

Mayor Walsh Announces Future Focused Transportation Improvements for Pedestrians, Cyclists and Drivers



To reduce serious traffic crashes, improve bike infrastructure, make meter payment more convenient, pilot elimination of street sweeping towing

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BOSTON - March 24, 2015 - Today, Mayor Martin J. Walsh announced five transportation initiatives to improve how individuals on foot, bike, or in a vehicle move around the City of Boston with a significant focus on improving public safety. The announcements include a complete streets approach to Commonwealth Avenue, featuring protected bike lane on from the BU Bridge to Packard's Corner, the adoption of Vision Zero Boston, aimed at eliminating traffic fatalities in the city, the citywide replacement of parking meters with intelligent parking meters, and a pilot program to eliminate street sweeping towing. The initiatives are early action projects as part of Go Boston 2030 launched to imagine a bold new transportation plan for Boston for the next five, 10, and 15 years. Additionally, the Mayor and the Boston Transportation Department will begin a nationwide search for a new Active Transportation Director to think holistically about how our streets are used by people who walk, bike, and take transit.

"We're implementing innovative and inventive transportation strategies and infrastructure upgrades in the City of Boston to improve travel safety and convenience," said Mayor Walsh. "Whether you walk, drive, take the T, or ride a bike on our streets, we're looking at solutions that can accommodate every mode of transportation in a meaningful way."

Vision Zero

Mayor Walsh announced that the City of Boston will adopt Vision Zero, based on the premise that traffic fatalities are not accidents, but rather they are crashes that can be prevented by effective policies and systematic evaluation, enforcement, engineering, education, and community engagement. By adopting Vision Zero, the City of Boston joins cities such as New York, San Francisco, and Chicago, which have committed to making traffic safety a priority. Toward that end, Mayor Walsh has convened a Vision Zero Task Force to develop an action plan for a comprehensive and coordinated strategy to eliminate traffic fatalities and injuries in Boston.

The Task Force includes representatives of Boston's Transportation Department (BTD), the Boston Police Department (BPD), the Public Works Departments (PWD), the Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC), Boston Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and WalkBoston, Massachusetts' leading pedestrian advocacy organization, and the Boston Cyclists Union. Early action items include:

- BPD improvements to its electronic crash reporting system that will lead to better data collection and better crash analysis;
- BPD is hiring a full-time Transportation Safety Data Analyst and a full-time DDACTS Analyst (Data Driven Approaches to Crime and Traffic Safety) to reduce motor vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle collisions. Evidence in other cities suggests that this will also reduce crime.
- BPD and EMS will use crash data to identify pedestrian crash hot spots and high crash corridors with the help of researchers from BPHC and the Tufts Medical Center Division of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery.
- BTD and PWD will pilot test rapid-response improvements at pedestrian crash hot spots and along high crash corridors, as well as "residential slow zones"
- BPHC will assist with education and outreach to educate residents on safe road behavior.

Commonwealth Avenue Multi-Modal Redesign

At a public meeting held at Boston University, the City of Boston last night unveiled the new Commonwealth Avenue Phase 2A Redesign Plan, which will transform the portion of this busy thoroughfare that extends between the BU Bridge to Packard's Corner. The built roadway will be innovative and provide bicyclists with physically

protected bike lanes on both the inbound and outbound sides of the avenue. It will also offer the MBTA and its patrons with fully ADA compliant crossings at all intersections along the project route and will create a framework for the construction of wider platforms that will be safer and more efficient for trolley riders. The design affords motor vehicle drivers and pedestrians with numerous enhanced amenities.

The Complete Streets design incorporates a "Protected Intersection" approach to make Commonwealth Avenue one of the most progressive multi-modal corridors in the country, and the first time that this design component will be used on Boston's public streets. This utilizes a sizeable separation between bikes and cars at intersections to reduce "right hooks," a common cause of bicycle/motor vehicle crashes where motor vehicle drivers turning right crash with cyclists continuing straight. This is a cutting edge safety feature built into the design along with bike boxes and a corner deflection island to maximize safety while accommodating turns and providing better visibility for both motor vehicle drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians.

A collaborative process between Boston's bicycle advocates, pedestrian groups, the Boston University community, as well as others with an interest in Commonwealth Avenue, helped formulate the design with the City.

Commonwealth Avenue in the project area will also receive new street lighting, landscaping, repaving and new street furniture. Construction financing for this \$17 million project is being funded 80% by the federal government and 20% by the state. The city expects to have another public meeting in the fall of 2015 before bidding begins on the project contract. Construction is expected to begin in the spring of 2016 with a completion date of late fall of 2017. The design process for this project began in 2009.

Adding protected bike lanes has shown positive economic impacts on surrounding businesses in cities across the country, including New York City, San Francisco, and Portland. A redesign of NYC's Union Square to include a protected bike lanes resulted in nearly 50% fewer commercial vacancies, and the construction of a protected bike lane on 9th Avenue saw a nearly 50% increase in retail sales. Studies have shown that adding a protected bike lane increases cycling traffic on the roadway, boosting retail performance, with nearly 70% of merchants on San Francisco's Valencia Street seeing a positive impact on business. Studies have shown that customers who arrive at retail stores by bike spend the same amount per month as comparable people who arrive by car, making smaller purchases but returning more frequently

Intelligent Parking Meters

The Boston Transportation Department will be making parking at the curb smarter and easier for people who park at the 8,000 metered spaces across the City. With the addition of new intelligent multi-space and single space parking meters, drivers can pay through mobile phone, a credit card, or pocket change. This next generation of meters will also provide real-time data to the City to help BTM better manage the space at the curb. The information provided by an upgraded parking system and an analysis of current on-street parking regulations will allow the City to make decisions based on data, not just intuition. Credit card and mobile payment enabled meters have shown increased revenue with drivers more likely to pay for the maximum length of stay.

Multi-space meters will be deployed in new locations in the Back Bay and in the Innovation District to improve City operations. A typical multi-space meter allows for more vehicles to fit on a blockface than a block demarcated with single space meters. In addition to the approximately 145 new multi-space meters that will replace some single space meters, current multi-space meters throughout the Back Bay and parts of Downtown will be upgraded, reducing annual maintenance costs for the aging equipment.

The remaining single space parking meters will be replaced with smart single space parking meters that can also be paid for with a mobile phone, credit card, or pocket change. A current pilot of credit card enabled single space meters in the Back Bay and around the Public Garden has shown positive results since deployment. This next generation of meters will provide the potential for collecting occupancy and turnover rate of vehicles, critical data that gives the City insight on how to better manage the curb space around Boston.

Street Sweeping Pilot

Mayor Walsh will file a City Council ordinance to pilot a new street sweeping initiative in one of Boston's neighborhoods. The ordinance, which is being drafted now, will propose eliminating towing for street sweeping, and increase the fine for not moving a vehicle from \$40 to \$90. The City plans to use the pilot to determine whether this initiative should be extended to other neighborhoods.

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