned to look at the feasibility of reducing the travel lanes along portions of Mt Auburn St from 4 to 2 lanes to improve pedestrian safety and to examine methods for improving traffic flow. The DPW's goal for Mt Auburn St is a full reconstruction using state & federal Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) construction funds instead of local tax dollars, at an approximate cost of \$9M dollars.

Mr. Benevento explained that when Mt Auburn St was rebuilt 30 years ago, the design requirement was to maximize traffic volume. The state design guidelines have changed significantly since then, and they now require "context-sensitive" design, with Mt Auburn St serving as a "town road" with local businesses and residences, as opposed to a "state highway" built to maximize through traffic flow.

Mr. Fitzpatrick gave the technical presentation. Traffic counts at key intersections were provided, both average daily traffic and peak hour traffic. West of Common St carries 23,380 vehicles/day and east of Arlington 17,430 vehicles/day. Efficiency of traffic operations was also studied, with the Arlington intersection receiving a failing grade in both the AM and PM, and the western Boylston intersection failing in the AM. Finally, traffic projections were made to 2030.

Based on the traffic volumes, WorldTech made the following recommendations:

- Mt Auburn St should remain 4 lanes west of Common St.
- East of Common St, two traffic lanes with dedicated left turn lanes were recommended at key intersections.
- A full traffic signal was recommended at western Boylston St.
- All existing signalized intersections would be upgraded with modern equipment to improve traffic flow and reduce wait times.
- The level of service at each key intersection would, based upon these changes, be equal to or better than what currently exists for the 4 lane configuration.

Next, three design concepts were produced:

1. Raised median: This concept restricts left turn access along most of the road, and limits access of emergency vehicles. It does not permit parking on both sides of the street. Bike lanes would be provided on both sides. It also presents maintenance issues. This was seen as the least desirable alternative.

2. Two-way left turn center lane: This alternative allows unrestricted left turns, room for emergency vehicles, and bike lanes, but does not significantly improve pedestrian crossings, and would not allow parking on both sides of the street. It also creates the opportunity for head-on collisions in dense urban areas. For these reasons, this alternative was seen as undesirable.
3. Single through lane: This alternative would have dedicated left turn lanes at key intersections, and, at some intersections, dedicated right turn lanes. Parking and bike lanes would be provided on both sides of the street. Dedicated bus stops that allow the trolleys to pull out of the travel lane would be provided. Pedestrian crossing distances would be significantly reduced. Adequate maneuvering room would be available for emergency vehicles. This concept also matches the design concept for the Coolidge Square improvements presented to the public in June 2009.

After a period of questions and answers, it was clear that the public preferred the 3rd concept, as did Mr. Mee and WorldTech Engineering.

Councilor Falkoff asked what the next step would be. Mr. Mee stated the DPW would proceed with Phase 2, Functional Design Report and Design of Early Action Projects, using state Chapter 90 funds as identified in the FY2012 Capital Improvement Program, if this were to be approved. He noted that there is still a lot of engineering work to be done, and plans will be presented to the public for feedback before the designs are finalized.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 pm.

Report prepared by: Vincent Piccirilli

SIGN-IN SHEET

1 of 2

<u>NAME</u>	<u>ADDRESS</u>	<u>E-MAIL</u>
Mary Barry	28 Appleton St. WAT.	
Peg Cassidy	22 Parent's St	
Cecilia Lent	81 Boyd St.	clenk@watertown-ma.gov
Angie Rourke	55 Keenan St.	Town Councilor
John Boetley	51 Langdon Ave	
Al Pechto	741 W. Main	
Missak Ourfalian	569 Mt Auburn St.	Masses Bakery@gmail.com
Susan Elyemezian	598 Mt. Auburn	FASTACH susan@fastach.com
Lynne Gaines	296 Mt. Auburn	
Deborah Peterson	277 School St	
Susan Magarian	526 Mt. Auburn St	
Lance Hobson	530 713 2844	
Mike HANLON	231 Coolidge Ave.	
Dennis J. Duff	33 Spruce St.	
Ruth Thomasian	323 Arlington St	
Don B. Elliott	125 Coolidge Ave	
Bill Burgess	10 Bigelow Ave	bburgess@watertownsways.com
Mark Giragosian	576 Mt. Auburn St.	
Maureen O'Sullivan	40 Franklin St	
A. Peantadosi	41 Melendy Ave	Wat
George K. Omartian	48 Bigelow Ave #31	
Clyde Younger		
Sheila Fay	557 Mt Auburn St	

