



Meeting Minutes TSAC August 28, 2019

DATE: September 4, 2019
SUBJECT: **TSAC Minutes from August 28, 2019**

Meeting called to order by Michael Diluiso at 8:37 AM

Members Present:

- Michael Diluiso, Parking Department
- Deputy Chief John Goodwin, Police Department
- Director Steven Calla, Department of Public Works
- John Eade, Resident Representative

New Business:

Agenda Item:

Request for bike lane on Veterans road

Director Calla is studying this matter to report back to the Town Manager and the Town Council. No specifics were given, just the task to look at the feasibility of a bike lane on Veterans Road. He took it upon himself to look at putting the bike lane on the Northbound side, which is the non-parking side, in the direction of the flow of traffic.

He measured at 4 locations along the roadway: By the Temple near Hadassah Way, Cutler St, the rear of Clothes Encounters, and at Hadassah Way itself. Although the Northbound lane met the minimum lane width if a 4-foot bike lane was installed, the roadway width is inconsistent and does not meet minimum lane widths in several locations. 4 feet is the minimum, with a 6-foot bike lane being recommended. At two out of the four stations, the width of the roadway reduces so there is not a full 11-foot lane width present. This means that coming Southbound, when parking is taken into consideration, there are at least two spots of the four measured with less than 9-foot lanes, and there may be more areas with similar conditions. This lane width would put a bus or other large vehicle over the center line when travelling under normal conditions. This means that if a car and a large vehicle are passing at the same time and a bike is in the bike lane, when the large vehicle crosses the center line, it will force the car into the bike lane, and possibly force the cyclist into the sidewalk.

There is a concern that painting a bike lane will give the cyclist a false sense of security. With a 4-foot bike lane, it does not give a cyclist much space to maneuver when the width of the handlebars is taken into account. Director Calla does not recommend painting a designated bike lane at this location. He

stated that if there is a desire to make this a bike route, sharrows would be the better option, but he does not recommend that either.

If you promote this as a bike route, then you are sending cyclists into an area where they have no place to go. Shirley Street heading toward Revere Street is a two-way road that is too narrow to accommodate a bike lane, and vehicles regularly breach the center line. If you go right on Shirley Street it would be safer, but you're sending cyclists back the way they came from. Sending cyclists further up Veterans Road to Beach Road near the "green bars" also gives cyclists no place to go. Crest Ave also is too narrow to accommodate a bike lane, and Winthrop Shore Drive is also not configured to accommodate a bike lane.

Director Calla stated a better option may be to make an investment in placing a hard-packed surface by the walk Winthrop path by Lewis Lake to River Road, which would be a much safer alternative. River Road is a much safer alternative to Veterans Road, and Cross Street could potentially be reconfigured to accommodate cyclists to the High School area, then find a way to get them safely down to Morton Street, instead of Main Street from Magee's Corner to Pleasant Street. This path would be a much safer route to get cyclists from the Delby's corner area to the East Boston line, and to the Revere line if the new boardwalk and DCR trail system is utilized.

Veterans Road is a truck route, a bus route, an evacuation route, and it has pinch points that do not accommodate an 11-foot lane width, that is required due to the size of the vehicles forced onto that roadway. Sharrows would be a better option on Veterans Road, but still not preferred for the reasons previously mentioned.

Mr. Diluiso asked if a bike lane could even be installed on Veterans Road, since it is part of state highway 145. Director Calla was unsure and stated he could reach out to MassDOT if needed.

Mr. Eade pointed out that the chemical trucks to Deer Island use Veterans Road on a regular basis. He also reiterated the fact that the roadway width does vary greatly, down to less than 30 feet in places. Director Calla stated that on the side with the parking, he measured off of the guard rail 10 feet before measuring lane width, since cars regularly park about 2 feet away from the guard rail. Mr. Eade also pointed out that portions of the roadway have angle parking, which is very unsafe where a bike lane is present. This would make a bike lane on the West side of the roadway inappropriate. He also stated that there are vehicles that park on the East side of the roadway near the temple, even if it is only for drop-offs and pick-ups.

Mr. Eade stated that when 11 foot lane widths, plus 8 foot parking lanes, plus the 2 foot buffer to the guard rail are added up, you're looking at a minimum 32 foot wide roadway that is needed, before you add another 6 foot lane for each direction a bike lane would be installed. Not only does Veterans Road appear not to be wide enough to accommodate bike lanes and this level of traffic, but there may not be any roadway in town that can accommodate parking, two-way traffic of heavy vehicles, and bike lanes. There are also potential bicycle/pedestrian conflicts that need to be looked at.

Mr. Eade stated that most cyclists in town seem to be recreational riders who may be unfamiliar with the proper rules for riding in mixed traffic. He also stated that for both the cyclists and motorists, he feels it would be irresponsible to install a dedicated bike lane on Veterans Road.

Deputy Chief Goodwin stated that he couldn't approve installing bike lanes anywhere in town without review and guidance from a traffic study or engineering study showing that the lane to be installed would be safe. He also spoke with a Sgt in Revere, and stated that since Revere installed bike lanes, their traffic crashes involving cyclists have increased. He also cited issues with bike lanes in Cambridge, and agrees with Mr. Eade that it would be irresponsible to install any such lanes without an appropriate study by properly credentialed professionals. He supports implementing a program to the biking population, but wants to see it designed properly and safely.

Mr. Eade stated he would not want to see a situation like what exists on Saratoga Street with a narrow bike lane in one direction and sharrows in the other, which may not provide safe passage for cyclists. He also stated that he observed most cyclists in that corridor ride on the sidewalk due to the conditions.

Director Calla stated that a comment was made that we're looking at Veterans Road because it's one of the wider streets in town. While this may be the case, it doesn't fit with a bicycle route of the town because you're sending cyclists to other unsafe areas. Some education on how to safely commute via bicycle along with proper engineering is necessary.

Mr. Diluiso stated that even if we were to paint a bike lane on the Northbound lane of Veterans Road, the bus would still encroach on the bike lane to pick-up and drop off passengers. Even when bike lanes are professionally engineered, accidents can and do happen, some of which can be fatal.

Director Calla reiterated that there are other, safer options that would send cyclists in the same direction while providing a safer route for all modes of transportation sharing the road. Mr. Eade stated that you can lessen the conflicts between cyclists and motorists by encouraging cyclists to use the roads less traveled by motorists. He also stated that other routes may be more scenic and cultural.

Director Calla stated that in addition to this issue, a comprehensive study needs to be done beyond this one roadway to include bike routes and paths around the town, and the necessary parking and ordinance changes to implement such bike routes. Mr. Eade voiced reservations about expanding the scope of discussion beyond the Veterans Road corridor. Mr. Diluiso agreed, but also stated that placing a bike lane on Veterans Road does very little to help cyclists without giving them someplace to go once the proposed lane ends.

There was further discussion by the committee on the best wording for a motion before the following motion was made:

MOTION: By Deputy Chief Goodwin: Due to the challenges presented by the various transportation requirements and varying road widths of Veterans Road, TSAC does not recommend a bike lane on Veterans Road until such time as an engineering study can be completed to ensure that any such bike lane is installed as safely as possible in the interest of public safety.

SECONDED: Mr. Eade

DISCUSSION OF THE MOTION: Committee members discussed the matter for several minutes before arriving on the wording of this final motion.

VOTE IN FAVOR OF MOTION: Unanimous

Mr. Eade echoed previous concerns raised during the meeting that a bike lane on Veterans Road goes nowhere and connects to nothing beyond that roadway, leaving cyclists no safe path once that road ends.

Mr. Diluiso stated that if bike lanes are going to be painted anywhere in town, the previously drafted bike lane ordinance would need to be reintroduced in order to prevent parking in any such bike lanes.

Old Business

Deputy Chief Goodwin has asked that the traffic and parking plan around Winthrop Middle/High School be placed back on the TSAC September agenda, and that the Town Manager's office notify the abutters of any such meeting.

MOTION TO ADJOURN: Director Calla

SECONDED: Deputy Chief Goodwin

VOTE IN FAVOR: Unanimous

Meeting adjourned at 9:25 am.