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Subject: Bicycle safety improvements needed at Mass Ave/Appleton and elsewhere

hello esteemed members of the Arlington Select Board, I hope you are well doing well during these unprecedented times.

I am writing today to express my concern for the safety of road uses, especially bicyclists, at the intersection of Mass Ave and Appleton Street. The tragic fatality of a bicyclist there in early May was not an aberration. It was not a random, unfortunate accident because the rider just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Everyone in Town knows that the awkward geometry, grades and hidden sight lines make this intersection dangerous for everyone: pedestrians, drivers and motorists. Most exposed to danger are bicyclists heading east who may not always be visible to westbound motorists taking a left onto Appleton. This is what caused the death of Charlie Proctor, and the many near misses that bicyclists encounter regularly at this intersection.

One primary problem is that motorists are currently able to take a sweeping left turn, at-speed, to head up the hill. They too-frequently make a split-second judgement about the gap available, and can easily miss bicyclists coming in the opposite direction, especially if the rider is in the "shadow" of an adjacent SUV or pick-up truck. Something must be done to regulate how motor vehicles take a left turn, either with a complete traffic light with left turn signal, restrictions on left turns entirely, and/or median island or something in the center of the roadway that forces motorists to take a more calculated, slow and deliberate left turn at a tighter radius. These are the solutions that must be studied by transportation designers and traffic engineers. **Given possible costs for a reconfigured intersection, a solution may be a few years away...as such, I recommend that the planning work begin immediately by TAC with support from ABAC, the Planning Department and others.**

The other primary problem is that bicyclists are not only less visible at this intersection, but face a series of hazardous intersections along Mass Ave from Brattle Square up to Arlington Heights. Ironically, this challenging segment of Mass Ave is the longest in Town without designated bike lanes. The shared lane marking do very little to guide bicyclists to ride in the correct position and do virtually nothing to warn motorists to the presence of bicyclists in the roadway, especially at the awkward series of Mass Ave intersections: at Lowell, at Appleton and at Forest/Burton. **The relatively simple, relatively inexpensive solution is to connect the bike lanes that currently lie west of Lowell St and east of Brattle Square.** Proper demarcation of the bike lane with bright green pavement markings (as seen in Arlington Center) will help improve

navigation for cyclists and increase awareness of cyclists by motorists at the trickiest intersections.

Placing bike lanes in this stretch will also reduce the dangers of "dooring" for bicyclists, which is a recurring problem where the shared lane markings have been installed. The new bike lanes desperately needed on Mass Ave will have some impact on on-street parking, though a strategic plan would minimize parking loss, especially when adjacent to businesses that rely on parking for customer access. The bike lanes should not only be considered in the longer-term planning described above, but should be designed and installed as a short term improvement as soon as possible. **Striping the bike lanes this summer would be an appropriate response to the fatality, with the goal of fixing the Mass Ave/Appleton intersection for ALL road users in a 3-5 year time frame.** (Note: this was exactly the approach made by the City of Cambridge after the 2016 fatality of a bicyclists in Inman Square. In less than a year, the City instituted a ban on left turns and striped green bike lanes through the intersection. Now, four years later, construction has commenced on the redesign that will improve safety for bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists.)

I commend the work the Town has done to improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety and accessibility in the past ten years. Mass Ave, however, is still a glaring safety problem for pedestrians and bicyclists. We should aspire to never have a vulnerable user ever killed again on the Town's premier street. Following the recommendations above will take us one big step closer to meeting this goal.

thank you,
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