



WalkBoston

May 21, 2009

Frank Tramontozzi  
Chief Engineer  
Massachusetts Highway Department  
10 Park Plaza  
Boston, MA 02116-3973

Re: Signal & Intersection Improvements  
Dorchester Ave, Boston, MA  
File: 605625

Dear Mr. Tramontozzi:

WalkBoston has reviewed the plans for Dorchester Avenue and feel that overall the intersection improvements will make the Avenue more walkable.

However, because the plans as presented in the on-line document lack specificity, it is difficult to comment on the extent to which the Avenue will be substantially improved over the current condition.

In particular WalkBoston is uncertain if the traffic signals will provide safe, convenient crossings of the Avenue because the document does not include signal cycle phasing and timing. WalkBoston has been a proponent of concurrent signalization for many years, and has worked with the City of Boston to establish concurrent signalization as the standard. If the new Dorchester Avenue signals are concurrent, WalkBoston hopes that they will provide the maximum WALK time as well as leading pedestrian indicators that enable pedestrians to enter the intersection prior to the movement of vehicles.

Below are specific comments on the plans.

1. Too many apex sidewalk ramps that result in slanted rather than straight crosswalks. The geometry of Dorchester Avenue is such that it is laid out at a slant and thus intersects with cross streets at acute and obtuse, rather than right angles. Apex ramps contribute to the irregular geometry, often precluding straight crosswalks that would reduce crossing distances. We question the need for apex ramps at the following intersections:
  - Crescent/Dorchester
  - Taft/Dorchester – southwest corner
  - Savin Hill/Dorchester
  - Hoyt/Dorchester
  - Adams/Dorchester
  - Centre/Dorchester
  - Park/Dorchester
2. Curb radii have been tightened at several intersections; this is a very positive feature that will create safer pedestrian crossings. For example, Freeport/Dorchester has tighter curb

radii. Also, neckdowns at locations such as Dorchester at Taft will reduce pedestrian crossing distances and make pedestrians more visible to drivers.

3. Andrew Square in these plans continues to be a frightening passage for pedestrians. As it is currently configured it is a terrifying pedestrian experience. With six streets entering the very large intersection, pedestrians must wait a long time for a WALK and then must hurriedly cross a very large expanse of pavement. The high speed of vehicles entering the intersection further contributes to the pedestrian unfriendliness of this area. When WalkBoston attended a public hearing at which this intersection was presented, roadway designers contended that because this area serves as a truck route the roadway design would continue to be primarily oriented to trucks and vehicular traffic. This approach is unfortunate since the Andrew MBTA station is located here and a residential community abuts this intersection. As it is designed, the intersection will continue to discourage, not to mention endanger, those who wish to walk in this area. A design solution that reduces the large open expanses of concrete in the center should be proposed for this area.

We look forward to your comments on our suggestions.

Sincerely,

Dorothea Hass  
Senior Project Manager

cc: Thomas Tinlin, Transportation Commissioner  
Dennis Royer, Chief of Public Works and Transportation  
Patrick Hoey, Boston Transportation Department  
John DeBenedictis, Boston Transportation Department  
Nicole Freedman, Director of Bicycle Programs  
Evelyn Darling, Executive Director of Fields Corner Main Street  
David Watson, MassBike  
Charlie Denison, Livable Streets  
Jackie Douglas, Livable Streets