

ARLINGTON TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Memorandum

To: Board of Selectmen, Arlington, Mass

From: Transportation Advisory Committee

Subject: Hutchinson Road

Reference: Board of Selectmen Letter: April 2003

Date: 8 June 2004

Residents of Hutchinson Road sent letters to both the Winchester and the Arlington Board of Selectmen. The Arlington Board referred the issue to the TAC. The TAC met with Hutchinson residents, who identified the following concerns of the neighborhood:

- The high speed of travel along Hutchinson Road,
- Increasing volumes on Hutchinson Road due to cut through traffic,
- Lack of safety for pedestrians who walk on the roadway due to lack of any sidewalk or pedestrian way,
- Lack of safety at uncontrolled intersections.

Working with the residents, DPW, and APD over the course of many months, the TAC has unanimously voted the following recommendations.

- The Police should continue traffic enforcement (initiated last summer).
- The DPW should erect warning signs so that drivers are made aware of the pedestrian use of the roadway. The TAC recommends that such a sign include a standard yellow diamond shaped warning sign with a pedestrian symbol complemented by a rectangular yellow sign below it with the words "on road". One such sign should be erected near the intersection of Hutchinson Road and Winchester Drive and the other near the intersection of Hutchinson Road with either Oldham Road or Lantern Lane.
- The DPW should prune lower branches of trees along the Country Club that overhang the roadway right-of-way and impede pedestrian use of the limited town right-of-way off the roadway.
- It is recommended that the DPW estimate the costs of creating an informal pathway along the north side of the impacted part of Hutchinson Road to facilitate pedestrian activity off the roadway.
- The TAC does not see a high priority for other actions at this time after review of speed and traffic volume data.

More information on our investigation is provided in the attached report.

Sincerely,

Edward Starr

Chair – Transportation Advisory Committee

Transportation Advisory Committee Members:

Elisabeth Carr-Jones, Ralph Elwell, Larry Englisher, Jeff Maxtutis, Lt. James McHugh, Kevin O'Brien, Michael Rademacher, John Sanchez, Scott Smith, Edward Starr, David Walkinshaw.

Report on Hutchinson Road

This report is to provide the BOS with more detail on the status of our investigation of the traffic issues on Hutchinson Road in response to the Board of Selectmen referral of community concerns. The complexity of interfacing with another town added to the time needed. We apologize for the length of time it has taken to develop final recommendations.

Community Discussions:

Initial Contact to Understand Concerns

In May 2003, shortly after the referral of this issue to the TAC, a citizen representative of the TAC (Larry Englisher) and Lt. Jim McHugh of the Traffic Division and the TAC met with four members of the Hutchinson Road Safety Committee at the Community Safety Building. The four representatives of the group included two Arlington residents and two Winchester residents who live at the Town Line. Note that the resident group also discussed their issues with the Town of Winchester.

The concerns expressed at the meeting with TAC representatives included the following:

- The high speed of travel along Hutchinson Road
- Increasing volumes on Hutchinson Road due to cut through traffic
- Lack of safety for pedestrians who walk on the roadway due to lack of any sidewalk or pedestrian way (there was reference to a recent pedestrian accident)
- Lack of safety at uncontrolled intersections

At the meeting, the group suggested that various measures be investigated. After some discussion regarding what would be practical, it appeared that the primary solutions to be investigated by the TAC should include:

- Increased enforcement of speed limits
- New speed limit signs with reduced speeds if possible
- Stop signs on side streets that have significant traffic, such as Oldham Road
- Painting guidelines along the roadway (as is the case on the Winchester side) to identify a protected pedestrian way and reduce the travel lane to reduce speed
- Possibly cutting back trees on the Country Club side of the road to facilitate pedestrian use of the unpaved areas alongside Hutchinson rather than the roadway
- Possible construction of small rotaries at key intersections on Hutchinson (such as at Old Mystic Road) to calm traffic
- Other traffic calming measures that could be determined to be appropriate

Subsequent Communication with the Resident Group

On December 17, 2003, the same four residents came to the TAC meeting to participate in the TAC discussion on Hutchinson Road. The group reiterated its issues including speed, cut through traffic and truck traffic. After some discussion of many actions and the difficulties associated with them, the group seemed to focus on the delineation of the roadway by guidelines and the need to trim trees along the road to facilitate pedestrian use of the curbside. Subsequent internal discussions at the TAC led to the conclusion that guidelines would not be practical due to road width and that posting of signs warning drivers of the presence of pedestrians on the road would be the best solution until and unless pathways for pedestrians could be created off the roadway surface. This shift in focus was communicated to the resident representatives. The TAC is currently in contact with the residents about the location of the proposed signs.

Existing Conditions:

Hutchinson Road is two lane road of varying width that is uphill in the northwesterly direction and has substantial curves, particularly in Winchester. While there are sidewalks in Winchester, there are no sidewalks in Arlington. Along the eastern section of the road, there are residences on both sides of the road. Along the western section of road closest to Winchester, residences occupy one side and the Winchester Country Club the other side. Along some sections, vegetation and a guardrail prevent pedestrians from walking along the Country Club side of the road. Most pedestrians who use the road for recreational walks or jogging use the roadway pavement. It is a popular road for walking due to the views of the golf course. The road is a Designated Scenic Road. There is little in the way of traffic control and sight distances are somewhat impeded by roadway curvature as well as by trees and bushes. Stop signs are located on some side roads; other intersections are completely uncontrolled.

Speed limit signs on the Arlington side indicate a 25 mph speed limit as you enter Arlington. The posted speed limit in Winchester is 30 mph.

Data that the TAC has had access to do not indicate a pedestrian crash ever taking place on Hutchinson Road within the time period covered.

Winchester Actions

The TAC representatives contacted Winchester early in the review process to share traffic data and to determine what actions Winchester would be taking. Winchester collected counts and identified much higher traffic than Arlington. It is believed that Confirmation activities at St. Eulalia Church may have influenced the Winchester counts. Winchester increased enforcement dramatically and residents have been pleased with the results of enforcement. Winchester also placed an additional speed limit sign with the existing speed limit. Note that there are already sidewalks on much of the Winchester portion of Hutchinson Road and there are some unpaved refuge areas for pedestrians where there

are no sidewalks. Also, Winchester has renewed the painted guide lines along the roadway.

Actions Taken, Investigation and Further Recommendations:

Tree Trimming to Facilitate Pedestrian Activity

A member of the resident committee contacted the Country Club to investigate trimming of the trees to facilitate pedestrian use of the non-paved area alongside Hutchinson Road. The Country Club is reportedly not willing to take such action.

The residents have identified the following trees as impeding pedestrian use of the road:

Tree Number*	Across from following Hutchinson Rd. Address
12/no tag	98
19	94
22	90-94
28	86
30	82
38/39	78
44/45/46/	66
48/49/50	62

*Second row number on the brass tags
(1st number is always 15R for 15th hole right side)

The DPW has identified where the town's roadway right-of-way ends so that trees that overhang the town's right-of-way can be trimmed accordingly without further actions involving the Country Club.

Recommendation: The town should trim trees to the extent that they overhang the town's property.

Speed and Volume Measurement and Traffic Enforcement

Lt. McHugh had already collected tube counts of traffic volume and speed along Hutchinson Road in November 2002. The data was summarized and shared with the residents. This information indicated that the speeds were not unusually high, although a percentage of traffic is traveling above the speed limit.

At Oldham Road and Hutchinson Road (alongside the golf course just as cars enter Arlington), the eastbound average speed is 29 mph, and the 85th percentile speed is 35 mph. 71% of the traffic travels at a speed in excess of the 25 mph speed limit. In the westbound (uphill) direction, speeds are approximately the same.

At 22 Hutchinson Road (down the hill where residence occupy both sides of the road), the eastbound average speed is 30 mph and the 85th percentile speed is 34 mph. 82.5% travel over the 25 mph speed limit. Westbound, the average speed is 26 mph and the 85th percentile speed is 31 mph; at this location right after the turn from Old Mystic Road, only 59.7% were traveling over the 25 mph speed limit.

Lt. McHugh believes that the speed limit studies could not be used to justify lower speed limits; in fact, the likely state action in response to the information would be an increase rather than a decrease in speed limit. Therefore, no further action on speed limits is recommended. Lt. McHugh and the TAC determined that improving enforcement would be the best immediate action and the Arlington Police began to enhance enforcement in the area right away.

Recommendation: Increased enforcement of speed limits (already taking place).

Physical Traffic Control and Engineering

Representatives of the resident group were interested in guide striping along the route. The DPW indicated that the roadway is currently too narrow to construct a pedestrian or bike path. The DPW has measured the width as 24 feet and indicated that 12 foot lanes are most desirable and there is insufficient width to create any viable space for pedestrians.

Construction of mini-rotaries is unlikely to be feasible given the roadway width. DPW would need to examine this to be certain before we can make a recommendation. The location of a mini-rotary at Old Mystic Road might improve that intersection but would have little impact on downhill (eastbound speeds) on much of Hutchinson Road.

Lt. McHugh determined from visual inspection that counts were unnecessary to document traffic volume on Oldham Road. Lt. McHugh determined from visual inspection that the volume would not warrant a stop sign at the location. Further improvements to visibility to enhance safety would likely conflict with area resident desires to preserve the rustic nature and area trees and landscaping.

TAC members believe that sidewalks would be the most logical response to the residents' primary safety concern, most likely just on one side of the road. However, even if recommended, no immediate action on sidewalks is expected due to Town budget constraints. Furthermore, a community comment process would be strongly advised before making any such recommendation since there may be strong community concerns that constructing sidewalks would be detrimental to the rustic character and to property owner landscaping and trees. It is believed that in the past, the community residents sought Scenic Road Designation to preserve the rustic character and preclude sidewalk construction. Note that a public hearing would be required to construct a sidewalk on a Designated Scenic Road, according to the DPW.

The TAC recommends that warning signs identifying pedestrian use of the roadway be placed to warn motorists approaching the segment of Hutchinson Road between Lantern Lane and Winchester Drive (from both directions) that pedestrians may be walking on the roadway. The recommendation is that the signs contain a pedestrian in a standard diamond-shaped yellow warning sign and that a supplementary rectangular-shaped yellow sign be placed below it containing the words “on roadway.” Such a design would make the maximum use of standard signage. Although the precise location of these signs is left to the Town Engineer’s discretion, the TAC has suggested candidate locations to the DPW and is confirming resident concurrence. Note that the existing signposts containing speed limit signs cannot be used for the proposed warning signs as long as the speed limit signs remain. Therefore, new signposts need to be erected some distance away from the existing signs.

In addition, the DPW should estimate the cost of creating a non-paved (stone dust) walking path on the north side of the roadway within the town’s right-of-way. After a review of this estimate, the Town can decide how and when to incorporate such a pathway into the budget. Due to the Scenic Road Designation it would be advisable to conduct a community process before undertaking such action but only after the cost estimate has been completed and the project is deemed worthwhile and feasible to pursue. If economical, it would be a good solution.