

Huntington Village Center Walk Audit Huntington, MA

May 2, 2017

MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE

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Purpose of Assessment

Volunteers and staff members in the Town of Huntington responded to a Healthy Hampshire Request for Proposal for walkability project funding. The focus of Huntington’s proposal was the planning and construction of a “River Walk” along the Westfield River to better connect residents and visitors with the natural assets in the region. The proposal also suggested an analysis of the safety and quality of existing walking routes currently used by senior walking groups and running groups in Huntington. These routes include the proposed River Walk site.

Healthy Hampshire reached out to WalkBoston to lead a walk audit with the town staff and residents. The goals of the walk audit were to:

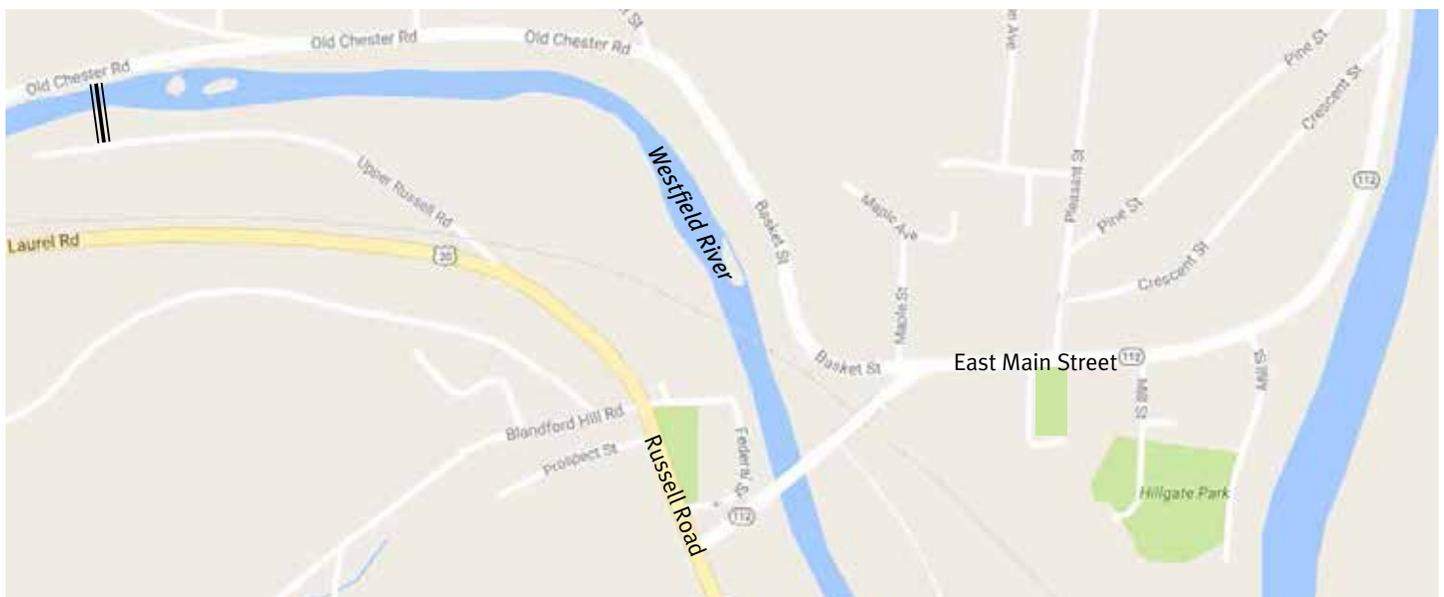
- Assess the safety and quality of the pedestrian infrastructure along Russell Road (Route 20) and East Main Street (Route 112)
- Increase access to walking facilities (trails, sidewalks, safe crossings) for Huntington residents, including Huntington walking club members
- Review the “River Walk” design concept along the west side of the Westfield River behind Town Hall and Stanton Hall
- Explore the “trolley line” easement as a recreational trail; ultimately part of the Highlands Footpath initiative

Study Area

The study area included both sides of the Westfield River between the pedestrian bridge connecting Old Chester Road and Upper Russell Road and the vehicular bridge (Route 112 – East Main Street), and extends to the Mill Street intersection with East Main Street. Due to time constraints, the walk audit itself was limited the south side of the Westfield River and across the vehicular bridge to Mill Street.

Both Route 20 and Route 112 are designated as State Scenic Byways and have management plans and steering committees charged with implementing those plans. The Jacobs Ladder Trail committee is particularly active in Huntington and the surrounding communities.

Before the walk, WalkBoston staff reviewed the concept of walkability and the infrastructure elements which contribute to a safe, high quality pedestrian experience, such as crosswalks and sidewalks. WalkBoston relied heavily on the graphics contained in the *The Urban, Rural and Suburban Complete Streets Design Manual for the City of Northampton and Communities in Hampshire County* to describe walkable road design in rural communities.



Study area



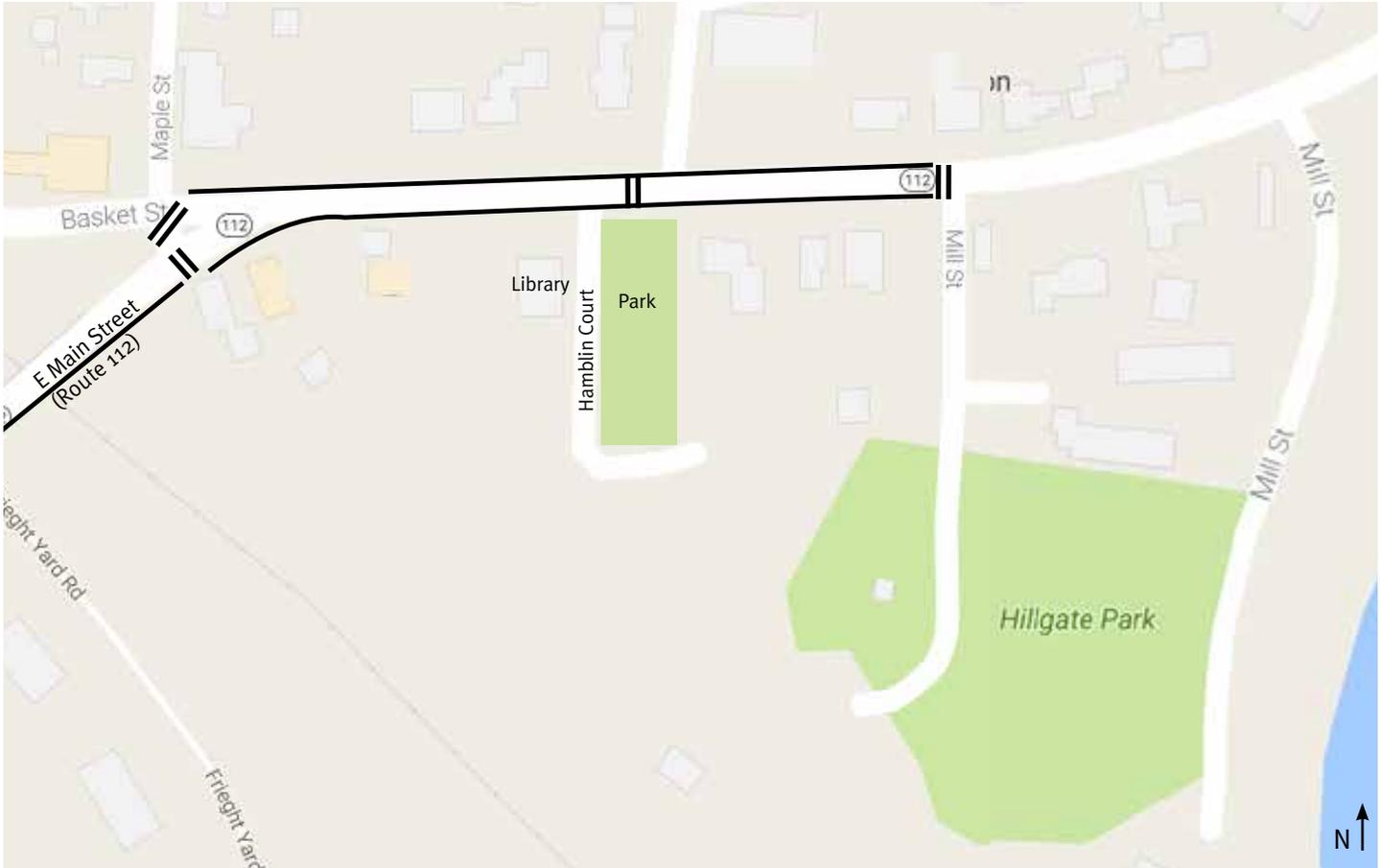
Walk assessment route

Walk Audit Route

The walk began with a discussion of the River Walk project on the western bank of the Westfield River behind Town Hall and Stanton Hall. The River Walk project will involve the construction of a new path between the river's edge and the parking area behind Town Hall; a crosswalk from Town Hall to the path; and an information kiosk introducing visitors to the trail, river ecology, and history of the area. The first phase of the path will be approximately 200 feet long and begin just north of the Route 112 bridge and end where the small stream joins the river. In future phases, the path may continue over the stream and under the CSX railroad bridge. The goal of the path is to provide a connection to the Westfield River for Huntington residents and visitors, and to familiarize people with the history of the area. The River Walk project is currently being designed with construction planned in the summer of 2017.



Proposed River Walk Corridor along the Westfield River



Walk assessment route

After leaving the River Walk site, the walk audit group walked up the slope to East Main Street, crossed the Route 112 bridge and continued to the town library, park space and the crosswalk at the Mill Street intersection. We then returned to the town common, explored the retail area and walked over to the Trolley Line easement off Blandford Hill Road. Back in the town offices, we regrouped to discuss our observations and suggest recommendations for infrastructure improvements.

Participants

There were 13 participants on the walk audit (including 2 children and 1 dog not listed here) representing multiple town committees and resident interests.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| Susan McIntosh | Chair of the Huntington Conservation Commission |
| David Norton | Historical Commission |
| Helen Speckels | Town Administrator |
| John McVeigh | Selectboard Member |
| Amy Porter | Westfield News |
| Every Korfias | Planning Board |
| Ed Renauld | Selectboard Member |
| Jeff Penn | Architect, Project Lead for River Walk, serves on several town and regional committees |
| Kate Albright-Hanna | Planning Board |
| Diane Meehan | Hilltown Community Health Centers, Inc. |
| Sarah Bankert | Healthy Hampshire |
| Stacey Beuttell | WalkBoston |

Summary of Key Recommendations

The following recommendations address issues observed on the walk and during the post-walk discussion session.

Slow traffic down on Route 20 and Route 112 in downtown Huntington.

Route 20 is one of the major roadways running through the town of Huntington. It is state-owned which means that the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) controls the design and maintenance of the road. The current speed limit in the downtown area is 30 mph on Route 20 and 25 mph on Route 112.

Route 112 intersects Route 20 just south of the town common. Traffic from the bridge on Route 112 is required to stop at the intersection since this is the southern end of Route 112, while Route 20 traffic is the through road. Drivers turning right onto the bridge from Route 20 rarely slow down given the long curb radius and generous travel lane. The crosswalk on Route 112 is located just beyond the intersection, which is a precarious location given the fast-moving traffic onto the bridge. Drivers and walkers do have reasonable sight lines which can lessen the danger posed at this crossing.



The intersection of Route 20 and 112 is precarious for pedestrians. Wide travel lanes and difficult sight lines make walkers feel vulnerable when crossing Route 112.

Since MassDOT owns and maintains both Route 20 and 112 roads, attempting to change the speed limit would require a speed study. Often, data collected in a speed study can result in a recommendation to increase a speed limit. If a speed study is conducted, the results must be implemented. Therefore, WalkBoston would not recommend a speed study for this section of Route 20 or Route 112.

Town officials have mentioned that they have had discussions with the MassDOT District office about strategies to calm traffic through the center of Huntington. The town has placed an in-street pedestrian crossing sign in the crosswalk on Russell Road (Route 20) in front of the Huntington Evangelical Church. MassDOT requires that the sign not be in the roadway in the winter months to facilitate snow removal.

Other towns in Hampshire County have successfully implemented traffic calming measure on state highways, such as enhanced crosswalk markings and even raised crossings. In some cases, the towns have adopted the roadway giving them the latitude to changes its speed and design. However, the town is then responsible for maintaining the road and the utilities beneath it. These costs may be too much of a burden on some towns.



Route 20 has the state standard pavement markings, including fog lines and crosswalks. The town has also placed an in-street pedestrian near (and usually in) the crosswalk @ the Main Street intersection.

Short-term recommendations:

- Continue to discuss traffic calming strategies permissible on MassDOT roads with MassDOT District 1 staff.
 - » Potential for additional in-street pedestrian signs in the crosswalks on Route 112
- Adopt a town-wide crosswalk standard requiring a ladder or continental design. This standard may be used in state-funded projects, but must be approved in advance by the MassDOT district office before use on State Highways. except on state highways. (See both MA amendments to the MUTCD, p. 64, Jan 2012, and MassDOT Engineering Directive E-96-001; 03/26/1996 for more information).
- Request MUTCD-approved signs pedestrian awareness signs be placed along Route 20 as drivers approach the town center (see below for examples)
- Reach out to other towns in Hampshire County, such as Williamsburg, Lee and Northampton, to learn more about their experiences implementing traffic calming measures on state-owned roads.



Crosswalks on Route 112 currently do not have in-street pedestrian signs to alert drivers to the possibility of people crossing



Ladder crosswalks are planned to complete the recent curb bump out construction at the Basket/Maple Street intersection with Route 112.

Long-term recommendations:

- Discuss tightening of curb radii on the southeast corner and narrowing travel lanes at the intersection of Routes 112 and Route 20 just west of the bridge with MassDOT District office.
- Consider adopting a section of Route 20 and possibly Route 112 to give the town decision-making authority to implement traffic calming measures.

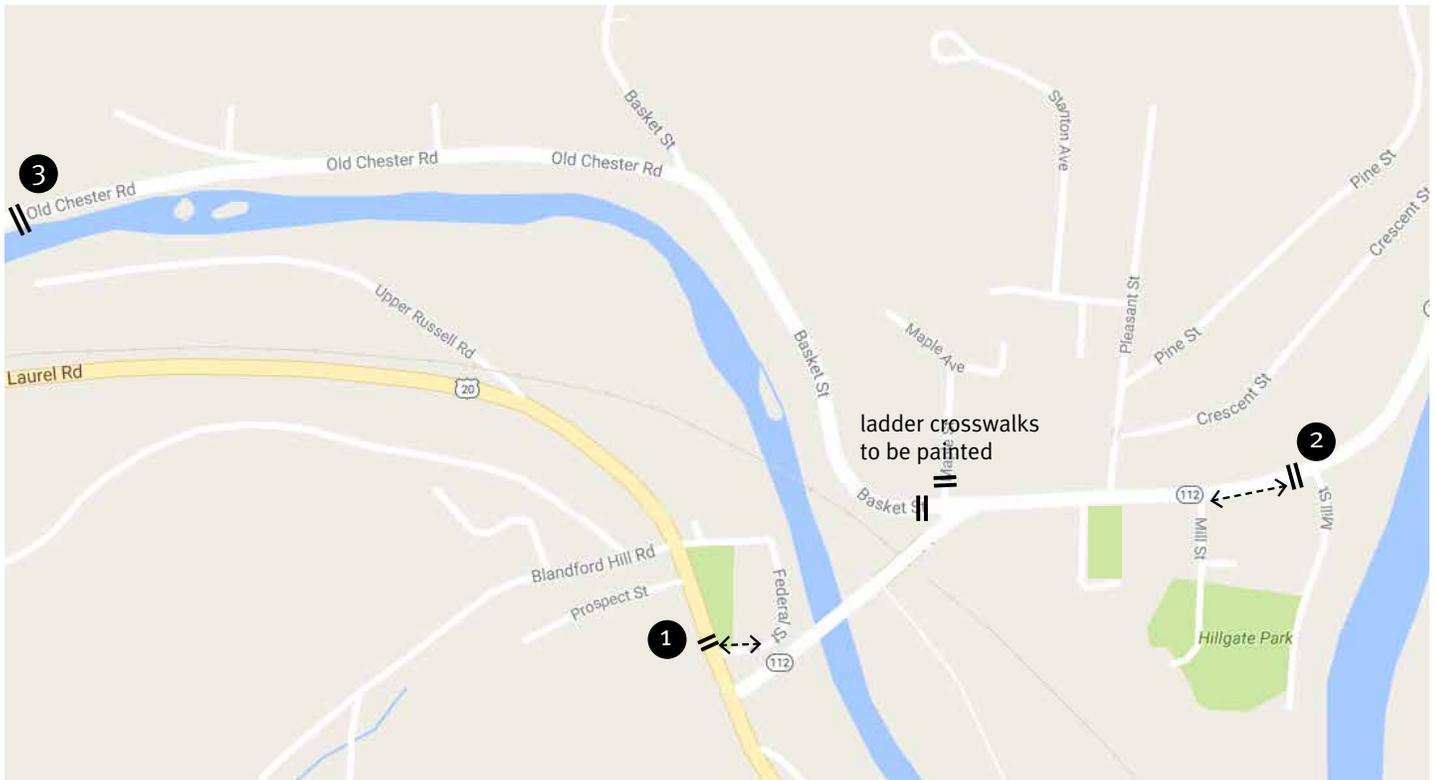
Increase the number and the safety of marked crosswalks in the study area.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, many of the marked crosswalks in Huntington are across state-owned roads, which gives the town less control over how they are designed. On the positive side, many of the crosswalks were recently upgraded to include accessible curb ramps and detectable warning strips. Unfortunately, those upgrades did not include enhanced crosswalk pavement markings.

The crosswalks on town-owned roads in the study area are painted with a ladder design, which WalkBoston recommends: @Main and Federal streets behind Town Hall and Stanton Hall, and leading from the common to the retail shops. The crosswalks at the Basket Street/Maple Street intersection will also be ladder crosswalks once construction of the sidewalk bump out in front of the former church is completed.



Examples of pedestrian awareness signs
<http://www.safetysign.com>



Proposed crosswalk and sidewalk extension locations

- = Proposed Crosswalk
- <---> Sidewalk Extension

There are several locations where additional crosswalks would provide safer crossings and potentially slow traffic.

1. Consider installing a crosswalk on Route 20 at the intersection of Federal Street near Stanton Hall. A crosswalk in this location could bookend the town between the crosswalk at the Route 20/ Main Street intersection, and help to define the village center. In-street pedestrian signs and advance crosswalk signs would also alert drivers to the possibility of people crossing. Since Route 20 is state-owned, MassDOT must be consulted and give final approval for the crosswalk.
2. Evaluate the safety of a new crosswalk across Route 112 at the Mill Street intersection near B&D Variety at 22 E Main Street. In-street pedestrian signs and advance crosswalk signs would also alert drivers to the possibility of people crossing. A crosswalk would require that the sidewalk be extended along the south side of Route 112 to Mill Street. Walk audit participants commented that many people cross the road without a crosswalk now, which can be dangerous. Sight distances on Route 112 may make installing a crosswalk here inadvisable.
3. Consider painting a crosswalk and installing pedestrian crossing signs on Old Chester Road where the pedestrian bridge meets the road. The bridge is along one of the walking and running loops identified in Huntington. Since people will cross Old Chester when walking east to face oncoming traffic, a crosswalk would facilitate this need. There are no sidewalks on this section of Old Chester Road.

Short-term recommendations:

- Consider installing an accessible crosswalk with curb ramps across Route 20 at Federal Street. Begin conversations with MassDOT to understand feasibility, schedule and potential funding streams.
- Consider installing an accessible crosswalk with curb ramps across Route 112 at Mill Street. Begin conversations with MassDOT to understand feasibility, schedule and potential funding streams. A sidewalk extension will most likely be required.
- Study the feasibility of a crosswalk on Old Chester Road at the pedestrian bridge
- Adopt a town-wide crosswalk standard. MassDOT may be more likely to upgrade crosswalk designs on state-owned roads if the community has a crosswalk standard.

Long-term recommendations:

- Acquire funding for crosswalk installations on town-owned roads.
- Determine funding streams for installing crosswalks on MassDOT roads (Route 20 and 112).

Identify walking loops that connect the village center with other town assets.

Walk audit participants identified two walking loops that residents could use for recreational walking. The first loop connects the two sides of the Westfield River using the Route 112 bridge and the pedestrian bridge that connects Upper Russell Road to Old Chester Road. There is at least one walking group who uses this loop all year round. Old Chester Road and a section of Basket Street do not have sidewalks. Sidewalks would make the walking conditions safer, but the narrow right of ways and limited funding may make construction difficult. If this route is to be an official walking route in Huntington, WalkBoston would recommend constructing sidewalks. In the meantime, some notation or warning indicating the lack of sidewalks should be shown on all maps or digital formats.

The second loop connects town-owned land south of E Main Street. The loop would begin at the library, continue south to Hillgate Park (Murray and Prettis Fields), and lead north along the west branch of the Westfield River back to E Main Street. The establishment of this walking loop would give further justification for a sidewalk extension to the eastern Mill Street intersection along the south side of Route 112.

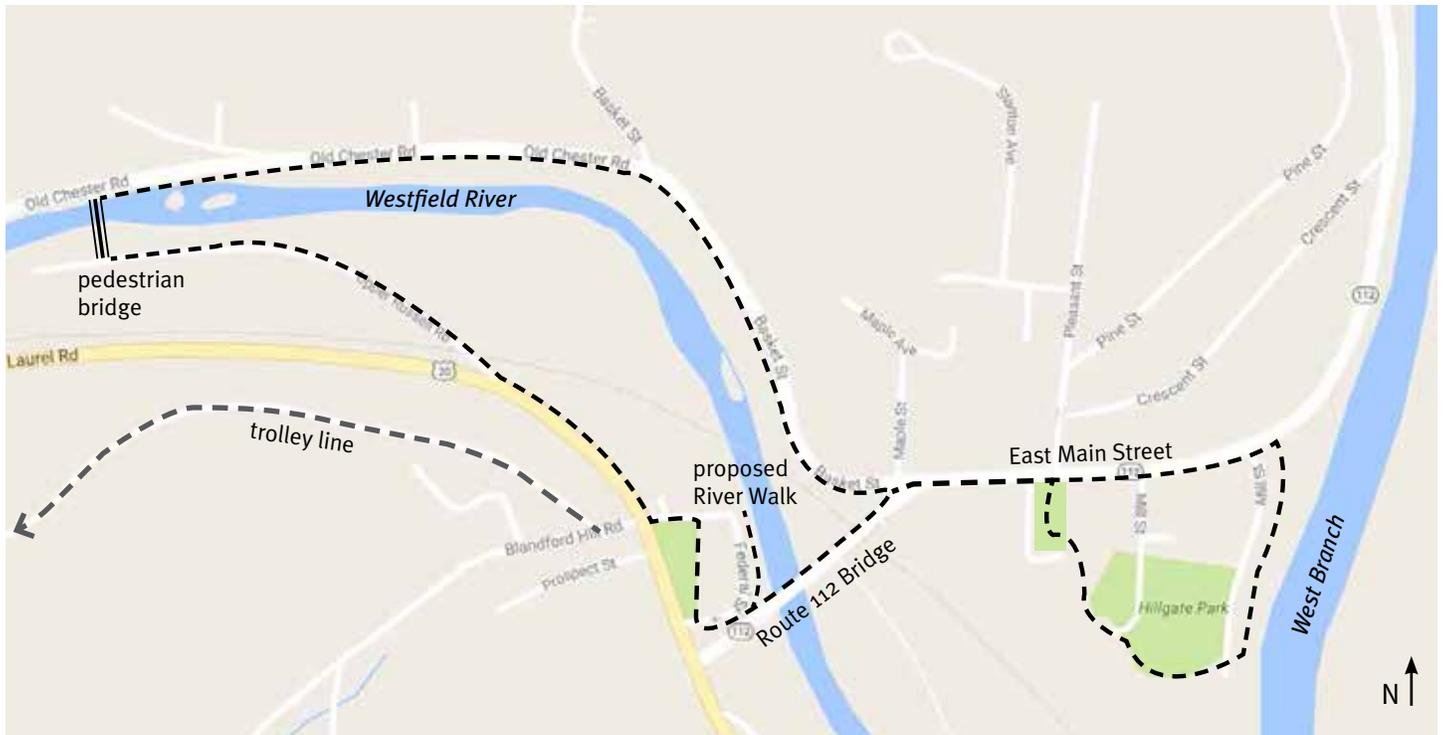
In addition to these two walking loops, we visited the trolley line easement off of Blandford Hill Road and discussed the ongoing regional trail planning efforts, such as the Jacob's Ladder Trail and the Highlands Footpath. Huntington has representation on these trail planning committees who will continue to keep town officials and residents informed on any progress.

Short-term recommendations

- Evaluate feasibility of walking loop on town-owned land south of E Main Street.
- Publicize walking loops on town website and other platforms to promote their use.
- Begin conversations with MassDOT and the town on prioritizing sidewalk improvements along Route 112, Basket Street, and Old Chester Road.
- Continue to participate in regional trail planning efforts.



Pedestrian bridge entrance from the Upper Russell Road side of the Westfield River



Proposed walking loops linking downtown with the river and other town assets

Long-term recommendations:

- Install missing sidewalks along Basket Street, Old Chester Road (if feasible), and E Main Street (Route 112) between Mill Street loop road
- Build missing trail links on the town-owned land walking loop.
- Develop wayfinding signage programs for both walking loops. Use trailblazers to list walking times to destinations.
- Include the trolley line easement into regional trail planning initiatives

Pass a Complete Streets Policy

Complete Streets is an approach to road design that considers the needs of all road users (walkers, cyclists, and drivers) and people of all abilities (including people with disabilities, older adults, and children). The MassDOT Complete Streets Program provides funding to communities who pass a complete streets policy. The funding can include technical assistance to develop a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan and capital funding to build complete streets projects. More detailed information on the program, including those communities already participating, can be found at the MassDOT Complete Streets portal (<https://masscompletestreets.com/>).



Entrance to the trolley line easement from Blandford Hill Road

Many rural towns in western Massachusetts have developed along MassDOT-owned rural roadways. It is important to note that complete streets funding does not apply to MassDOT-owned roads. This is due to the fact that all MassDOT-owned roads are already required to adopt a complete streets design approach during roadway design (per the Healthy Transportation Compact in the transportation reform legislation signed into law in June 2009). However, municipalities are therefore dependent on the State’s interpretation of a complete streets design for State roads.

WalkBoston encourages all cities and towns to pass a complete streets policy and apply to the MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program. The municipality can secure money to plan for and build complete streets projects. By establishing a complete streets policy, cities and towns demonstrate their commitment to a complete streets approach and may, therefore, exert more pressure on MassDOT to build or rebuild State-owned roads to meet the municipal complete street standards.

This strategy has not yet been tested. WalkBoston has been working in many rural towns in Hampshire County wrestling with similar pedestrian safety issues as Huntington. We are also working with MassDOT to find good ways to address this concern. We believe a complete streets policy is an effective tool to improve pedestrian safety and community walkability.

The *Urban, Rural and Suburban Complete Streets Design Manual for the City of Northampton and Communities in Hampshire County* contains excellent design guidance on how to implement complete street road designs communities like Huntington. The design standards illustrate what a complete streets approach looks like in a rural context.

Short-term recommendations:

- Consider passing a Complete Streets Policy for Huntington

Long-term recommendations:

- Pass a Complete Streets Policy
- Apply for technical assistance funding for a Complete Streets Prioritization Plan



Huntington town common

Appendix A. Terminology

Below are images and definitions of the terms used to describe the walking environment in this report.

Crosswalk and Stop Line

Crosswalks can be painted in a variety of ways, some of which are more effective in warning drivers of pedestrians. Crosswalks are usually accompanied with stop lines. These lines act as the legally mandated stopping point for vehicles, and discourage drivers from stopping in the middle of the crosswalk.



Crosswalk patterns
Source: USFHA



Crosswalk and stop line
Source: http://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/ped_bike/tools_solve/ped_scdproj/sys_impact_rpt/images/fig16.jpg

Curb Ramp and Detectable Warning Strip

Curb ramps provide access from the sidewalk to the street for people using wheel chairs and strollers. They are most commonly found at intersections. While curb ramps have improved access for wheelchair-bound people, they are problematic for visually impaired people who use the curb as an indication of the side of the street. Detectable warning strips, a distinctive surface pattern of domes detectable by cane or underfoot, are now used to alert people with vision impairments of their approach to streets and hazardous drop-offs.



Curb ramp and detectable warning strip

Curb Extension/Curb Bulb-out

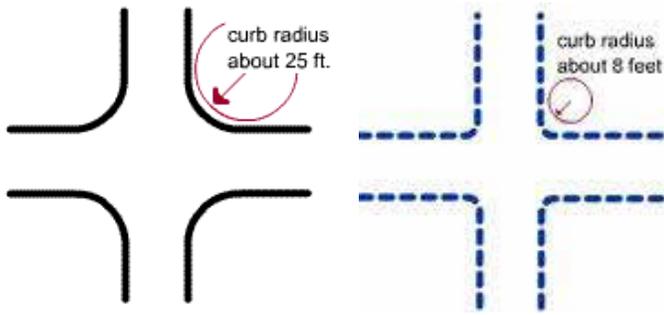
A sidewalk extension into the street (into the parking lane) shortens crossing distance, increases visibility for walkers and encourages eye contact between drivers and walkers.



Curb extensions are often associated with mid-block crossings

Curb Radius

A longer curb radius (on the left in figure below) allows vehicles to turn more quickly and creates longer crossing distance for pedestrians. A shorter curb radius (on the right in the figure below) slows turning speeds and provides pedestrians shorter crossing distances.



(A) Gravel-filled curb extension

There are two excellent examples of the shortening of curb radii in Woburn, MA. The first (A) is a low-cost solution using a gravel-filled zone between the original curb line and the newly established road edge. The second is a higher-cost solution using grass and trees and extending the sidewalks to the new curb. Both work to slow traffic.

Fog Line

A fog line is a solid white line painted along the roadside curb that defines the travel lane. It narrows a driver's perspective and helps to slow traffic speeds. Fog lines are used in urban, suburban and rural locations.



(B) Grass, trees and extended sidewalk in curb extension



Fog lines delineate the vehicular driving zone on wide roadways.

In-street Pedestrian Crossing Sign

In-street pedestrian crossing signs are used at the road centerline within crosswalks to increase driver awareness of pedestrians in the area. These signs are a relatively low-cost, highly effective tool in slowing traffic by the narrowing travel lanes. They are popular with road maintenance departments since they can be easily moved for snow removal.



Appendix B. Crosswalk design clarification documents

MA Amendments to the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, January 2012

Section 3B.06 Edge Line Pavement Markings

At intersections, right edge lines shall end at the marked crosswalk or stop line (or point of curvature (P.C.) if there is no crosswalk or stop line). Edge line markings shall not be continued around the intersection corner or provided between adjacent crosswalks.

Section 3B.10 Approach Markings for Obstructions

Where traffic is required to pass to the right of an obstruction, yellow diagonal crosshatch markings shall be provided in the neutral area. These markings shall be twice the width of the no passing zone markings.

Where traffic can pass to either the right or the left of an obstruction, white chevron crosshatch markings shall be provided in the neutral area. Both the crosshatch markings and the approach markings shall consist of a double width white line.

Section 3B.16 Stop and Yield Lines

Yield Lines shall be used only:

At entry points to roundabout intersections,

To control unsignalized movements (i.e. “free right” turns) at otherwise signalized intersections, and/or

Where deemed necessary or desirable, based on engineering judgment or study, in advance of unsignalized mid-block crosswalks, as illustrated in Figure 3B-17.

Section 3B.18 Crosswalk Markings

On state highways, standard crosswalk markings shall consist of twin transverse lines as depicted in Figure 3B-19, unless a compliant alternative marking is already in use on other roadways within that municipality and has been approved by the Department for use on a specific project.



Number: E-96-001
Date: 3/26/96

ENGINEERING DIRECTIVE

Thomas J. Brubaker, P.E.
CHIEF ENGINEER

STANDARDIZATION OF CROSSWALK MARKINGS

The Department is responsible for installation and maintenance of crosswalk markings in accordance with the guidelines provided in the MUTCD and the Highway Design Manual. However, these references give only general information regarding such markings.

The purpose of this directive is to provide specific requirements to be followed for the installation of crosswalk markings on state highways.

Effective immediately, crosswalk markings provided as part of any project shall conform to the following:

- 1) The standard crosswalk marking used on the state highway system shall be the 'TYPE A' marking as detailed in Figure 3 - 14 of the MUTCD.
- 2) The standard line width of the markings shall be three hundred (300) millimeters.
- 3) The width between crosswalk lines should be no less than two (2) meters.
- 4) Where provided, stop lines should be placed no less than 1.25 (one and one-quarter) meters behind an adjacent crosswalk line.
- 5) Isolated crosswalks shall not be installed in areas with a sight distance less than the minimum required under Table 3.11 STOPPING SIGHT DISTANCE in the MED Highway Design Manual.

This directive applies to new crosswalk installations at state highway locations and in state-funded projects. However, if a municipality has adopted a local standard which is in conformance with the MUTCD, it may be incorporated into state-funded projects which do not involve state highway.

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