

WalkBike Springfield

Residents working to improve the safety of walking and bicycling in Springfield

March 16, 2021

Patricia Leavenworth, P.E., Chief Engineer
MassDOT - Highway Division
10 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116-3973

RE: Project File No. 608565

Dear Ms. Leavenworth

The members of WalkBike Springfield have the following written comments related to the virtual public hearing for the proposed improvements on St. James Avenue at St. James Boulevard and Carew Street in Springfield, Massachusetts (project file No. 608565). Related Improvements Project (Project File No. 608717).

1) The virtual public hearing format where there was NO OPPORTUNITY for direct public participation and the ability for questions and answers was UNACCEPTABLE – especially for the critical 25% design stage of the project. For example, the presentation used the phrase “where feasible” a number of times when referring to the shared-use path, but never showed exactly where and what would be the alternative. The “hearing” could have provided better information if the presentation had even just read the information in the hearing notice!

2) As was voiced at the pre-25% design hearing in November 2019, we applaud the actual delineation of lanes and reduction to two travel lanes with a third turning lane to be a welcome improvement. We also expressed support for a shared-use path over the alternative of an unprotected on-street bicycle lane. We are also pleased that the project does plan to reduce/consolidate the existing entrances to the Big Y and other stores on the south side of St. James Avenue.

3) HOWEVER, the design shows no reduction or consolidation of the driveways (to multiple commercial establishments) to enable the share-used path to be used safely and reduce sites for vehicle entering and exiting.

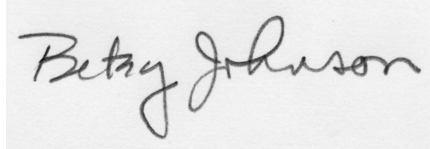
4) We are pleased that the design does now give some consideration to the existence of the Mary O. Pottenger Elementary School and the proposed design aims to better accommodate school bus drop-off and pick-up. We also support the upgrade of the crosswalk and installation of a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) at the crossing of Carew St. at Hobart Street.

5) At the pre-25% hearing, participants stated the need to slightly extend the project limits in order to realize full benefits from this work. We are pleased that the project does now seem to include both intersections of Hobart Street. However, ending the project just short of Ames Street and St. James Ave. does not make sense. Similarly, the project should extend

to the merge of Carew Street with St. James Boulevard, at least to in front of the Fire Station.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments, and would hope MassDOT would schedule a follow-up response session prior to the 75% design hearing. Meaningful public participation is possible even with COVID restriction, not the current effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Betsy Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive style and is centered within a light gray rectangular background.

On behalf of Members of WalkBike Springfield

www.walkbikespringfieldma.org



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