



April 6, 2022

Dear Mayor Reardon:

We appreciate the efforts of your administration to prioritize investment in street and sidewalk improvements in the City. We are also encouraged to see you take the important step of laying out a multi-year plan and providing an opportunity for public input into this process.

As members of Newburyport Livable Streets, we endeavor (through advocacy, education, and action) to make it easier for people to bike and walk throughout Newburyport by providing a network of streets, sidewalks and trails that are accessible and comfortable to everyone regardless of age, ability, or mode of travel. With that goal in mind, we would like to make a few recommendations for the plan and process that you and your staff have outlined to date.

First of all, we would like to request that, in addition to conditions of the roadways and sidewalks, the City's criteria for selection of projects prioritize roads and sidewalks that have high value for providing important connections in the City's bicycle and pedestrian network. This would mean prioritizing streets and sidewalks that are utilized by a larger number of travelers and, particularly, our most vulnerable users (people walking and biking). Specifically, we would like to encourage the City to focus on primary routes to our rail-trails, residential neighborhoods within 1-mile of our schools, transit routes, and sidewalks that serve senior and low-income housing.

Second, we encourage you to follow the City's Complete Streets Policy throughout all phases of planning, design, construction and maintenance of our roads and sidewalks. We would like to focus your attention on a few sections of the City's policy that are relevant to some of the issues we have observed on recent road and sidewalk projects:

City officials shall approach every transportation improvement and project phase as an opportunity to create safer, more accessible streets for all users. These phases include, but are not limited to: planning, programming, design, right-of-way acquisition, construction engineering, construction, reconstruction, operation and maintenance. Wherever feasible, Complete Streets design principles shall be incorporated into all new publicly and privately funded projects, and incrementally on existing streets through a series of small improvements and activities over time.

Complete Streets principles will be applied in all street construction, retrofit, and reconstruction projects except in the unusual or extraordinary circumstances listed [in the policy]. Even under the conditions outlined [in the policy], a project's impact will be evaluated

for the effect it would have on the usefulness of the street for all users, now and in the future, and the ability to implement other adopted plans in the future.

When designing a street improvement project, the DPS and OPD shall collaborate with all stakeholders to ensure that, wherever feasible, all users and transportation modes are adequately accommodated. These stakeholders may include, but are not limited to neighborhood groups, individual residents, the Police Department, Fire Department, TSAC, Newburyport Commission on Disabilities, and when required any federal or state agency with jurisdiction or direct interest on the proposed project.

As such, the City needs to consider whether there are adjustments that can be incorporated to make the street or sidewalk safer for all users when planning any roadway project - from major projects such as road reconstruction and paving, to maintenance projects such as re-stripping and patching after utility work, to installation of traffic signals. We also believe that Complete Streets principles should apply to all phases of a project (from planning through construction).

With the above guidance in mind, we would like to suggest several steps that the city can take before and during construction in order to provide better communication with residents, ensure that projects stay on schedule and that project budgets are adequately planned for, and make sure that all users' concerns and safety are considered. We believe all of these suggestions are consistent with the City's Complete Streets Policy.

- **We recommend the City post a notice of planned roadway projects (including paving and routine maintenance) 3 to 6 months prior to project start and provide a contact point to whom comments and suggestions can be submitted for consideration.** We understand that not all suggestions will be able to be incorporated into every project, but we think it's important for the City to consider every opportunity for incremental changes.
- **We recommend that any construction project that impacts roads, sidewalks, and bike routes have a clear communication and detour plan that includes regular construction schedule updates via social media and the City's web page, road and sidewalk closure information, recommended detour routes, and identification of safe crossing points.** When school routes are impacted, we recommend that the School Department receive notice well in advance and be provided with a map of the detour routes for walkers and bikers.
- **We recommend that the City require and oversee accommodations and safety measures for bicycles and pedestrians during construction including signage and detours for bicycles and pedestrians.**

As always, NLS is ready and willing to work with the City to develop these procedures and policies for implementing and supporting our Complete Streets Policy. Thank you for your consideration, we look forward to your response and opportunity for further discussion.

Sincerely,

Rick Taintor, President
Alden Clark, Treasurer
Juliet Walker, Clerk
Benjamin Iacono, Director
Sheila Taintor, Director
Kitty (Mary) Kracji, Member

on behalf of Newburyport Livable Streets
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Newburyport Livable Streets seeks to support and improve the health and well-being of our community through education and advocacy related to transportation infrastructure and policies. Our goal is to make it easier for people to bike and walk throughout Newburyport by providing a network of streets, sidewalks and trails that are accessible and comfortable to everyone regardless of age, ability, or mode of travel. We support safe sidewalks, bike routes and neighborhood streets; off-road paths and trails; local transit; and other policies and investments that respect Newburyport's intimate scale and historic character. Livable Streets will nurture a healthy, vibrant city that people want to live in, businesses want to invest in, and tourists want to visit.