



**TOWN OF ARLINGTON**  
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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**MEMORANDUM**

To: Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager

From: Daniel Amstutz, Senior Transportation Planner

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

Date: June 27, 2019

RE: Correspondence About Pond Lane Traffic Concerns

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In fall 2018, Rebecca Girash, resident of 48 Lombard Terrace, contacted the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) to raise her concerns about traffic safety on Pond Lane. Ms. Girash attended the December 12, 2018 TAC meeting and requested that TAC review the area to determine if the Town could do something to improve safety along Pond Lane. The TAC noted that they had reviewed the conditions at Pond Lane in 2009 and 2015, had made recommendations to the Select Board, and would need to have a directive from the Board to review it again. The TAC recommended that Girash write to the Select Board to address her concerns. Girash forwarded her concerns to the Select Board, which referred her correspondence to the Department of Community Planning and Development at their January 7, 2019 meeting. This memo detailing the situation and recommendations is a follow-up to that correspondence.

The specific area under review is Pond Lane from Wellington Street to the Minuteman Bikeway overpass. Girash's concerns include the following:

- Drivers going at unsafe speeds in front of the Boys & Girls Club and around the sharp turns by Pond Terrace;
- The mixing of different road users including drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists, who must share the road due to the lack of separated sidewalks or bike facilities in many areas of Pond Lane;
- Impatient and aggressive driving behaviors through the curves and at the underpass;
- The speed bumps that are installed in front of the Boys & Girls Club have been flattened over the years and are no longer effective; and
- Pavement markings that say "NO PARKING – TOW ZONE" need to be repainted.

## Location Context, Staff Observations and Crash Data

Pond Lane is a two-way road that starts at the end of Wellington Street in the west, and ends at Massachusetts Avenue in the east. The segment under review is between Wellington Street and the underpass for the Minuteman Bikeway. The road varies in width, from a high of approximately 30' by the Boys & Girls Club, down to 15' at the sharp curve near Pond Terrace, to as low as 13' at the narrowest point of the underpass for the Bikeway, which is much too narrow to allow two vehicles to pass through at the same time. Parking is allowed on-street near the Boys & Girls Club, but not between the Club and the Spy Pond Park parking lot. There are sidewalks through only part of the corridor, along the frontage of the Club and adjacent to the Park. The statutory townwide speed limit of 25 mph applies to this roadway. There is one crosswalk which goes from the Boys & Girls Club to the tennis courts. Adjacent property uses are mostly recreational and residential and include the Boys & Girls Club; Elks Lodge; Spy Pond Field, Tennis Courts, and Park; a parking lot for Spy Pond Park; and eight residences (four abutting Pond Lane, four abutting Pond Terrace). Pond Lane in this segment is a private way; the remainder of Pond Lane from the Bikeway to Mass Ave is a public way.



Figure 1: Pond Lane at Bikeway underpass



Figure 2: Pond Lane at sharp curve

### *Staff Observations*

DPCD staff met with Ms. Girash the morning of Tuesday, January 15, 2019, between about 7:30-8:20 a.m., on a cold, bright day. Staff observed that vehicle traffic was frequent, though not necessarily excessive, for a morning rush hour period. Pond Lane can be used as a cut through between Pleasant Street and Mass Ave, and may save drivers time if they are traveling northbound on Pleasant Street and intend to go eastbound on Mass Ave (a travel time study was not completed for this memo). Several pedestrians and cyclists were also observed using Pond Lane in the morning, and had to mix with traffic in the sections without sidewalks. Some drivers appeared to be going faster than would be considered a safe operable speed given the narrow and mixed traffic conditions, although they may not actually have been going over the statutory speed limit. Driver aggression and impatience was observed in one instance where two cars had to carefully squeeze by each other in the

narrowest part of the curve by Pond Terrace; however most drivers appeared more or less careful in their behavior. The Bikeway underpass is only wide enough for one vehicle to pass at a time, and is also the only way for people walking or bicycling along Pond Lane to get past the Bikeway. Additional care by all users is necessary. An oil tanker was observed passing through the underpass with very little room to spare vertically or horizontally.

Staff conducted further observations, including some roadway measurements, late in the morning on April 18, 2019.

### *Crash Data*

For this segment of Pond Lane, DPCD staff reviewed crash data provided by MassDOT from 2010-2016 and also asked the Arlington Police Department to provide data on known crashes over the last three years. Based on these data, seven crashes were identified, mainly from 2011-2014. The crashes are detailed on the next page on Table 1.

There were no fatal crashes in this segment. In terms of severity, one crash resulted in an injury, three crashes were property damage only, and three crashes have no information on their severity. Five of the seven crashes involved parked vehicles or vehicles backing out of a parked space, at least three of which took place in the Spy Pond Park parking lot.

<b>Crash Date</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Location 1</b>	<b>Location 2</b>	<b>Nonmotorist crash?</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>19-Aug-2011</b>	<b>V1: Collision with motor vehicle in traffic</b>	<b>60 POND LANE / WELLINGTON STREET</b>	<b>ARLINGTON BOYS &amp; GIRLS CLUB</b>		<b>MassDOT Crash Data 2010-2016</b>
<b>05-Feb-2012</b>	<b>V1: Collision with motor vehicle in traffic / V2: Collision with motor vehicle in traffic</b>	<b>POND LANE</b>	<b>IN SPY POND PARKING LOT</b>		<b>MassDOT Crash Data 2010-2016</b>
<b>06-Jun-2012</b>	<b>V1: Collision with motor vehicle in traffic / V2: Collision with motor vehicle in traffic</b>	<b>POND LANE</b>			<b>MassDOT Crash Data 2010-2016</b>
<b>30-Jul-2013</b>	<b>V1: Collision with other movable object</b>	<b>56 POND LANE / WELLINGTON STREET</b>		<b>P2: Pedalcyclist (bicycle, tricycle, unicycle, pedal car)</b>	<b>MassDOT Crash Data 2010-2016</b>
<b>23-Oct-2013</b>	<b>V1: Collision with parked motor vehicle / V2: Collision with motor vehicle in traffic</b>	<b>POND LANE</b>	<b>PARKING LOT AT 60 POND LANE</b>		<b>MassDOT Crash Data 2010-2016</b>

08-Jan-2014	V1: Collision with bridge	POND LANE	BRIDGE		MassDOT Crash Data 2010-2016
04-Feb-2014	V1: Collision with parked motor vehicle / V2: Collision with parked motor vehicle	60 POND LANE			MassDOT Crash Data 2010-2016

**Table 1: Crash History of Pond Lane Between Wellington Street and Bikeway Underpass**

Crashes that occurred on Pond Lane east of the Bikeway overpass or near Mass Ave have been excluded from this report. APD noted that on November 3, 2016, there was a report of a truck hitting the Bikeway overpass, but on arrival officers did not find the vehicle and there was no visible damage to the overpass. Therefore this report has not been included in this analysis.

From 2011-2014, there were two crashes or less each year on this segment of Pond Lane. From 2015-2018, no crashes were identified and so far none have been reported in 2019.

### **Previous Studies by the TAC**

The TAC has reviewed transportation concerns related to this segment of Pond Lane and reported to the Select Board in two instances. First, in May 2009 TAC was requested to look at various safety issues around Spy Pond Park where the underpass intersects the municipal parking lot. In October 2009 TAC sent a memo to the Board recommending signage around the underpass including “ONE LANE BRIDGE” warning signs on either side of the underpass, and “YIELD TO ONCOMING TRAFFIC” signage on the westbound approach.

Second, the TAC also reviewed part of Pond Lane by the Boys & Girls Club in 2015 related to the renovation of the Spy Pond Tennis Courts at the corner of Pond Lane and Wellington Street. TAC made recommendations about the pedestrian connections from the tennis courts to Pond Lane and the Boys & Girls Club, on-street parking, and traffic calming measures, as requested by the Recreation Department. Options for traffic calming reviewed included a speed table and developing a “woonerf” (or shared street) on Pond Lane in front of the Boys & Girls Club. Neither TAC report appears to have touched on the Pond Lane corridor between the Boys & Girls Club and the underpass, an area of concern for Ms. Girash but also strictly a private way.

### **Challenges and Recommendations**

A challenge of addressing real or perceived safety issues on Pond Lane is that it is a private roadway between Wellington Street and the Bikeway underpass. As noted in a letter from Town Counsel to the Select Board on July 13, 2018, regarding maintenance and repairs of private ways, the Town has a long-held position “that it [is] not responsible for maintenance or repairs to private ways, which were not built to the standards of public ways and on which

the Town may not spend money absent an authorized vehicle of state law. Rather... private way residents are responsible for maintaining their ways and may be liable for failure to do so.” However, because the Town owns property directly abutting the private way, it is allowable for the Town to make improvements on the private way next to its property, specifically: in front of Spy Pond Field, at the Bikeway underpass and the Spy Pond Parking lot. On segments of Pond Lane that only have private abutters, the private property owners are responsible for maintenance of traffic control, pavement markings, and warning signage. For the area of concern between the Boys & Girls Club and the Spy Pond Parking Lot, Ms. Girash would need to speak to the property owners to address these issues. This information is based on DPCD conversations with the Legal Department, Public Works, and Police Department.

Ms. Girash noted that the speed bumps in front of the Boys & Girls Club have been flattened out, and there is missing signage at the underpass. The Town does not currently install speed bumps (they interfere with snow clearing operations) and thus would not replace these. Exploring other types of traffic calming measures could be brought before the TAC with the inclusion of the Boys & Girls Club, if desired. Despite the concerns about the mixing of different modes of traffic and potential unsafe speeds, crash data available shows that there have been few incidents on this segment of Pond Lane since 2010 and none reported for more than four years. Most incidents involved crashes with vehicles in the Spy Pond Parking lot or other parked vehicles along the street and only one of those incidents involved a non-motorized user.

In front of the Boys & Girls Club, staff noted that additional visibility at the crosswalk would improve pedestrian safety. The following actions are recommended:

- Add pedestrian warning signage at both sides of the crosswalk facing oncoming traffic with downward arrows to indicate the location of the crosswalk. (MUTCD W11-2 with W16-7P)
- Restrict parking by 20’ before the crosswalk on the northwest side of the street (on the same side as the tennis courts). There is a handicapped parking spot directly after the crosswalk on this side; ideally there would be a 5’ gap between the crosswalk and this parking space, but this is not recommended at this time to avoid additional parking marking reworking of the space.

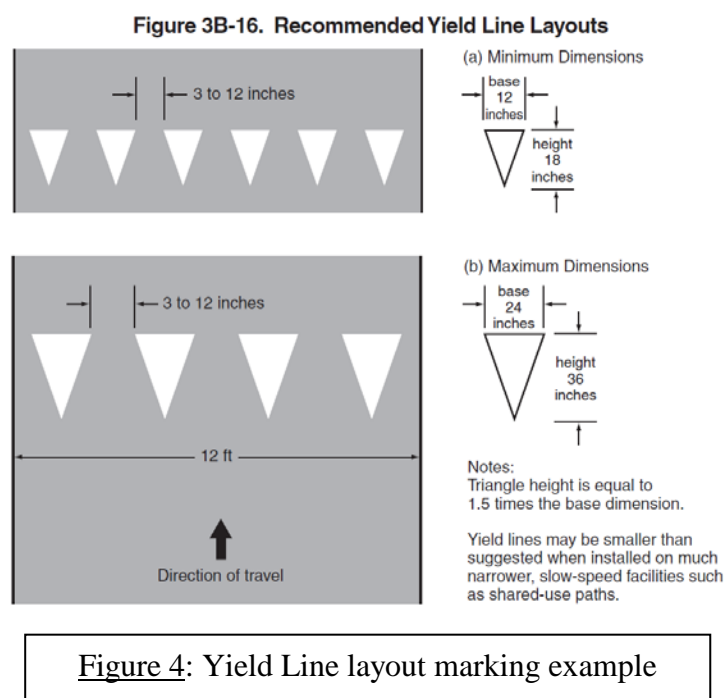


**Figure 3:** Crosswalk in front of Boys & Girls Club



Near the underpass, the following signage and markings are recommended:

- A “ONE LANE BRIDGE” warning sign (MUTCD W5-3) was installed under the recommendation of TAC in 2009 on the Spy Pond side of the underpass. This sign is no longer there, for unknown reasons. This sign should be replaced.
- Install yield lines at the “YIELD TO ONCOMING TRAFFIC” sign for traffic approaching the underpass. This may assist with yielding compliance and reinforce right-of-way priority for the underpass, reducing the potential for close calls. See Figure 4 for examples of yield line layouts from the MUTCD.
- Further evaluation should be made if low clearance signs (MUTCD W12-2) should be installed on the underpass above the road. One reported crash in 2014 resulted from a truck running into the bridge, and in 2016 the same type of crash was reported although no evidence could be found. The MUTCD states that this sign should be used “to warn road users of clearances less than 12 inches above the statutory maximum vehicle height.”



Specific recommendations for the section of Pond Lane between the Boys & Girls Club and the Spy Pond Parking lot were not developed for this memo. In general, signage warning of a sharp horizontal curve, a mirror to view oncoming traffic, and/or an advisory speed limit may be warranted for installation in this segment, subject to an engineering review. Any signage placed in this segment must be MUTCD compliant.

## **Conclusion**

The above improvements can be made by the Town for vehicle and pedestrian safety along this stretch of Pond Lane. However, Ms. Girash should consider speaking to the property owners along Pond Lane who are responsible for the private way if she wishes to pursue additional signage or repainted pavement markings between the Boys & Girls Club and the Spy Pond Parking lot. Please advise if there are any questions or clarifications about this memo.