

Pedestrian Safety and the Challenges of a the Downtown Roadway

From Norman Khumalo, Hopkinton Town Manager

For more information, contact Dave Daltorio, Town Engineer

In May 2010, Town Meeting authorized \$400,000 for engineering to develop a plan to improve streetscape and infrastructure in our downtown. The Town additionally established the Downtown Initiative Steering Committee (DISC) to advise the Town Manager and provide public input to the BETA Group (the engineers hired to develop the plan) and to assist in facilitating public participation.

The Problem

Approaching Hopkinton Center from Ashland, Main Street widens considerably in front of the Common, and at the same time, flattens out. This combination unintentionally encourages an increase in traffic speed, making the pedestrian crosswalk at Hayden Rowe and Main Street particularly dangerous. Traffic speed is not as significant a concern coming from the west, notwithstanding the downhill between Pleasant Street and Route 85, because the road is a constant width and increased congestion provides a visual cue to maintain a constant speed or even reduce speed. Continuing east on Main Street after the Route 85 intersection, however, gives rise to a new problem. The crosswalks in front of Bill's Pizza and at the intersection of Main and Hayden Rowe Street are difficult to see coming up the hill, creating a pedestrian safety issue. Difficulty in crossing Main Street essentially divides the center of town, substantially decreasing downtown viability.

Options Considered

Solutions to the interaction between pedestrians and vehicular traffic involve traffic “calming” measures (to allow traffic to move through steadily but safely) and increased pedestrian visibility. Those “calming” measures include:

- “Sidewalk extension” – curbing that extends into the roadway to increase pedestrian visibility, shorten crosswalks, and slow traffic speeds,
- Traffic islands – islands in the center of the road that provide a pedestrian “safe” zone in a wide roadway,
- Proper road markings (including crosswalks) – visual cues to help direct traffic,
- Lights and beacons – visual cues to both drivers and pedestrians, and
- Adjusting driveway openings – fewer and better placed driveway openings can enhance traffic flow and pedestrian safety

Possible Solutions

DISC now is in the process of developing its recommendations with regard to the pedestrian safety, roadway widths, downtown streetscape and infrastructure and continues to seek public input. Comments can be provided to the Town Engineer, who is also available to provide time for residents to review the plans. More information is available on the DISC space on the Town of Hopkinton’s website or by contacting the Town Engineer.