



TOWN OF ARLINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

TOWN HALL, 730 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE
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MEMORANDUM

To: Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager

CC: Jennifer Raitt, Director, Department of Planning and Community Development

From: Daniel Amstutz, Senior Transportation Planner, Department of Planning and
Community Development

Date: April 8, 2019

RE: Review of Wachusett Avenue Parking Impacts from New MBTA Bus Stop Sign Proposal

At their February 25, 2019 meeting, the Select Board approved the MBTA's proposal to install rear bus signs at four bus stops in the town. A fifth proposed location was not immediately approved, pending additional review of potential parking impacts from the installation of a rear bus stop sign at the following location:

Stop ID: 2471

Stop Name: Wachusett Avenue @ Florence Avenue

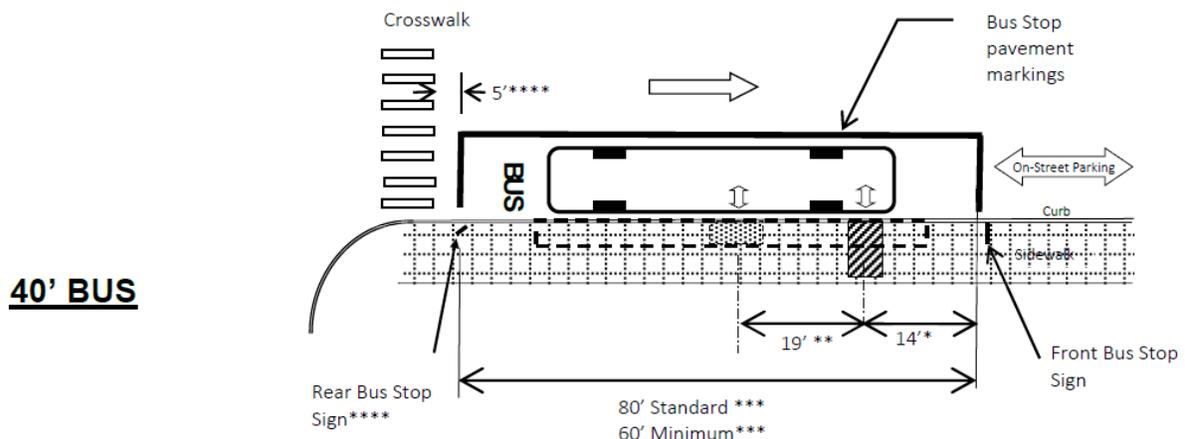
MBTA Bus Routes: 78 & 84

Type of Parking: Unregulated

The bus stop under additional review is on the southbound side of Wachusett Avenue approximately 125' south of the intersection with Wachusett Avenue and Florence Street. An MBTA bus sign is currently located on a utility pole in front of the residence at 131 Wachusett Avenue. This pole is approximately 25' south of the driveway leading into 131 Wachusett. As a result, the bus stop appears to be only 25' long, if the driveway is not taken into account.

The MBTA proposes to place a second bus stop sign 25' north of the driveway at 131 Wachusett to delineate the bus stop zone in this area. This would extend the bus stop to be approximately 60-70' long, which is the MBTA's minimum stop length for a far-side bus stop based on their 2018 Bus Stop Planning and Design Guide. This stop is considered to be on the "far-side", where the stop is located after the intersection, and the standard stop configuration is diagrammed in the Bus Stop Planning and Design Guide under Figure 4.2:

Figure 4.2: Far-Side Bus Stop



The length of the bus stop enables buses to “maneuver around parked cars or other obstacles to enter the bus stop zone, and to re-enter the traffic stream upon exiting.”¹ The bus stop must be of sufficient length “to allow MBTA buses to come to a stop parallel to the curb with all doors... this facilitates usage of the bus front door access ramp and maximizes bus accessibility and safety at all doors.”² Thus a proper bus stop length is important for accommodating passengers with mobility issues.

Based on the existing configuration, there should currently be no parking allowed on-street between the bus stop sign and the driveway for 131 Wachusett. The new sign placement will require the removal of one on-street parking space in front of 127 Wachusett Avenue (considering the proposal for the sign to be located 25’ from the driveway; striped on-street parking spaces are typically 18-22’ in length). The driveway at 131 Wachusett is also included as part of the bus stop length and will be blocked briefly when the bus is stopped to pick up or discharge passengers. Although the MBTA notes that buses serving a stop should not obstruct driveway access, these are determined on a case-by-case basis. The Bus Stop Planning and Design Guide notes “For low volume driveways, temporary blockages are generally acceptable... A driveway within the bus stop zone can often be advantageous since it can effectively reduce the required bus stop length and thus reduce the need to displace on-street parking spaces.”³ There is room for another parking space directly to the north of the proposed bus stop sign between the sign and the driveway for 127 Wachusett that is partially blocked by a tree at the curb. If this parking spot is not easily utilized, residents or visitors may park down the block on Wachusett or Florence. On-street parking is generally unrestricted in the immediate area outside of bus stop zones. Both residences adjacent to this bus stop also have private driveways.

¹ MBTA Bus Stop Planning and Design Guide, April 2018, page 22.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., page 13.

The MBTA has communicated to the Town that extending the bus stop zone is a critical aspect of ensuring that all bus stops in the MBTA system are accessible to persons with disabilities and for the safety of bus riders, drivers, and residents.

The Arlington Disability Commission at their March 20, 2019 meeting voted to unanimously support the MBTA's request to lengthen bus stop zones, including this stop at Wachusett and Florence Avenue. A letter from the Commission Chair dated March 21, 2019 is included with this memo.

Staff request that the Select Board approve the new bus stop sign at this location and the associated parking restrictions be put in place. See below for a picture provided by the MBTA of the approximate location. This in consideration of the following factors: this change will improve safety and accessibility for bus riders, drivers, and residents; the Disability Commission supports this change; the parking impact of this request is minimal; adjacent properties have private driveways; additional on-street parking is available within a short distance from this location; and parking utilization for this street is generally low on a day-to-day basis.

I would be glad to discuss this further, should you have any questions about this proposal or the recommendation.

Bus Stop Graphic Showing Approximate Locations of New Bus Stop Sign:

