

EAST ARLINGTON 
Livable Streets Coalition

www.ealscoalition.org

August 8, 2009

Dear Business Owner:

The East Arlington Livable Streets (EALS) Coalition is a growing group of 75 neighbors whose primary mission is to maintain and promote the livability of our neighborhood. We believe that a vibrant neighborhood business district is a critical part of any successful community and many of our members cite Capitol Square as one of the best things about living in East Arlington. Throughout the Mass Ave Corridor planning process, EALS has maintained constant support for many of your concerns such as maximizing curb-side parking along Mass Ave., developing a longer stretch of two east-bound traffic lanes between Bates Road and Route 16 and a well managed and expedited construction schedule.

Over ten thousand people live within a mile of the Mass. Ave/Lake Street intersection, a twenty-minute walk or seven minute bike ride. We believe that a much higher percentage of local residents will walk to the Capitol Square if the experience of crossing and walking along Mass Ave were a more comfortable one, especially for seniors and those with children. The current plan will provide this by including:

- wider sidewalks in select places in the business district
- improved crosswalks with bump outs for enhanced pedestrian visibility and safety
- new pedestrian-scale lighting
- additional street trees, landscaping and benches
- enhanced access for bicyclists

These improvements will help to strengthen Capitol Square's "sense of place", the intangible quality that draws people to metro Boston's most successful local business districts.

We believe that currently, you lose customers because Mass Ave traffic can be chaotic. People sometimes drive as if it's a four-lane highway. The new design will create a more predictable and steadier flow of traffic. Drivers will be more likely to stop if they are able to see your business better, read your signs, find parking and have a more enjoyable short walk to your business.

Designated bike lanes will bring more shoppers into the business district. Although the lanes are a controversial part of the design, we support them because they will make Mass Ave safer and calmer, help ease traffic congestion, free up curb-side parking, and discourage cyclists from

dodging in and out of traffic or riding on the sidewalk. They will also provide space for your delivery vehicles and MBTA buses to pull over without blocking car traffic. All of these things will add to the ease of visiting your business--for cars, bicycles, and pedestrians.

An example of how calmer traffic and bike lanes can help a business district can be seen along San Francisco's Valencia Street, a previously four-lane neighborhood main street converted to three traffic lanes and bike lanes in 1999. A 2003 study showed that after four years, 66% of merchants felt that bike lanes had a positive effect, and 37% reported an increase in sales. None felt that bike lanes had made things worse. (The full report can be found at http://www.emilydrennen.org/research_trans.shtml)

We also want to direct the thousands of walkers and bikers that use the Minuteman Trail to your businesses on Mass Ave. EALS will work with business, the Chamber and the Town to locate a sign where the Minuteman crosses Lake St directing bikers and others up to Mass Ave to shop, eat or catch a movie.

The EALS Coalition believes that the quest for a more pedestrian and bike-friendly street does not need to come at the expense of auto access and parking or bus ridership. The Mass Ave Corridor Plan will improve our community and your business by making the Avenue safer, more inviting and more accessible for all. As your neighbors, we hope this letter addresses some of your concerns, and we look forward to working with you to ensure a successful business district.

Please write us at ealscoalition@gmail.com or visit our web site at www.ealscoalition.org. Thank you so much for your time and we look forward to hearing from you.

Phil Goff, co-chair
East Arlington Livable Streets Coalition