



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: October 13, 2020

SUBJECT: MOTION OF 9/22/20 BY COUNCILOR CONWAY  
REQUEST CITY MANAGER DIRECT DPD/TRANSPORTATION ENGINEER TO  
DEVELOP A PROTOCOL/POLICY FOR CITIZEN CONCERNS AND  
COMPLAINTS REGARDING TRAFFIC ISSUES IN THE CITY

The City of Lowell contends with myriad and complex transportation issues, including but not limited to traffic congestion, circulation concerns, aged infrastructure, commuter/cut-through traffic, UML traffic and parking concerns, business and resident parking concerns, construction projects, utility replacements, 100+ bridges in the City and 2-lane (or closed/structurally deficient) bridges/river crossings. Resident requests for evaluation and review of traffic related issues come to the desk of the Transportation Engineer through many channels, including phone calls, emails, petitions, Council motions, in person/drop-in meetings and contact with City staff. It can be challenging to track, evaluate and respond to all of the requests. Development of a Citywide protocol for transportation issues is appropriate and needed.

In addition, the creation of a Transportation Working Group (TWG) at the City, for evaluation of larger issues, such as circulation changes, the impact of large infrastructure projects like the Lord Overpass and the Rourke Bridge replacement and pilot programs like Streateries and Shared Streets would aid in timely decision-making. The TWG would include all City stakeholders, including but not limited to the Transportation Engineer, City Engineer, LPD, LFD, Development Services, Economic Development, Sign Department, Parking Department and the Law Department.

Refer to the attached flow chart for an abbreviated overview of the process. The following is the proposed Citywide protocol for citizen concerns/complaints for traffic issues:

- Resident identifies the need for a new sign or traffic ordinance, a change to current traffic configuration, a dangerous intersection or other transportation-related issue and submits a Petition to council via the City Clerk's office. Resident complaints/concerns that are submitted via email or phone call will be directed to submit a petition. The petition process allows for the resident to explain their request in writing, makes the City Council aware of the request and for the petitioner to attend the City Council meeting to speak. Councilors could also speak in support of the petition. This will help with tracking the issue from inception to resolution. If a resident can't apply for a petition, transportation staff will put an informational report on the Council agenda. Transportation staff will update their webpage to describe the process for requesting a stop sign, handicapped sign etc. if not already available, and the Clerk's office should make it possible to submit a petition online.

- Council refers the petition to the Transportation Engineer for investigation.
- Review of existing traffic ordinances and site visits are performed. Most issues fall into three categories: 1) dispute between neighbors; 2) traffic ordinance change is required/needed; or 3) more in-depth study and design is needed.
  - For disputes between neighbors, a meeting will be scheduled with the transportation staff, the neighborhood liaison, LPD's neighborhood contact and the residents, with the goal of resolving the issue.
  - If a new or revised traffic ordinance is required, transportation staff drafts a 60-day trial memo and ordinance. The memo should include a detailed explanation of why the change is proposed and will include the email address [60daytrial@lowellma.gov](mailto:60daytrial@lowellma.gov) so feedback can be gathered in a central location.
  - If the issue is one that can't be resolved with signage/new ordinance, and more study is needed, the transportation staff will work with the City Engineer on a solution, which will be presented to the TWG and City Council.
- If the change is significant and will impact a large number of residents, such as converting a street from 2-way to 1-way, eliminating parking or changing the direction of a 1-way street, the TWG will convene to discuss the issues and note concerns from all City Departments.
- Transportation staff will identify the recommended solution and will draft and send a letter notifying impacted residents of the proposed change to the ordinance, with a date of when the ordinance is proposed to take effect. The letter will go out minimum of 2 weeks before the 60-day trial will go before Council for approval. Council will receive a copy of the letter in the agenda packet.
- Transportation staff will prepare the 60-day trial memo; Law will coordinate with Engineering for review and confirmation of the draft ordinances. Upon completion of their review, Law will place the 60-day trial(s) on the next City Council agenda.
- Upon City Council approval, the City Clerk will send the approved trial ordinances to the members of the TWG. The Transportation staff will coordinate with the Sign Department to mark out the sign locations, as needed.
- Once the Sign Department has installed the sign(s), they will notify the transportation staff for tracking purposes.
- Transportation staff will maintain and update a 60-day trial tracking spreadsheet. The spreadsheet will track the following: date of complaint; date of site visit; date sent to Law/Engineering; date approved by Council; date installed; date of expiration of 60-day trial; notation of feedback provided via email.
- Once per quarter, for the ordinances that the 60-day trial period has expired/been completed, transportation staff will compile a quarterly memo for City Council approval to become permanent traffic ordinances. The memo will go to the DPD Director and then to Law for inclusion on the next City Council agenda.

See attached flow chart for an overview of the suggested protocol.

NV/ns

Attachment

cc: Ting Chang, PE, City Engineer  
 Christine Clancy, PE, DPW Commissioner  
 Natasha Vance, PE, Transportation Engineer

# Traffic Issues Protocol

