

MEMORANDUM

Diane Nichols Tradd
Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

TO: Eileen M. Donoghue, City Manager *EMD*

FROM: Diane N. Tradd, Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

Craig Thomas
Deputy Director

DATE: July 14, 2020

SUBJECT: COUNCIL MOTION OF 6/9/20 BY COUNCILOR NUON REQUEST. CITY MANAGER WORK WITH THE STATE DELEGATION AND THE MASS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION TO IMPLEMENT CHANGES THAT WILL SLOW TRAFFIC ON THE PAWTUCKET BOULEVARD; POSSIBILITIES INCLUDE RADAR SPEED DISPLAY, AUTOMATED SPEED ENFORCEMENT, SPEED BUMPS AND NARROWING THE ROAD

On June 1, 2020, Senator Edward Kennedy, with Representative Golden in copy, sent a letter to Dan Fielding, the Legislative Liaison for the MassDOT Highway Division, about the fatal crash and requesting that MassDOT study the roadway and implement traffic calming measures. A prompt response was received from Paul Stedman, District 4 Administrator, noting the planned review and safety assessment. See attached.

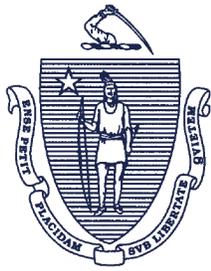
On June 12, 2020, the Transportation Engineer and the City Engineer met virtually with Frank Suszynski, Deputy Highway Director in District 4 and other District 4 staff members to discuss the issue of speeding on Pawtucket Boulevard/VFW Highway. The District 4 staff had already engaged with the Traffic Safety Unit in the MassDOT Boston office to evaluate the safety concerns on the roadway. They indicated that they would have a range of recommendations, which would be immediate/near-term, mid-term and long term. MassDOT has installed a Dynamic Speed Warning Sign (DSWS) between Old Ferry Road and the Water Department. DSWS typically work well to immediately lower speeds on roadways, with declining efficacy in approximately 6 months. MassDOT's Traffic Safety Unit will evaluate the speed limit signs to determine if they are correctly placed and sized for the roadway. They will collect and evaluate data using RIDDIX, a crash data tool, to determine if portions of the roadway need safety improvements. MassDOT is committed to following the data to the appropriate conclusions.

In addition, given the recent pedestrian fatalities on VFW Highway and understanding the urgency of the public safety situation, DPD also sought an immediate solution with a very quick turnaround time. DPD has applied for a Shared Street grant to create a road diet along Pawtucket Boulevard from Varnum Avenue to the Esplanade. The Shared Street grant application emphasized creating additional public space for socially distanced walking and biking. If approved for the grant, a 2,100' long row of jersey barriers will be placed at the edge of the inside lane, providing significant additional space for pedestrians and cyclists, with a protective structural barrier between them and traffic. The City will be notified by July 14, 2020 if we received the funding.

NV/ns

Attachment

cc: Natasha Vance, PE, Transportation Engineer
Ting Chang, PE, City Engineer



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

MASSACHUSETTS SENATE

SENATOR EDWARD J. KENNEDY

First Middlesex District

STATE HOUSE
BOSTON, MA 02133-1053
TEL. (617) 722-1630
FAX (617) 722-1001
WWW.MASENATE.GOV

June 1, 2020

Dan Fielding, Legislative Liaison - MassDOT Highway Division
10 Park Plaza, Suite 4160
Boston, MA 02116

Dear Mr. Fielding,

Pawtucket Boulevard in Lowell (Route 113) has, for decades, been a problem spot in the city of Lowell for speeding and reckless driving, causing many fatal and non-fatal accidents.

It runs along the Merrimack River, which draws many pedestrians during the warmer months who come out for recreation, to get an ice cream, or enjoy a concert.

During this current public health crisis, many people who live in the Pawtucketville neighborhood have been walking along Pawtucket Boulevard, on both sides of the street, to get their daily exercise and some fresh air. The decrease in vehicle traffic due to the pandemic has made the two-lane roadway a speedway even during times of the day that would, in normal times, be congested by rush hour traffic.

At 6:30 p.m. on Thursday May 21, an evening walk proved deadly for Jose and Fernanda Medina, a couple in their 60's who were walking on the sidewalk along Pawtucket Boulevard.

A 26-year-old man who was allegedly racing another vehicle struck the Medinas. He lost control of the Mustang he was driving and it veered up onto the sidewalk striking and killing the couple.

This tragedy should not have happened.

Lowell Police Superintendent Kelly Richardson told the Lowell City Council that despite his department increasing enforcement of traffic laws across the city and issuing more than 200 tickets per week, Pawtucket Boulevard continues to be a troubled stretch of road.

We are writing today to request that the Department of Transportation study Pawtucket Boulevard and provide recommendations for traffic calming measures along this busy and dangerous roadway.

A new Market Basket is scheduled to open along the street this summer, adding an estimated 5,000 vehicle trips per week to Pawtucket Boulevard (113).

Time is of the essence to remedy this dangerous situation. We cannot afford to wait for another senseless tragedy like what happened to Jose and Fernanda Medina.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ed Kennedy". The signature is stylized with a large "E" and a long horizontal stroke.

Sen. Edward J. Kennedy Jr.
First Middlesex District

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Golden". The signature is cursive and somewhat difficult to decipher.

Rep. Thomas A. Golden Jr.
16th Middlesex District



Charles D. Baker, Governor
Karyn E. Polito, Lieutenant Governor
Stephanie Pollack, Secretary & CEO
Jonathan L. Gulliver, Highway Administrator



June 17, 2020

The Honorable Edward J. Kennedy, Jr.
Senator, First Middlesex District

The Honorable Thomas A. Golden, Jr.
Representative, 16th Middlesex District

State House
Boston, MA 02133-1053

Dear Senator Kennedy and Representative Golden:

I am responding to your June 1st letter to Daniel Fielding, MassDOT Legislative Liaison, regarding traffic operations and safety on Pawtucket Boulevard in Lowell, specifically the section in the area of the tragic crash that killed two pedestrians who were struck by an out-of-control vehicle, travelling at an abnormally high rate of speed.

Pawtucket Boulevard is a four-lane divided roadway throughout much of its length in Lowell. The section between Old Ferry Road and Stockbridge Avenue is under local jurisdiction, while the sections to the east and west are under MassDOT jurisdiction. The roadway transitions from a four-lane divided section to a two-lane undivided section in the area near the Tyngsborough line.

In response to the fatal crash, MassDOT placed a speed reader feedback board on June 5th on the westbound roadway in the area near the Lowell Utility Works facility. Our office also commenced discussions regarding this matter with the Lowell City Manager's office and staff from the City's Transportation and Engineering Departments. We have begun to gather historical and current traffic volume, speed and crash data. Our staff will also conduct a field review to assess the pavement markings, signage and functionality of the traffic signal operations. Once the initial crash data has been obtained, MassDOT will work with the City and other stakeholders to schedule a Road Safety Audit (RSA) for the segment/intersections of concern. The results of the data gathering effort, field review and RSA will help us make informed decisions on potential short, mid and long-term measures to improve safety along the segment.

I look forward to continuing to work with you both on this matter. If you have any further questions or need additional information, please contact me at (781) 641-8300 or via email at Paul.Stedman@dot.state.ma.us.

Sincerely,

Paul D. Stedman
District Highway Director

PDS/JEG

XC: Dan Fielding, Legislative Affairs
Frank Suszynski, P.E., Deputy District Highway Director
Mike Karas, P.E., District Operations Engineer
John Gregg, P.E., District Traffic Operations Engineer