



CITY OF NEWBURYPORT  
HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
60 PLEASANT STREET • P.O. Box 550  
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October 25, 2018

Patricia A. Leavenworth, P.E., Chief Engineer  
Massachusetts Department of Transportation, Highway Division  
10 Park Plaza  
Boston, MA 02116

Attn: Stacey Donahoe, Room 4260

Re: Safe Routes to School project #608972 – High Street corridor

Dear Ms. Leavenworth,

The Newburyport Historical Commission (NHC) has been asked to provide feedback on the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) project along a portion of High Street in Newburyport, which is within the Newburyport National Register Historic District. We recently received more information about the project, held a public meeting on 10/24/18 and conducted several votes on this matter. We are consequently providing revised comments from our previous letter to the Massachusetts Historical Commission dated September 2018 (received 10/11/18) on this project. The NHC's Section 106 advisory review of this project has been solicited under the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, as amended.

Overall, the NHC finds that this project will not have an "Adverse Effect" on the surrounding historic assets. Please see our further comments and recommendations below regarding certain details of the project.

Sidewalks: While removal and replacement of the older brick sidewalks is not optimal from a historical perspective, we recognize and accept the pedestrian benefits of reconstructing the sidewalks with new wirecut brick. We also recognize that reconstructing the deteriorated sidewalks will potentially enhance the setting and views of the district's historic assets, and acknowledge the positive impact of similar projects such as the reconstruction of brick sidewalks along Green Street in Newburyport. We appreciate that the sidewalks along High Street will continue to be varying widths, that concrete and asphalt sidewalks will be replaced in-kind with new concrete, and that abutters will have an opportunity to pay for the installation of brick if they can afford it and so desire. If there are any remaining Works Progress Administration (WPA) plaques, we strongly recommend that they be salvaged for potential interpretation.

Raised curb pedestrian refuge islands: We recognize the pedestrian safety benefits of installing two pedestrian refuge islands with raised 6" granite curbs at crosswalks across the wider portions of the roadway in this busy high-volume thoroughfare. We also are cognizant that raised curb pedestrian refuge islands have been installed other historic/National Register districts in the Commonwealth. We strongly recommend that the appearance of the refuge islands be improved by laying in granite cobbles rather than concrete or brick inside the curbed non-walking surface.

Traffic calming: We appreciate that no over-road signaling beacons shall be used and that the Rectangular Rapid Flash Beacons (RRFBs) shall have black ornamental bases and poles.

Curbing: We are pleased that the project incorporates removing and resetting as much of the existing granite curbing as possible, and accept that it is appropriate to use new granite curbing (particularly radius pieces) for the new bump-outs and similar relocated curb areas. We acknowledge that it is appropriate to shift the curbing to reduce the width of the roadway at excessively wide areas in order to promote pedestrian and bicycle safety, and that reduction of the expanse of asphalt will likely enhance the district's historic assets.



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Signage: We prefer a minimum of signs, and acknowledge that the engineer has reduced unnecessary signage in the proposed plans, and that "pedestrian crossing" and arrow signage is warranted at the crosswalks as well as others such as stop signs, one-way signs at the school driveway, turning lane signs, and others. We continue to believe that street signs should be of a size no greater than their current dimensions in the project area.

Greenway: We understand that the green strips that separate High Street from the public sidewalk in various areas will remain, and will be expanded in the section between Kent and Buck Streets where the asphalt pavement area is being reduced.

As noted earlier and in light of the new information and clarifications, we find that this project will not have an "Adverse Effect" on the surrounding historic assets in this portion of the Newburyport National Register Historic District.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me through the Newburyport Planning Office.

Best regards,

Sarah White, Chair  
Newburyport Historical Commission

Stephen Dodge  
Christopher Fay  
Ron Ziemba  
Glenn Richards  
Malcolm Carnwath  
Ned McGrath

Cc: Brona Simon, MHC  
Linda Santoro, MHC  
Geordie Vining, Newburyport Planning Office  
Andrew Port, Newburyport Planning Office  
David Shedd, MassDOT  
Heather Shand, Ward 3 City Councilor