



Diane Nichols Tradd
Assistant City Manager/DPD Director

Craig Thomas
Deputy Director

MEMORANDUM

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

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

DATE: November 26, 2019

SUBJECT: PETITION – CITY COUNCIL – OCTOBER 29, 2019
REFERRED TO THE TRANSPORTATION ENGINEER
REQUESTING IMMEDIATE SOLUTION TO UPGRADE SAFETY AT THE CITY HALL
CROSSWALKS ON MERRIMACK STREET

The Transportation Engineer investigated this location and agrees that safety improvements are in order for this location. Currently, pedestrians cross in front of City Hall at two different, unsignalized crosswalks originating on either side of Cardinal O’Connell Parkway. These crosswalks are in a stretch of Merrimack Street that has no stop lights from the intersection with Dutton all the way down to the intersection with Cabot Street, resulting in fast-moving traffic and drivers who are not expecting pedestrians to cross the road. There is also an issue with solar glare at one of the crosswalks. Several pedestrians have been struck by vehicles when crossing Merrimack in front of City Hall.

The Transportation Engineer recommends the following solutions to improve safety for pedestrians crossing at this location:

Immediate:

- Add portable signs placed in the crosswalk instructing vehicles to yield to pedestrians.
- Remove parking spots closest to the crosswalks to increase visibility of pedestrians waiting to cross (Sign/Parking Department labor to remove parking signs/markings or add no parking signs).
- Move Bus Stop past the first crosswalk to aid in pedestrian visibility.
- Add high-visibility pedestrian crossing signs at the four crosswalks.

Short-term:

- Add double-sided Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) to indicate when a pedestrian is crossing (funding must be located, approximately \$20,000 for both crosswalks).
- Outreach campaign about the Massachusetts General Law requiring that motorists yield to pedestrians trying to cross within 10’ of their vehicle (\$2,500 for flyer insert into a mailer, ask LTC for a PSA). This includes both pedestrians waiting to cross and pedestrians in the crosswalk.
- Campaign directed at pedestrians to increase their safety awareness when crossing (a variation on the UMass Lowell student campaign “Eyes Up, Phone Down”), making eye contact with drivers before crossing and other ways to identify distracted drivers.

Long-term:

- Study the removal of the traffic signal at Worthen Street. Can be repurposed within the City. Note that a flashing yellow traffic signal indicates that cross traffic has a stop condition and through traffic has the right of way. A red flashing traffic signal indicates a vehicle must come to a Stop and can proceed cautiously through the intersection once the way is clear.
- Study and evaluate the installation of traffic calming measures. Note that per FHWA, a speed hump is applicable for neighborhood or residential collectors and a maximum Average Daily Traffic (ADT) of 3,500 vehicles. Merrimack Street has an ADT of 7,600 vehicles (2013 count). Potential measures include raised crosswalks, curb bump-outs and pedestrian refuge islands. Traffic calming measures would require review of available ROW, design and construction. Costs could range from \$5,000-\$50,000, depending on the design and construction costs.
- Complete the design phase for the Merrimack Street improvements project that addresses the issues of traffic speed, parking, pedestrian and bike facilities.

The Transportation Engineer recommends performing the immediate solutions and installing RRFBs, which are the most impactful short-term solution. The Transportation staff can begin work on the education campaigns for drivers and pedestrians, if approved.

NV/ns

cc: Natasha Vance, Transportation Engineer
Lt. Stephen Gendreau, LPD
John Cooper, Sign Division
Steve Coutu, City Electrician