

East Arlington On-Street Residential Parking: Next Steps

Several changes are being proposed to daytime on-street parking regulations on residential streets in East Arlington. This report explains what they are, and solicits your views.

Background

The East Arlington parking study was motivated by complaints by residents to the Board of Selectmen about commuter parking, emergency vehicle access and driveway access. The study was focused on the residential streets south of Mass Ave, north of the Minuteman Trail, and east of Lake Street.

This brief report presents findings, some options for changing the current daytime regulations, and asks for your views on these regulations via a mail-in survey. We need your responses to determine the degree of community support for these proposed changes.

What was done

In spring 2005, the Town of Arlington Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) partnered with Tufts University to study existing conditions and formulate recommendations for parking policy. Meetings with residents and businesses were held in February 2005, and another meeting with residents was held in June 2005. The findings were presented to the Selectmen at a public meeting in November 2005.

Findings

Street widths are 24 – 25 feet, with a variety of parking regulations. With the exceptions of Chandler Street and Boulevard Road, parking is permitted on both sides of each street, sometimes leaving only a 10 foot travel lane. Although no areas have permit parking, some areas have 2 hour limits. Peak occupancy (percent of spaces occupied) in the study area ranges from over 75% on Mass. Ave. to under 40% on the side streets, with an average peak occupancy of under 40%. However, some parts of some of the side streets (particularly near Mass. Ave.) can have much higher occupancies. In stakeholder interviews, the Arlington Fire Department expressed concern about their ability to adequately respond to emergencies when both sides of the residential street are filled with parked cars.

It appears that the long-term occupants of the available on-street spaces include local residents (throughout the neighborhood), employees of local businesses (near Mass. Ave) and some Alewife commuters (primarily on and near the east end of Herbert Road). Detailed findings, including parking space inventories and occupancies by street, are available on the TAC website (<http://tac.arlington.ma.us>) and at Fox Library.

Policy Options

Options fall into three areas:

1. Preventing already-illegal parking within 20-feet of each street intersection
2. Parking on one side of the street versus both sides of the street
3. Time limits to discourage commuter parking.

Each is discussed in turn.

1. Parking within 20 feet of a street intersection

Current traffic rules prohibit parking within 20 feet of an intersection. This rule is frequently violated. Problems with violations include

- Reduced visibility for motorists pulling out of the side street
- Reduced visibility between pedestrians and motorists at the intersection
- Impaired ability for large vehicles, including emergency response vehicles, to make the turn.

This recommendation simply calls for the posting and enforcement of this rule.

2. Parking on one side of the street

This recommendation would be to allow parking on only one side of each side street, similar to the current regulation on Chandler Street. Parking would continue to occur on both sides of Mass. Ave. To ease automobile entry/egress in snowy conditions, parking should be **allowed** on the **right side** of one-way streets. On two-way streets, parking should be allowed on the side of the street with the fewer intersections. A second option would be to alternate the side upon which parking is permitted.

Advantages of one-side parking include

- Eases emergency vehicle access and response. To service a fire, a ladder truck with extenders requires about 18' of space. Currently, this space is not available on the side streets when they are filled with parked vehicles on both sides. Given the current parking situation, the Arlington Fire Department has expressed significant concern about their ability to respond to emergencies in this neighborhood.
- Reduces mishaps between trucks and parked cars. A number of collisions have occurred with parked cars, because of the tight space.
- Eases driveway access.

Disadvantages of one-side parking include

- reduces the number of legal spaces
- the increased available street width might encourage speeding.

The issue of driveway access deserves further discussion. The relevant section of Arlington's Traffic Rules reads as follows:

“Parking is prohibited...(g) In front of any private road or driveway or within three (3) feet on either side thereof, moreover on the opposite side of any driveway in such a manner as to inhibit the entry or departure from same.”

The difficulty is that it is very easy for a motorist to violate this clause without intending to. Consider the following scenario. In Figure 1, motorist A has just arrived. He sees that there is plenty of room for motorist B to enter or exit, and therefore parks at space A. Five minutes later, motorist C arrives, and legally parks on the other side of the street, 3-feet from the driveway. Now, B is blocked in, even though all of the drivers involved believed they were parking legally

One side parking (Figure 2) allows more room to maneuver, even when cars are parked close to each driveway.

Figure 1 Sequence of Events

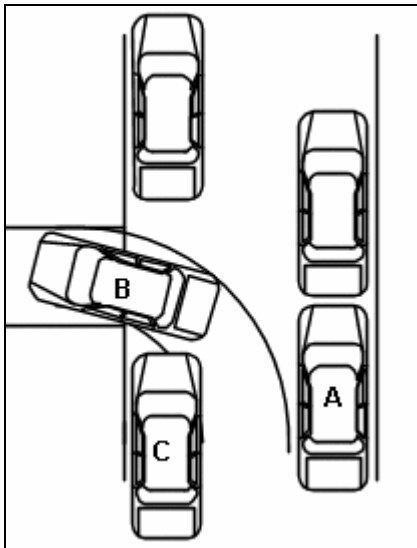
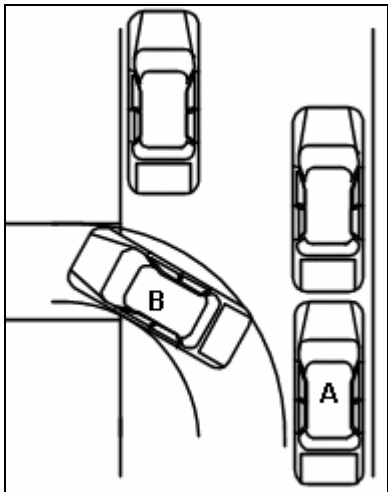
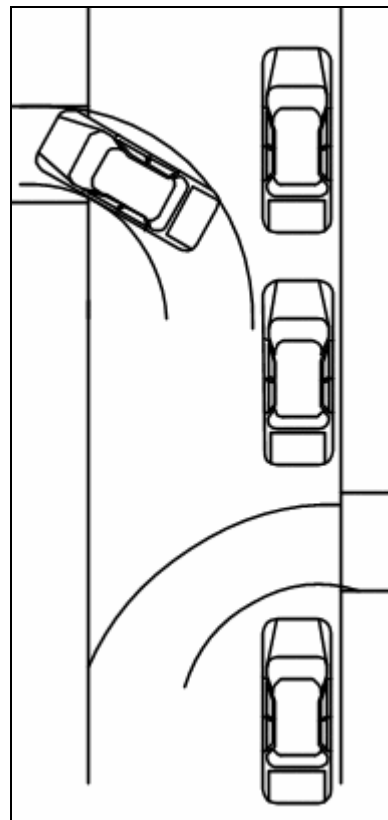


Figure 2 Driveway Access with One-Side Parking



3. Time Limits to Discourage Commuter Parking

A number of residents have complained about commuters who arrive early in the morning, park on the street, and then walk to Alewife, leaving their cars on the street all day. Options to discourage commuter parking include the following:

- a. Impose a two-hour parking limit on all of the residential streets.
- b. Impose a two-hour parking limit, but allow residents and local businesses to obtain permits allowing them to park all day. In both cases, the two-hour limit would apply between 8 AM and 6 PM, Monday through Friday. It would not affect evening and weekend parking.
- c. Prohibit parking, except by permit, between 8 and 10 AM each morning, Monday – Friday.

Advantages of the first option (two-hour limit) include the following:

- Simple to implement
- Will reduce commuter parking, and the number of cars parked on the street.

Disadvantages of the first option (two-hour limit) include

- Does not accommodate residents who might have a need to park on the street all day
- Does not accommodate local businesses who might not have on-site parking available to them, and depend on using the streets for employee parking.¹

Unless there is significant enforcement, these residents and businesses might be expected to simply violate the rule. Furthermore, some local businesses might respond by parking on Mass Ave (thus forcing more of their customers to find parking on the residential streets) or to simply move their vehicles around every few hours.

Advantages of the second and third options (limits except by permit) include the following:

- Will reduce commuter parking, and the number of cars parked on the street
- Does accommodate those residents and local businesses that need all day parking
- Provides a mechanism to regulate the number of people parking all day (for example, there could be a limit on the number of permits issued, or the permit fee could be set to ensure that some short term parking spaces remain available)
- A resident who does not need morning or all-day parking does not need to bother with obtaining a permit.

Now, it's your turn. Please complete and return the following survey by 12/6/2005, whether or not you agree with the proposed changes. If you have questions, please call the Board of Selectmen's office at 781-316-3020.

On behalf of the Board of Selectmen and the Transportation Advisory Committee, thank you!

¹ A variant may be to limit enforcement near Mass. Ave. so that people who need to park all day do not receive more than about 1 ticket per month.

EAST ARLINGTON PARKING SURVEY

Proposed Regulations: For each item, please indicate your level of agreement

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The new parking regulations are proposed for the residential streets south of Mass. Ave, east of Lake Street and north of the Donald R. Marquis Minuteman Trail. In your opinion, they should...					
1. Include posting and enforcement of the rule that currently prohibits parking within 20-feet of a street intersection					
2a. Allow parking on one side of the street. The side chosen would be the right side on the one-way streets, the south side of Brooks (fewer intersections) and a side to be chosen in consultation with residents on the other streets.					
2b. Allow parking on one side of the street, with the side chosen alternating each year.					
3a. Two-hour limit on all parking					
3b. Two-hour limit, but permits will be available to local residents and businesses to permit limited all-day parking					
3c. Prohibit parking, except by permit, between 8 and 10 AM					

Comments:

OTHER QUESTIONS

What street do you live on? (please circle one)

Brooks Boulevard Chandler Egerton Fairmont Herbert
 Lafayette Magnolia Mass. Ave. Melrose Milton Thorndike
 Varnum Other: _____

If you circled one of the north-south streets, please indicate where you live:

? Between Herbert Road and Mass. Ave. ? South of Herbert Road

How many people over age 16 are in your household _____

How many motor vehicles in your household _____

(Optional) Name and e-mail/phone _____

Please return by December 6, 2005 to the Selectmen's Office, Town Hall, 730 Mass. Ave, Arlington MA 02476.

THANK YOU