



Memorandum

To: Town Council Members
From: Councilors Lynn Griesemer and Cathy Schoen
CC: Town Manager
Date: November 9, 2023
Re: Speed Mediation surrounding Cushman School

Purpose

The purpose of this memo is to request the implementation of speed mediation measures related to the Cushman Scott Children's Center. The measures listed below would together implement a "safety" zone for stretch of Market Hill with the Center and the adjacent intersections.

Specifically, it is a request to take the following actions:

- Speed limit: Lower speed limit to 20 mph on the ¼ mile stretch of Henry Street between Market Hill through the intersection with Pine Street; on both sides of the school
- Speed Bumps: Add 1 or 2 speed bumps on the road between Market Hill and Pine Street
- Stop Signs: Install two additional stop signs at the intersection of Henry and Pine Street. There already exists a stop sign at the end of Pine Street and Henry. This request would make that intersection a three-way stop.

Attachment A has 2 maps of the area showing lowered-speed zone on the street, potential location of speed bumps, and stop signs.

Background: Safety Zones and Cushman Scott Children's Center

On October 2, 2023 the Amherst Town Council unanimously adopted MGL Chapter 90 Section 18B – Establishing Safety Zones. Adoption of this provision allows Amherst to set a speed limit of 20 MPH in a designated safety zone.. [General Law - Part I, Title XIV, Chapter 90, Section 18B \(malegislature.gov\)](#)

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation provides the following definition and guidelines for such zones with explicit mention of child-care centers.. The following text is copied from the posting: [About the role of speed limits | Mass.gov](#)

Safety zones

Safety zones are specially designated areas such as parks, playgrounds, senior citizen housing, hospitals, and childcare centers. Within these zones, speed limits must be set at

20 mph. Safety zone speed limits are the only regulatory speed limits that municipalities can adopt on city- and town-owned ways without approval from MassDOT; they cannot be placed on state highways without prior written approval by MassDOT. Safety zones should have roadway treatments that cue drivers to slow down.

Where do safety zones apply?

- The street should be adjacent to a land use that is likely to be an origin or destination for vulnerable road users.
- The safety zone should contain one or more areas that have potential conflicts between motor vehicles and vulnerable road users that warrant a reduction in speeds such as crosswalks, driveways, or side streets.
- **The minimum length of the safety zone should be at least ¼ of a mile** and it should not extend more than 500' beyond a side street unless an applicable land use continues along the adjacent block.

The Board and Parents of the Cushman Scott Children's Center have approached the Town of Amherst, multiple Town Councilors, and Town Committees (e.g., JCPC and TSO) regarding their request for speed mediation along Henry Street over a number of decades. The street is frequently used by cars as a cut-off to go downtown or north. The high speeds and lack of stop signs or speed bumps puts children, parents and staff at risk as well as neighbors living on the narrow street. There is also a near-by intersection with Pine that has cars turning left or right onto Henry Street into traffic that regularly exceeds the posted 25 MPH speed limit, leading to the risk of traffic accidents.

Our understanding is that there has been a survey by Amherst Police Department and the Amherst Department of Public Works that supports the Center and public concerns. With the Council adoption of Safety Zones, we therefore believe this is the time to move forward and implement the Town's first use of the Safety Zone Provision as adopted by the Town Council.

Speed limits alone are not enough. To enhance safety the Center has asked for and we support use of speed humps/bumps and additional stop signs. Such actions are suggested by the State in conjunction with safety zone and other efforts to limit speed. [Safe speeds: roadway treatment technical toolkit | Mass.gov](#)

Cushman Scott Children's Center representatives have met with Town staff multiple times to discuss actions that would address safety concerns. Most recently, they supplied maps shown in Appendix A that indicate the potential location of the 20 MPH speed zone (up to ¼ mile), speed bumps in front of the Center and additional stop signs.

Town Council Action

With the adoption of safety zones, the Town Council has the authority to act to establish a safety zone a reduced speed limit and supportive measures to slow traffic along a stretch of Henry Street by the Center and the nearby intersection by the Center. As keeper of the public way, the Council has the authority to implement the proposed actions.

MOTION: To establish a safety zone at the Cushman Scott Children's Center on Henry Street with the following actions:

- Lower speed limit to 20 mph on a ¼ mile stretch of Henry Street from Market Hill through the intersection with Pine Street – lowers speed on both sides of the school;
- Add 1 to 2 speed bumps on the road between Market Hill and Pine Street; and
- Install 2 additional stop signs at the intersection of Henry and Pine Street. There already exists a stop sign at the end of Pine Street and Henry. This request would make that intersection a three-way stop.

We ask the Town Manager to report back to the Town Council by December 31, 2023 on an implementation plan.

APPENDIX A

Figure 1. North Amherst – Cushman Region. The proposed location of a ¼ mile Safety Zone, centered on Cushman Scott Children’s Center, spanning the distance between the intersection of Henry St and Market Hill Rd in the north and the Salamander Crossing in the south, is highlighted in Red. The proposed location of stop signs to create a three-way intersection at Pine and Henry Streets is highlighted with an Orange Star. A black box is drawn to highlight the location of Cushman Scott Children’s Center.

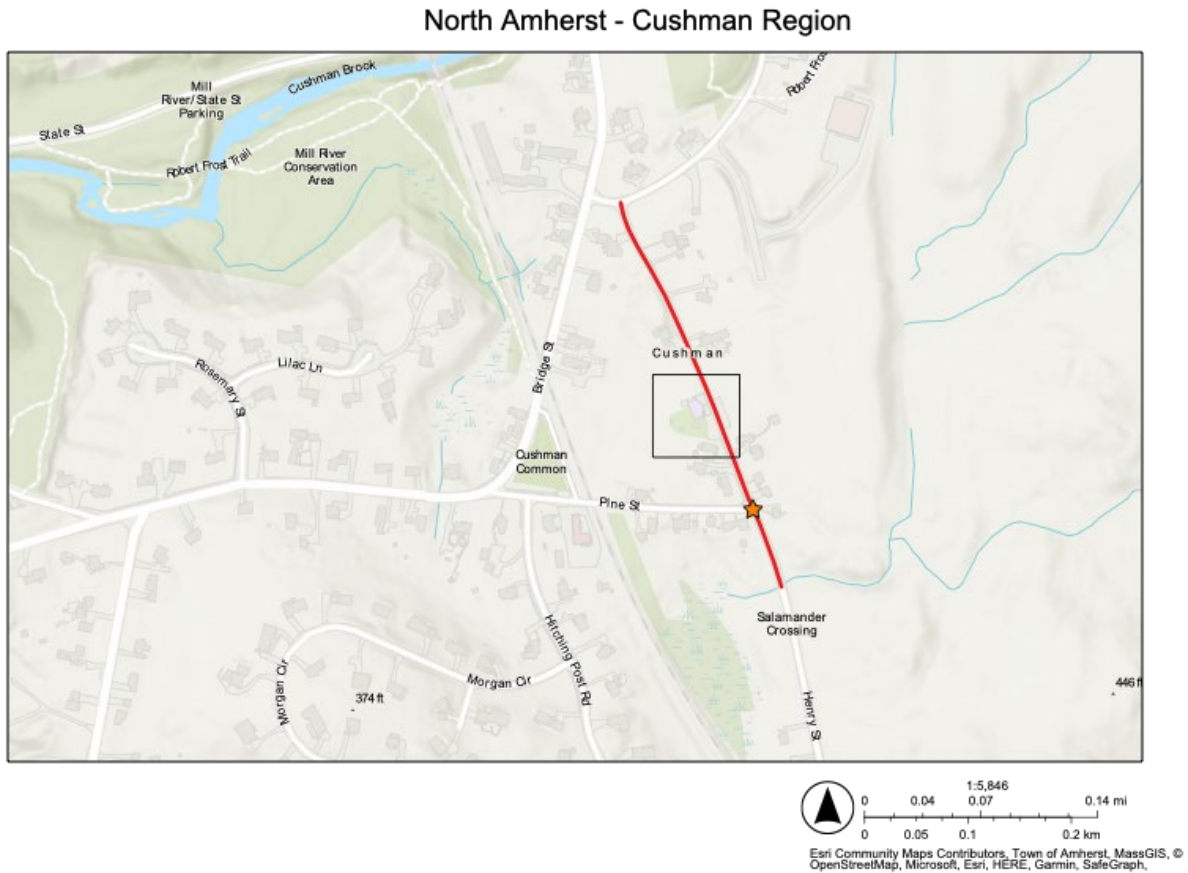


Figure 2. North Amherst – Cushman Scott Children’s Center. The proposed location of a ¼ mile Safety Zone, centered on Cushman Scott Children’s Center is highlighted in Red. The proposed locations of two Speed Humps to be placed on the north and south sides of existing parking for Cushman Scott Children’s Center are shown in Orange.

Cushman Scott Children's Center

