



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: May 12, 2022

RE: Correspondence Regarding Intersection of Wachusett Ave & Appleton Street

On April 14, 2020, the Select Board forwarded correspondence to the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) from resident Mark Lepler (7 Wachusett Ave) regarding traffic safety at the intersection of Wachusett Ave and Appleton Street. Specifically, Mr. Lepler was concerned about drivers running the Stop Sign at the westbound Appleton Street approach and the potential hazard to pedestrians, particularly children. This memo detailing the situation and recommendations for next steps is a follow-up to that correspondence.

Location Context, Resident Communication, Staff Observations and Crash Data

The intersection of Wachusett Ave/Appleton Street/Dow Ave/Valentine Road is a complex six-legged intersection in Arlington Heights. There is a wide expanse of pavement in the middle of the intersection which does not provide much guidance to drivers. Traffic control exists on five of the intersection approaches in the form of Stop Signs; the sixth approach from Appleton Street eastbound is free-flowing with no control. One bus route (MBTA Route 78) goes through the intersection.

Town staff initially reached out to Mr. Lepler in April 2020 to note that it would not be possible to meet or do a site visit due to the COVID-19 pandemic that had just started, that traffic patterns have been significantly impacted and observations would not show the same as "normal" times, and to ask clarifying questions about his correspondence. Staff also noted the complexity of the intersection and about Town policy and practices in terms of certain types of traffic calming. Mr. Lepler responded with additional information and suggestions.

Staff were able to conduct traffic observations in late November 2020 once the COVID-19 pandemic had eased at the time and traffic began to come back to normal levels. In general, staff observations confirmed poor Stop Sign compliance by drivers on many of the approaches, and one driver ran the Stop Sign on the westbound Appleton Street approach. It is unclear why there is no Stop control at the eastbound Appleton Street approach, and

without experience going through the intersection previously it would be an unexpected condition from the other approaches. Drivers on the eastbound Appleton Street approach appeared to be confused it about it as well, as several were observed slowing down and more carefully entering the intersection from here. Sight distance appears to be good at all approaches except southbound Wachusett Ave because it is very difficult to see the eastbound Appleton Street approach to the right.

Crash history at this intersection is limited. According to MassDOT data, since 2016 only two crashes have occurred at this intersection, both in 2017. Both crashes were angle collisions, occurring in daylight, and resulted in property damage only (no injuries). It is likely that some drivers are more cautious at this intersection because of the wide and uncontrolled nature of the middle of the intersection; however, the conditions of the intersection create unnecessary risk to roadway users due to its poor design.

Recommended Action

As part of the development of Connect Arlington, the Town's Sustainable Transportation Plan, the Town's consultant created a concept to calm traffic and simplify this intersection by eliminating one of the approaches (Valentine Road). This concept is shown on the next page as Figure 1. Due to the complex nature of this intersection DPCD staff recommend relaying this correspondence and issue to the Transportation Advisory Committee for further evaluation and recommendations, including reviewing the Connect Arlington concept and determining if this concept should be designed for future implementation. Staff have contacted Mr. Lepler to confirm that this is an acceptable next step, and he has agreed to this course of action. Staff recommend that the Board forward this correspondence and any other correspondence concerning Wachusett Ave/Appleton Street to TAC to create a project and begin a review.

I am available for questions as needed.

Wachusett Avenue - Bike Boulevard - Dow Avenue Inset

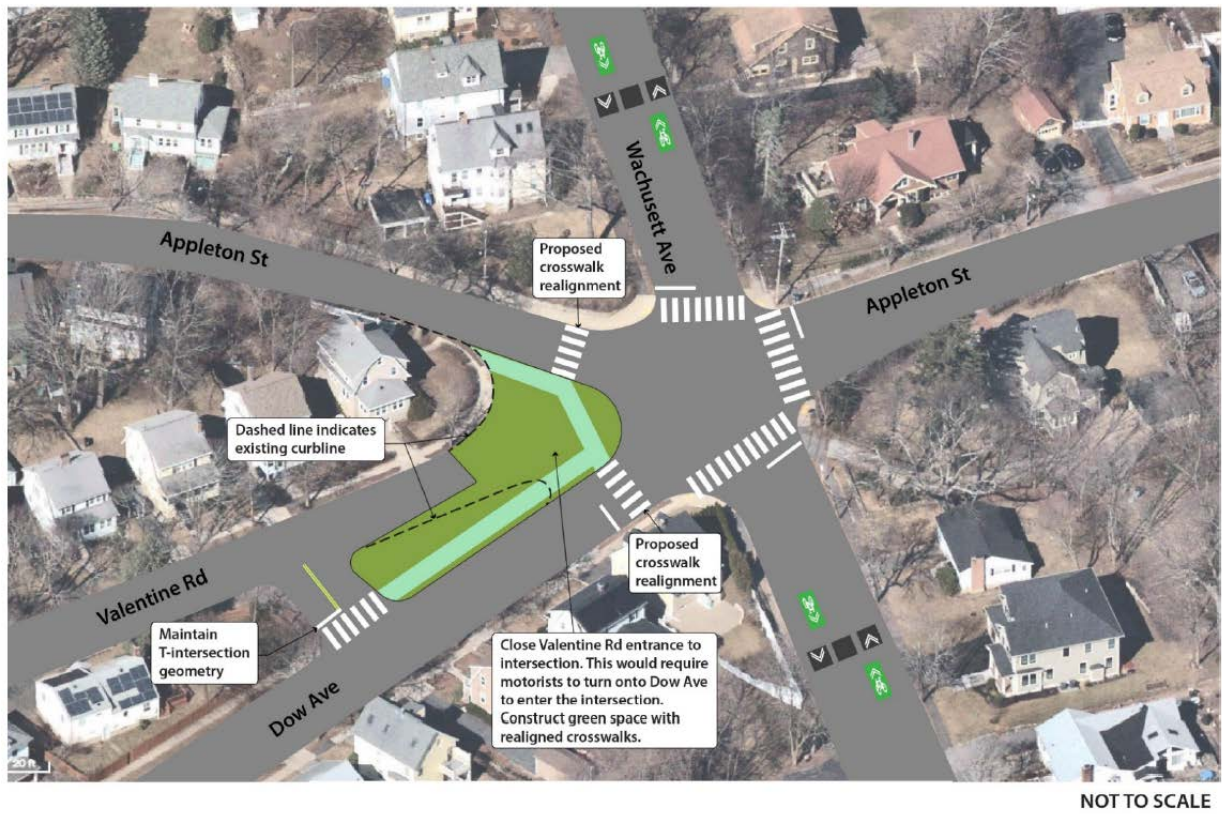


Figure 1 - Wachusett Ave/Appleton St/Dow Ave/Valentine Road traffic calming concept from Connect Arlington.