

Committee Report for Spring Town Meeting 2023
TTAC
April 21, 2023

The Winchester Traffic and Transportation Advisory Committee (TTAC) offers the following summary for our committee's priorities, activities, and outlook as the town approaches Fiscal year 2024.

Our committee is comprised of 11 Select Board-appointed seats with eight active members (includes two pending Select Board reappointment) and meets monthly, primarily via Zoom. TTAC would like to thank our town's staff and outgoing committee members (recently expired terms: Elizabeth Brodbine Ghoniem and Michele Walsh) for their dedication to improving our town's transportation and safety infrastructure. We also want to take the opportunity to thank Jay Gill for his dedication and outstanding service to the town as our long-time head of the DPW. Congrats on your retirement, Jay!

Our committee advises the Select Board on traffic and transportation-related topics and policy and is supported by the town's engineering, planning and DPW departments although staff support for TTAC has waned recently. Staff change/turnover at Town Hall has led to more sporadic engagement with our committee and the majority of traffic-related work is currently being performed by the town's transportation engineering partner, Toole Design. TTAC appreciates the work that Toole has completed for our town and the partnership they've displayed. Our committee does not have operational responsibility for, or direct influence on, Toole's work but believes the output of their efforts overall has been beneficial to improving the town's traffic infrastructure. With that said, our committee is supportive of the town taking on more direct and dedicated ownership of design, engineering, and installation of traffic-related improvements, especially traffic calming.

The past six months have been marked by our committee's support for the town's transportation master plan, an effort TTAC has championed for more than six years. We've also spent time advocating for improvements along corridors impacted by Eversource work, creating a bike lane from McCall to the Medford line, adding traffic calming elements to the Highland corridor, and evaluating improvement opportunities around a rebuilt Lynch school. Advocating for residents and community members along Main Street, the Packer-Ellis courts area, and the Children's Own School have also been notable. One item that *has not* received much attention is MBTA-related construction in our downtown area! We commend the MBTA, workers, town oversight, and impacted residents and businesses on working through a difficult, but important, enhancement of own town center. Thank you.

This spring and summer's construction season will be highlighted by the continued renovation and improvement of the corridor impacted by Eversource work including the installation of the town's first permanent speed humps between Big and Small Winter ponds. Another highlight will be the implementation of the town's first dedicated bike lane along Main Street. The town's

work on the Lake Street Bridge and ensuring safe connection between the new Lynch school, the neighborhoods that feed it, and the High School/Downtown areas are a focus.

What is not currently in focus for our committee are details related to the town's Master Transportation Plan. Our advocacy for this plan has been consistent but output of the plan and details shared has not been satisfactory. There were three goals for the plan: 1) Create a vision for the town's multi-modal transportation network, 2) create a prioritized list of potential improvement projects, and 3) identifying opportunities for better inter-departmental coordination - *a key to delivering efficient and effective services when finances are strained*. Toole provided both TTAC and the Select Board updates on the draft plan which was scheduled to be completed this spring. The Select Board asked for more detail and engagement on the plan, as did our committee. The committee has not seen any substantive content on Goal #1 or Goal #2 of the plan and fears that the outcome of this exercise is simply a prioritized list of projects. Helpful? Yes, but incomplete. To date, the committee nor the public has received any detail on the list of projects included in the plan or the proposed priority of those projects, an outcome we warned the Select Board of in numerous correspondence about during the funding and framing of the project. It has also been shared that the current draft plan has de-emphasized pedestrian and bike-focused improvements and recommendations, in lieu of traffic and roads, due to budget and priority decisions made by the town and with Toole on this project. This is also "not satisfactory" or a good outcome for the study. We encourage the Select Board, Town Meeting members, and concerned residents to ensure that the town completes a plan with *all three goals* addressed and presents it to the town for review in 2023. Elsewise, the master plan project will have been an expensive effort to collect data about the town we already knew and/or outline more studies to do the same.

Ben Keeler
Chair, TTAC