

May 27, 2014

Dear Mr. Mooring,

We are writing as residents of The Pine Street Cohousing Community located at 155 and 161 Pine Street in hopes of influencing the decisions currently in process regarding possible improvements to our neighborhood streetscape. Several of us have attended meetings of The Public Works Committee over the past year and we have been keeping ourselves apprised of the various proposals put forth regarding the addition of sidewalks and/or bike lanes along our road.

After much consideration, we have come, collectively, to the opinion that pedestrian and bicycle safety, as well as accessibility, would be best served by providing a dedicated sidewalk on the north side of the road and a bicycle “climbing” lane along the south side. We recognize that there are many constraints in place that influence the degree to which the street can be widened. Given those constraints, we feel that this is the best solution available and far superior to the idea of a mixed, multi-use path designed to serve two way traffic—an idea that we believe, in reality, wouldn’t serve either bicyclists or pedestrians particularly well.

We would like to say, emphatically though, and for the following reasons, that the worst possible and in fact unacceptable choice available to the town is to do nothing (an option we saw noted in the April 3rd, 2014 meeting minutes of The Public Works Committee).

- Pine Street is one of the busiest traffic arteries in town frequented by heavy, fast moving trucks as well as automobiles.
- It has been in dreadful condition for years, with eroded side edges that make cycling and walking treacherous.
- It has experienced an influx of student housing along its full length leading to the presence of more walkers traversing to and from the bus service area of the Village Center (including late at night along a dark, narrow and winding streetscape, with some stretches that have no discernable shoulder to depend on).
- It is the link between the North Amherst and Cushman Village Centers, both of which are currently slated for increased residential development. Bicycle, pedestrian and vehicular traffic on the road are only likely to increase.
- It is situated in a densely populated neighborhood with many surrounding amenities that residents want and should be able to access safely by foot or bicycle. These include: several restaurants and shops, a branch library and post office, the Mill River pool, playing fields and recreation area, Puffers Pond and surrounding trail system, PVTa bus service, North Amherst Community Farm and Simple Gifts CSA, to which many residents from adjacent neighborhoods bike or walk both for recreational purposes and to pick up their weekly vegetable share.
- The current situation is extremely unsafe and completely out of step with the aspirations of both our Master Plan and the town’s recent designation as a Green Community.

We would like also to pass on the request that particular attention be paid in the final design process, to providing adequate space and curbing between areas of pedestrian use and vehicular traffic—unlike what currently exists on the section of sidewalk just west of the intersection with State Street, which is completely untenable. It is our view, if faced with such a choice, that it would be better to sacrifice overall width of the walking path in favor of space between the path and the road.

We thank you for your consideration of these viewpoints and for your work on behalf of the town, and trust that this letter will be forwarded to members of both the Public Works and Public Transportation and Bicycling Committees for their review. It is clear to us, especially given the other infrastructure work that has been taking place on the road, that the time for action is now. Pine St. will not likely be slated again for major improvement for decades. The window of opportunity is upon us. Let us, please, do whatever we can to seize it.

Respectfully submitted by,
The Pine Street Cohousing Condominium Association

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Deborah I. Margolin, 155 Pine St.

Steven Dunn and Jessica Plaut, 161A Pine St.

Will Snyder and Laura Muller, 161B Pine St.

Mark Roberts and Andrea Cooper, 161C Pine St.

Jennie Traschen and David Kastor, 161D Pine St.

Marcy Sala, 161E Pine St.

Alan Sax and Susan Schwartz, 161F Pine St.

Benjamin Dadidovitch and Irene Dujovne, 161G Pine St.

Mary Dent, 161H Pine St.