

HIGH STREET HILL ASSOCIATION

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November 4, 2007

Michael Sandman, Chair
Brookline Transportation Board

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Dear Mr. Sandman;

Two weeks ago, the High Street Hill Association held a special meeting to discuss neighborhood concerns about safety on High Street, concerns that were highlighted in an April petition signed by 71 residents. Town Administrator Rich Kelliher hosted the meeting and invited staff from the Town Police, Planning and Transportation Departments to respond to questions. The discussion was fruitful and we are thankful for several specific remedies already undertaken by the Police and DPW since then. But, given the complexity of such matters, the meeting only served to raise more questions. It was suggested that we should formally appeal to the Transportation Board for proper consideration of the issues.

Therefore, we, the Board of the High Street Hill Association, respectfully request that the Brookline Transportation Board undertake a full-scale traffic assessment study of High Street. In light of the frequent automobile accidents on High Street, serious safety concerns for pedestrians, speeding by motorists, frequent violations of posted No Left Turn signs, and limited sight distances because of existing conditions on the roadway, we ask that this study be undertaken immediately to avoid further accidents and potential harm to residents.

In consideration of this request, we offer the following specific points:


- Motorists are regularly driving significantly above the speed limit. Brookline Police have stated that speeds on the street average 38 mph for 95% of the vehicles, even though the majority of the street is posted for 30 mph. The speed limit of 30 mph on High Street from Highland to Walnut is too fast given current road conditions, poor sight lines, and the fact that it is a thickly settled neighborhood with many pedestrians, including school children.
- There are many children who live on the Pond Avenue side of High Street, who must cross High Street each morning and afternoon on their walk to and from Lincoln School. The congestion of traffic and the high speed of most cars make this crossing very dangerous, regardless of whether they cross at Allerton or Irving Streets.
- There are frequent serious accidents at the corner of Allerton and High Streets owing to limited sight lines and high speeds of drivers.
- Heavy congestion at morning rush hour backs up traffic from Walnut Street all the way to Irving, making the Allerton intersection especially dangerous as cars on High Street often block the intersection while cars coming up Allerton from Pond Avenue frequently take up two lanes –

one for people trying to turn right onto High while other drivers try to pass them on the left to cut across High Street to get to Irving or Upland. This maneuver is made even more dangerous as they cannot see oncoming traffic coming up the hill on High Street, and those cars can't see them.

- Approaching Allerton from Walnut there are serious sight limitations. We recently learned from Transportation Administrator Todd Kirrane that his survey found that 17 mph is the appropriate necessary speed to stop safely at Allerton – not 30 mph as is posted.
- Speeding on the downhill stretch of High Street approaching the crosswalk at Highland Road is frequent, creating a dangerous situation for anyone trying to use the crosswalk -- - at any time of day, but especially for school children going to and from Lincoln School during rush hours.
- According the Brookline Police, High Street is seldom patrolled for speeding because the police find the road is too narrow to them to pull over suspect speeders safely-- thus allowing the impression that speeding is not discouraged.
- Illegal left turns off High onto Irving and Allerton in the morning by commuters who are trying to bypass the congestion caused by the Walnut St. intersection raises the risk of accidents on Irving and Upland as cars accelerate through the neighborhood to take advantage of the perceived shortcut.
- The time is right to do a comprehensive traffic study of High Street. Major projects such as the redevelopment of 2 Brookline Place by Childrens' Hospital, the redevelopment of the Red Cab Site and the redesign of the Walnut Street "jughandle" at the intersection adjacent to Allerton/High, provide a rare opportunity to do a coordinated and thorough traffic review. The Planning Department has already engaged traffic engineers at Vanasse Hangen Brustlin and their findings may be of use to a High Street study (e.g. VHB has stated in a preliminary report that the average daily volume on High Street south of Walnut is 8,300 vehicles).

Over the last few weeks Town staff has begun to address our concerns in a variety of ways but it is only by way of a thorough and comprehensive study that the risks to those who use these streets can be properly minimized. In light of the serious safety concerns listed above we ask that you make a High Street study a Town priority.

Sincerely,



Rob Daves
President
High Street Hill Association

Cc: Richard Kelliher
Todd Kirrane