



TOWN OF ARLINGTON
DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING and
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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**Discussion - Plan to Implement & Outreach for Mary Street Shared Streets
PilotMEMORANDUM**

To: Adam Chapdelaine, Town Manager
Cc: Jennifer Raitt, Director of Planning & Community Development
Mike Rademacher, Director of Public Works
Chief Julie Flaherty, Arlington Police Department
From: Daniel Amstutz, Senior Transportation Planner
Date: September 30, 2020
RE: Mary Street Pilot Shared Street Update

On August 17, 2020, the Select Board approved a pilot shared street project on Mary Street between Margaret Street and Wilson Avenue. To support the creation of this pilot project, the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) applied for funds from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) Shared Streets and Spaces Program. On September 11, The Town received a grant for this project for \$10,947. The grant is being used to purchase materials to create gateways, traffic calming, and install signage to pilot the shared street. Due to the time-limited nature of the grant, the pilot project must be installed this fall. Town staff expect to implement the project on Saturday, October 10. The pilot project will remain in place for 5-6 weeks, concluding the week of November 16. During winter 2021, Town staff will evaluate the data collected from the pilot project to determine its effectiveness.

Further information about this project is provided below.

Background, Public Engagement, and Data Collection

Project Background

The purpose of the Mary Street shared street pilot project is to promote social distancing for people walking and bicycling while at the same time reducing and slowing car traffic on Mary Street. Several residents of the neighborhood, as well as Mary Street abutters, nominated Mary Street to become a shared street during the initial Brooks Avenue area shared street demonstration project in May 2020. After being contacted by Town staff to follow-up with their nomination, in late July and early August the neighborhood residents gathered support from local abutters and other neighborhood residents for a pilot shared street on Mary Street and received approval from the Select Board on August 17. As mentioned above, DPCD then applied for and received a grant from MassDOT to support implementation of the project.

Public Engagement

DPCD developed a strategy of public outreach and engagement to ensure comprehensive notification and understanding of the project by neighborhood residents and the wider Arlington community. This strategy includes the following:

- A letter was mailed to all abutters along Mary Street the week of September 22; the letter included a description of the project purpose and timeline, frequently asked questions and answers about shared streets, detailed information about the temporary traffic calming measures to be used, and information about how to comment on the proposed design of the project with comments due October 2;
- [A press release and news item was posted to the Town's website](#) on September 25, which links to a copy of the package mailed to Mary Street abutters, a more detailed visual of the proposed design, and copies of presentations to the Select Board about shared streets from May, June, July, and August;
- Emails to residents of Mary Street, both supportive of the project and with concerns, with a request to distribute the news item and associated materials to the wider neighborhood;
- A message sent through the East Arlington Neighbors WhatsApp group (part of the Arlington Helps mutual aid network) with links to the news item and associated materials for review and distribution;
- An E-notification and social media the week of October 5, in advance of the project installation;
- Email notifications to residents who provided comments or feedback on the Brooks Ave shared streets pilot project, nominated a shared street, or otherwise have been involved with Arlington's shared streets; and
- Flyers on abutting residences and around the neighborhood (as staff and volunteer capacity allow) in advance of the project implementation the week of October 5.

As of September 30, Town staff had received three questions about the project and its design: a concern about cut-through traffic using other streets in the neighborhood to avoid Mary Street; a question about implementing this project now instead of at a later date; and a question about whether the existing turn restriction signs on Lake Street would be changed or impacted by the project. In response to the first question, it is expected that cut-through traffic will be discouraged from using other neighborhood streets because it is more difficult and inconvenient to navigate the neighborhood on the other streets. Additionally, if cut-through traffic uses Mary Street anyway they will be slowed by the traffic calming elements as part of the project and may be discouraged to use Mary Street in the future. Regarding the second question, the project is intended to provide social distancing during the pandemic, slow traffic at all times of day, and must be implemented this fall as part of the terms of the grant. Finally, there will be no changes to the turn restrictions from Lake Street into the neighborhood as part of this project; they will operate as normal.

Data Collection

Similar to the Brooks Avenue pilot project, Town staff plan to collect before and after data of car traffic volumes and speeds on the street; before and after data of usage by people walking and biking, as well as general observations of safety, social distancing, and mask usage; and comments from abutters and local residents on perceptions of safety, traffic speed, volume, and other concerns. Staff will do their best to be responsive to residents' needs and experiences during the project implementation. These data will be evaluated to understand the effectiveness of the pilot project in winter 2021.