



TOWN OF ACTON

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Office of the Town Manager

November 20, 2018

Green Acton Board of Directors
Po Box 1233
Acton, MA 01720
Sent via email to debra_simes@GreenActon.org

Dear Directors of Green Acton,

Thank you for submitting your May 15, 2018 public statement regarding the Kelley's Corner Infrastructure Project and your October 5, 2018 clarification letter. I appreciate your interest and engagement in this project. The Kelley's Corner Infrastructure project has been and continues to be a community driven project.

Town staff and the Kelley's Corner Steering Committee (KCSC) have held multiple public workshops and made several public presentations with members of Green Acton in attendance. Since receiving your letters, staff and members of the KCSC have also met individually with members of Green Acton to attempt to address your concerns. As requested, the table below provides written responses to your stated concerns.

Green Acton Concern	Response
<i>We do share a concern that the goal of reducing traffic wait times has been prioritized too far "above" other goals. We plan to continue working with the KCSC to understand how best to address our concerns.</i>	Pedestrian safety is a primary goal of the design. The Kelley's Corner project will provide the community with a comprehensive ADA compliant pedestrian network. The proposed pedestrian network would be a significant safety enhancement for residents who access services in the Kelley's Corner area and for the Acton-Boxborough schools particularly the high school which operates under an "open campus" and allows students to leave the campus throughout the day. There was public planning process that identified the preferred alternative currently being sought which included public meetings, workshops, and other community engagement methods. There was an alternative called "Targeted Improvements" which consisted of minor modifications to the roadway, improved sidewalks, bike lanes and access management to control curb cuts. The "Targeted Improvement" alternative which may be considered a lower impact design was not chosen by the community. The "Balanced Network" concept, which represents the current design, was overwhelmingly selected by the community members who participated in the several outreach opportunities and was approved as the design concept for this project at the 2016 Town Meeting. The speed of traffic will not get faster, but cars will be able to maneuver throughout the Kelley's Corner area at a more consistent flow due to the reduction in queue lengths and designated left turn lanes at the major intersections and in other locations to facilitate more efficient access management into business locations. In total these measures, combined

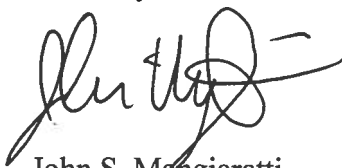
	with the application of complete street design standards, will greatly improve the efficiency of flow and safety for all traffic participants in the Kelley's Corner area regardless of their choice of transportation mode.
1. The destruction of large trees that are sequestering major amounts of carbon and contributing to quality of life, especially the trees on the north side of Mass. Ave. between Main Street and Charter Road. Suggestions include:	The proposed design reduces CO emissions. For example: during the weekday PM peak hour from 28.72 kg to 7.83 kg network-wide. This is a 73% reduction in CO emissions. Each tree removed will be replaced and the total number of new trees will be 30% more than what is there today.
A. have an arborist report on the health and estimated remaining lifetime of these trees for use as guidance in judicious removal of any "senior" trees	An arborist was hired to evaluate trees and we are including special instructions in the revised plans so that during the construction process the Town can attempt to save the 42 inch diameter northern red oak in front of the old high school building on Massachusetts Avenue is saved.
B. fund sufficient trees to match the total of diameters of any trees that may be removed in the course of the project; these replacement trees do not all need to be sited in Kelley's corner, and probably shouldn't be	A proposed tree replacement program that is responsive to this request was presented conceptually at the 11/19/18 Board of Selectmen meeting. The proposed plan is to plant 25-35 new trees annually at specific locations over the next five years to increase the total diameter of trees that are replanted. We are evaluating funding sources and look forward to discussing this idea with Green Acton and others for feedback.
C. reconfigure sidewalks, traffic lanes, and bike lanes to keep the embankment as is in order to protect the trees on the north side of Mass. Ave. between Kelley's Corner and Charter Road	The Town asked GPI to evaluate if trees could be saved if the proposed second left turn lane on Massachusetts Avenue east bound was removed. Compared to the current roadway width, the proposed roadway width, including the required bike lanes and the additional turning lane, will be 10' wider. However, eliminating the proposed second left turn lane would not mean that the entire roadway, including bike lanes, could shift to the south as roadway alignments need to be maintained through the Massachusetts Avenue Main Street intersection. Additionally, the roadway alignment cannot be shifted further south as this would require a taking and removal of the historic structure at 426 Massachusetts Avenue (offices of Baker Whitney Oil), which is listed on the State Register of Historic Places. The result is that regardless of the number of proposed left hand turning lanes, the roadway will be widened 5'-0" +/- on the north side of the road. On the north side, a retaining wall is required due to significant and abrupt changes in grades adjacent to the sidewalks. Excavation and construction of this wall in its proposed location will require removal of trees.
D. ensure that the landscaping for the project:	The project proposes a robust landscape scheme throughout the project area to foster a pedestrian friendly environment.
i. responds to the need for "green visual corridors," or vistas, along the length of the project on Mass. Ave. and Main St.	The plan includes the planting of a corridor of street trees along Massachusetts Avenue and Main Street in addition to a vegetation buffer and raised landscaping islands in the center of the roadways approaching the main intersection.

<p><i>ii. is designed with human needs in mind, i.e., more natural/fluid/organic than rectilinear (note how few straight lines exist in nature)</i></p>	<p>The pedestrian network improvements are designed with the human needs for safety and the human needs for accessibility in mind. Other features such as traffic calming measures and pedestrian level lighting are also designed to improve safety.</p>
<p><i>iii. employs a diverse assortment of hardy, long-lived native trees and other plantings</i></p>	<p>The trees and other plantings will be selected to ensure hardiness, longevity, and climate appropriateness. The landscaping details will be further refined as the plan progresses to the 75% design phase where additional community outreach will be solicited and a landscape architect will be more heavily involved. We welcome your involvement in this process.</p>
<p>2. The wider crossing distances at the main Kelley's Corner intersection that create extra risks and concerns for people with disabilities and children, and may threaten the viability of parking-dependent businesses by removing parking. Suggestions include:</p>	<p>The premise of this comment is incorrect. The proposed crossing distances in the Kelley's Corner intersection are a total of 25 feet shorter than current crosswalks. Two crosswalks are longer, one by 3 feet, the other by 5 feet. Two crosswalks are shorter, one by 8 feet, the other by 25 feet. In addition, the crosswalks are proposed to be more perpendicularly aligned which provides a safer condition for pedestrians.</p>
<p>A. remove additional turning lanes to shorten walking distances</p>	<p>Walking distances are shorter in most locations and pedestrian signalization will be installed at multiple crossings to support safer crossing.</p>
<p>B. raise and widen crosswalks to create a more compelling zone of safety for pedestrians</p>	<p>The design includes four raised landscape islands, one to serve as a pedestrian refuge and all to serve as a traffic calming feature. Crosswalk widths are standard per MassDOT regulations.</p>
<p>C. provide additional persuasive information on how new traffic light systems increase safety for children and people with disabilities by extending the time allowed to cross — even with longer crossing distances</p>	<p>The premise of this comment is incorrect. The proposed crossing distances in the Kelley's Corner intersection are a total of 25 feet shorter as described above. In addition to safer crosswalks, the traffic signals are part of a comprehensive design to enhance the safety for pedestrians in this area. The existing sidewalk network presents accessibility challenges especially for people with disabilities and/or people walking with a stroller. The existing crosswalks are too long, are skewed, and are not supported by traffic signals, pedestrian level lighting, or pedestrian flashing beacons. The proposed traffic signals will support the cohesive pedestrian network comprised of ADA compliant sidewalks, appropriately designed ADA ramps and push buttons that are reachable, leading to appropriately designed crosswalks, pedestrian level lighting, vegetated buffers and street trees creating traffic calming and separation from vehicles, and raised landscape islands serving as both pedestrian refuge and as traffic calming features.</p>
<p>D. create specific parking plans to allay the concerns of business owners</p>	<p>Throughout the planning and community engagement for this project we have been in regular communication with business owners to understand and address concerns related to parking. 263 Main Street is a 14,810 square foot, commercially zoned lot located on the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Main Street. There is a “v” shaped building located on the lot which is occupied by a twelve seat restaurant, “Bueno Y Sano”. The Zoning Bylaw requires restaurants operating with twelve seats to have a minimum of three parking spaces. The existing site configuration contains twelve striped parking spaces and one accessible space. The proposed infrastructure project as submitted for 25% review showed a permanent taking of +/-3,437 square feet which resulted in a reduction of</p>

	<p>parking spaces down to five. Over the last few months we have worked with our engineers and MassDOT to find a way to address the concerns of the property owners. We are pleased to report that MassDOT is supportive of a realignment of the intersection that is responsive to concerns related to parking at 263 Main Street. The updated proposed design for the intersection reduces the necessary takings at 263 Main Street and increases the number of parking spaces to at least eight. Additional concepts for parking layouts on the property are being evaluated which may further increase the number of parking spaces. This work will continue in collaboration with the property owners.</p>
<p><i>E. lower the speed limit to that used for other arterial numbered highways in area towns (such as in Wayland at Rt. 27), and make any other “traffic-calming” changes that would implicitly communicate the new, slower limits</i></p>	<p>We will continue to consider the appropriate speed limits for these roads and any potential changes may be discussed by the community. The proposed design incorporates several traffic calming mechanisms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised landscape islands will be located at each entrance into Kelley’s Corner on Massachusetts Avenue and Main Street, which serve to reduce motor vehicle speeds and identify entrance into a center; • Proposed consolidated and narrowed curb-cuts will make turning movements more predictable and safer for all traffic participants, especially pedestrians; • Designated left turn lanes will be located at strategic, highly frequented access drives channeling vehicle turn movements to predictable locations and removing turning vehicles from the through-lanes; this also provides additional landscape island opportunities; • Correctly positioned street trees located between the sidewalk and roadway curb will increase safety by framing a distinct buffer for pedestrians and creating a “green” visual edge, which influences drivers to reduce motor vehicle speeds;

Thank you for sharing your comments and concerns regarding this critical infrastructure project.

Sincerely,



John S. Mangiaratti
Town Manager

CC: Acton Board of Selectmen
Kelley’s Corner Steering Committee