



35 Varnum Street
Arlington, MA 02474

January 5, 2010

Patricia Leavenworth, District Highway Director
Massachusetts Department of Transportation
District 4 offices
519 Appleton Street
Arlington MA 02476

Re: Mass Ave Corridor Project in East Arlington

Dear Ms. Leavenworth:

The East Arlington Livable Streets (EALS) Coalition is a neighborhood-based advocacy organization founded in the fall of 2008. We are writing to express our strong support for the current Mass Ave Corridor plan in Arlington.

EALS has over 130 supporters on our e-mail list, over 200 fans on our Facebook page and we aspire to become the neighborhood's voice on transportation and livability-related issues. Our monthly meetings, held at the neighborhood public library, are open to all. Our supporters are a diverse group of new and long-term residents from all parts of the neighborhood. Many of us are parents with school-age children. All of us love our neighborhood, love the Capitol Square business district and love the Minuteman Path but we hate the speeding traffic on Mass Ave. Our members look forward to improvements that will make Mass Ave a more pedestrian-friendly, neighborhood-oriented "main street" for East Arlington.

Our group supports the Arlington Board of Selectman's recommended plan for improvements on Mass Ave for the following reasons:

- New sidewalks, street trees and lighting will improve the "sense of place" along the Avenue, bringing more customers to the business district and reducing its role as a bypass route through the neighborhood
- Bump outs, new crosswalks and wider sidewalks in strategic areas will make crossing the street more convenient and safe, especially for the elderly and those walking with children
- Three defined travel lanes and left-turn pockets will slow traffic and make traffic patterns more predictable and calm

- Dedicated bike lanes will provide space for the growing number of cyclists on Mass Ave and discourage cyclists from riding on the sidewalk (shared lanes, on the other hand, will not welcome less experienced cyclists and families and encourage sidewalk riding)
- Nearly all legal parking spaces will be retained, some will be added and, combined with streetscape improvements, will ultimately create a more vibrant business district
- Retaining existing traffic signals will maintain vehicle access and pedestrian crossing while the amply-warranted new signal at Bates Road acknowledges its existing status as a north-south collector street.

Many of us have followed the Mass Ave Corridor planning process from day one. We feel the Town has done an excellent job with public outreach and the numerous public meetings and workshops have given ample opportunity for the community to weigh in on the plan. We respect that some of our neighbors and local business owners oppose the plan. They are entitled to their opinions, but not to misstate the facts. Many of the project opponents continue to claim that the Town's plan will impede emergency vehicle access, increase cut-through traffic on side streets and create a virtual parking lot on Mass Ave, all of which are entirely false. Opponents have, at times, implied that the entire community is against the plan, even calling their plan to maintain the status quo with minimal safety improvements to pedestrians, cyclists and motorists, the "Residents Plan". Again, nothing could be farther from the truth.

The EALS Coalition urges you to take the necessary steps to bring the Mass Ave Corridor plan past the 25% review stage. At MassDOT's forthcoming hearing, we are prepared to show our support for a future Mass Ave that maintains vehicle access and parking while building a more vibrant, pedestrian- and bike-friendly "main street" for our neighborhood.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

Phil Goff, Co-chair

Chad Gibson, Co-chair

Cc:

Luisa Paiewonsky, MassDOT Chief Administrator
Connie Raphael, MassDOT District 4
Frank Suszynski, MassDOT District 4
Arlington Selectman Clarissa Rowe
Arlington Selectman Jack Hurd
Arlington Selectman Annie LaCourt
Arlington Selectman Diane Mahon
Arlington Selectman Kevin Greeley
Ed Starr, Transportation Advisory Committee Chair
Brian Sullivan, Arlington Town Manager
Carole Kowalski, Director of Community Planning