



## TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes

December 18, 2024

5:30 p.m.

VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM

**Present:** Rama Balakrishna (Chair), Zhengyu Huang, Paula Walsh (joined 6:20 pm), Chris Brandon and Andreas Kinzmaier

**Select Board Representative:** Jim Snyder-Grant

**Council on Aging Liaison:** Nirupama Velankar

Invited guests: Elizabeth Hora, Erik Heels, and Mark Gailus (Chair, Concord Transportation Advisory Committee)

### 1. Opening

Chair Rama Balakrishna opened the meeting at 5:34 p.m.

### 2. Regular Business

- A. Approval of Meeting Minutes – The September, 2024 meeting minutes were reviewed. Paula Walsh moved to accept the minutes and Chris Brandon seconded. Roll call was taken; minutes were unanimously approved with typographical edits. Rama will forward to the clerk's office
- B. Recoding of Minutes: Chris Brandon offered to take a rotation taking Meeting Minutes beginning in 2025. It was discussed that Zoom's transcription feature may be useful in recording minutes. There were some concerns about accuracy and participants cautioned on solely relying on the AI transcript.
- C. Council on Aging: The center has been busy these past two months, including a successful jewelry sale and a fiber arts sale. The proceeds totaled more than \$11,000.
- D. Select Board Update:
  - 1. Budget process-they are in the middle stages of development. They recently received the preliminary Capital Improvement Plan. But no detailed operating budget proposal yet, just a bottom line of how much the overall budget is going to be.
  - 2. Chapter 90 funding: normally this is used for roadway repairs but our roadways overall are in good shape so this money can be shifted to funding some sidewalks. This funding requires the town to complete some paperwork each year but is essentially guaranteed.
- E. Transportation denials: there were anecdotal reports of denied transportation requests. Rama will follow up with the Town Manager to discuss if data can be obtained on how many requests are being denied each month.
- F. Document archives: Rama will ask IT for information on how people can access DocuShare for archiving committee documents.



- G. South Acton and Central Street designs: TC Members should familiarize themselves with the plans for discussion and opinions to be shared during a future meeting and then shared with the Select Board.

**3. New/Special Business:**

**A. Citizen/Member Concerns:**

1. DPW building plans do not contain any sidewalk plans. Erik read a prepared statement that he states was also read at a recent Select Board meeting. He is a Forest Street resident and is concerned about the safety of pedestrians and bikers in the Robbins Park area. Erik has created a summarization of the history of the Forest Road sidewalk project which is available on one of his companies' websites, [GiantPeople.com/Acton](http://GiantPeople.com/Acton). Giant People LLC is a single person LLC owned by Erik. Jim recommended that Erik contact the Select board Chair, Fran Arsenault, for next steps in terms of the Select Board. Rama reviewed the role of TAC as advisory and that projects are reviewed and input for or against any project given as needed. There was a prior Sidewalk Committee that created a Sidewalk Prioritization Spreadsheet but has since dissolved. The sidewalk committee role has been rolled into the TAC umbrella and review of the Sidewalk Prioritization Spreadsheet has been ongoing, There were a number of factors considered in the grading of projects and a numeric scale derived. This was further complicated by regulatory hurdles, getting property owner's permissions and lack of an adequate budget. Review of the Prioritization Sheet should identify which roadways near the DPW location are already on the list. It was pointed out that funding was separate for this project as it is a town project of an existing building vs construction of a new private developer project. Erik will send a copy of his letter to TAC.
  2. Construction timing: Anecdotal reports of serious traffic delays around the same time when school begins in the area. If the construction teams could delay starting work on private property in the school areas to a slightly later time, it would be helpful to families dropping kids off to school. Similar issues occur with landscaping services, again causing bottlenecks of traffic.
- B. Sidewalk self funding: The question was raised by Stow Street residents as to whether or not residents who desire a sidewalk could self fund the project. Rama has sent an email to Town Manager regarding this and he will forward the response to residents.
- C. Taylor Road Update: the grading for the final stretch of the sidewalk circling the property at the corner of Taylor Road and Minot Street has been completed, the paving of the sidewalk will be in the Spring 2025 when the weather permits. To accommodate the sidewalk, the roadway on the opposite side of Taylor Road was shifted. There was concern that the new curb is difficult to distinguish from the roadway and whether the new curb could be highlighted.



- D. Travis Pollock/MAPC: Rama will extend an invitation to him to attend a future TAC meeting. The Acton Transportation Action Plan has been set aside for some months waiting on Travis's assistance to guide the town on projects to move forward.
- E. Micro transit: the town recently had discussions with a company called Via, as a subsidized way to connect people between existing transit options. It had appeared to be a productive meeting, and they at least originally agreed to assist us in applying for grant money, but the project just went cold with everyone involved backing away from the project. It has been challenging and frustrating in trying to coordinate these services, but it is still felt to be a worthwhile project to explore.
- F. Parker Street: Past concern about the speed limit, a TAC member asked if there had been any progress on this concern. Per Rama, Engineering is aware of the complaint but there is a process that must be undertaken before any increase or decrease of the speed limit is recommended. Any speed study takes into account the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of speeds of all vehicles and could result in a higher speed limit on the roadway. Regardless, Engineering must conduct the study and it is not an instantaneous process, it takes time. However, the town has been working on some traffic calming procedures and hopefully the town will have a document ready for review by the citizens soon.
- G. Electric van: It is unclear to TAC members how the electric van will be brought into service by the town. Rama will ask Jim Snyder-Grant for any available details on how the van will be put to use.
- H. Willow Street: At a prior meeting, QinRui from Engineering presented TAC with several design options. A roll call of TAC members was unanimous for Option 1; two-way vehicle travel with a widened multi use sidewalk/bike lane located on just one side of the roadway.
- I. Stow Street: last month Engineering proposed a similar concept as Willow or River Street, making the road one-way and in the short-term use concrete barriers to separate the pedestrians and bikers from traffic.
- J. Complete Streets: last month a town consultant gave a presentation on Complete Streets and provided the links to the public website where residents could make comments and feedback to assist the town to rank the 35 plus projects. Rama hoped to get some follow up on how they plan to proceed. He will contact them to get some answers, for example, a resident of Arlington Street asked how their street ranks as 27 out of 35, how does that relate to timing on when a project will actually happen.

At 7 pm, A motion to close the meeting was made by Andreas Kinzler and seconded by Chris Brandon. Roll call was done, and the motion was unanimously approved.

Attachments:



Sidewalk spreadsheet information is available on the Engineering Division's website <https://www.actonma.gov/126/Engineering>

Information on the Complete Streets Plan is linked

here <https://doc.actonma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-18716> which includes the updated Traffic Calming Policy

Information on the Main Street Route 2 to Acton Center Complete Street Assessment is linked here <https://doc.actonma.gov/dsweb/View/Collection-18751>

*Acronyms:*

*ADA= Americans with Disability Act*

*ARPA= American [COVID-19] Recovery Program Act*

*Boston MPO= Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization, the part of MassDOT that disburses federal transportation funds*

*BAG= Bicycle Advisory Group (formed January 2021)*

*CMAQ= Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality*

*COD= Commission on Disabilities*

*COVID= Novel Coronavirus 2019 causing a worldwide pandemic in 2020*

*CTPS= Central Transportation Planning Staff, within the Boston MPO, within MassDOT*

*\*Landline= a signage and way-finding project to connect communities by bike and pedestrian, by MAPC and MassTrails of MassDOT.*

*MAGIC= Minuteman Advisory Group on Inter-local Coordination, which is our 13-town subregion of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council*

*MAPC= Metropolitan Area Planning Council*

*MassDOT=Massachusetts Department of Transportation*

*MBTA= Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority*

*NRG=Nashoba Regional Greenways Coalition*

*SATSAC= South Acton Train Station Advisory Committee*

*TAC= Transportation Advisory Committee*

*TMA= Transportation Management Association*