




Gerald S. Mee Jr.
Superintendent

TOWN OF WATERTOWN

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
124 ORCHARD STREET
WATERTOWN MA 02472

(P) 617-972-6420
(F) 617-972-6402

TO: Michael Driscoll, Town Manager

FROM: Gerald S. Mee, Jr. 
Superintendent

DATE: July 6, 2018

RE: Mount Auburn Street Conceptual Design Endorsement

At the June 27, 2018 Public Works Subcommittee Meeting, the following motion was passed and proposed to be placed on the July 10, 2018 agenda:

To authorize the Administration to proceed and submit to MassDOT a design for the Mt Auburn St Reconstruction Project that is based on the conceptual design developed to date with input from the public since 2013, that is consistent with MassDOT Complete Streets Planning Guidelines, and is consistent with the goals of the Watertown Comprehensive Plan to revitalize Coolidge Square.

Attached you will find the current concept plan which the Department of Public Works has developed through an extensive public process. Attached you will find a memo from Town Engineer, Matt Shuman, detailing this process and its impact on the current design. This project is currently programed for State and Federal Funding in FY 2022 with an estimated construction cost of more than \$14 million and eligible for advertising in October of 2021. In order to meet this proposed construction schedule, the Department has requested that the revised conceptual design be endorsed by Town Council in order to proceed with MassDOT's 25% preliminary design submission.

The Council endorsement of the attached concept at the July 10, 2018 meeting is vitally important to ensure that the project remains on schedule and funding is not jeopardized by being allocated to a project in another community. Timing of the conceptual plan endorsement is critical in order to prepare and submit the 25% preliminary design to MassDOT by the December 2018 design review deadline. This design review is intended to provide MassDOT's Highway Division the opportunity to evaluate the proposed design relative to current design standards, right of way impacts, environmental impacts and other potential community concerns associated with the proposed design and provide feedback to the community.

Advancing to the preliminary design phase does not eliminate the opportunity for minor design modifications or public input. In fact, additional public meetings and workshops will be held prior to the official MassDOT Design Public Hearing at the conclusion of the preliminary 25% design stage and in advance to subsequent design phases (75%, 100%, PS&E).

The Mount Auburn Street design process is also consistent with MassDOT's Complete Streets Planning Guidelines (see attached memo from M. Shuman) and the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) considers Mount Auburn Street as a Regional Priority Project in the Complete Streets investment category.

Out of 28 projects evaluated by the MPO in 2017, Mount Auburn Street received the highest ranking in the Complete Streets investment category due to its positive impact in the six categories evaluated – safety, system preservation, capacity management, clean air, transportation equity, and economic vitality.

The Transportation Element of the Watertown Comprehensive Plan lists six overarching goals and below is a brief summary of how the current concept addresses these goals:

Goal #	Theme	How Concept Addresses Goal
1	Traffic Calming	Curb extensions, bump outs, and/or neckdowns along with on-street parking. Road diet where warranted
2	Expand Mass Transit	MBTA bus signal prioritization, bus queue jump lanes, bus stop adjustments for signal optimization, MBTA officials have been involved throughout process.
3	Bike/Ped Access	Narrower pedestrian crossings, bump outs, upgraded sidewalks and ramps introduction of bike lanes where none currently exist
4	Roadway Infrastructure	Complete Streets techniques introduced to consider all users throughout the corridor.
5	Reduce Congestion	Traffic signal upgrades including “smart technology”, improved intersection layouts, turning lanes introduced, plan designed using most recent traffic counting data
6	Alternative/Reduced Parking	Parking adjusted to conform to MassDot standards, will monitor the planned parking study. Retains/increases overall parking in business districts

Additionally, the Mt. Auburn Street Complete Streets project also supports economic vitality in the Coolidge Square business district by making it more comfortable and attractive for shopping, dining, gathering, and socializing. The following improvements will promote vitality and a sense of place in Coolidge Square:

- Wider sidewalks for pedestrians
- Narrower street crossings for easier and safer walking and shopping
- Benches for shoppers and bus riders
- Expanded pedestrian zone at Bigelow Street.
- New landscaped areas to improve air quality and provide shade and beauty
- Street furniture such as benches, tables, and bike racks for gathering or just resting
- Maintains road capacity while slowing traffic which encourages a sense of place

Due to the thorough public process, data collection and analysis, our positive collaborations with multiple agencies including other Town Departments, MassDot, the Boston MPO, the MBTA, and City of Cambridge, and the potential for over \$14,000,000 in outside funding, I would strongly encourage the endorsement of the attached concept plan.