

Stop and Shop and Crystal Springs Plaza

Walk Audit Report

Prepared for the Town of Belchertown by:
Healthy Hampshire/Mass in Motion
Collaborative for Educational Services, Northampton, MA

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Overview and Methodology

Goals:

1. Foster an awareness of the infrastructure elements that contribute to the walking environment
2. Evaluate the safety and quality of the walking environment along the route
3. Recommend infrastructure improvements

On June 24, 2015, Healthy Hampshire organized a walk audit of two intersections in the area around the Stop and Shop grocery store in Belchertown, MA, all of which are MassDOT roads.

We began at the meeting house of the New England Small Farm Institute. There were twelve participants. The meeting was coordinated by Pat Barry and Sarah Bankert of Healthy Hampshire. Sarah gave a presentation on healthy design features that impact pedestrian safety and accessibility. The participants went into the field and recorded their observations using a survey tool provided by WalkBoston. Then they returned to the meeting house and discussed their experiences over lunch.

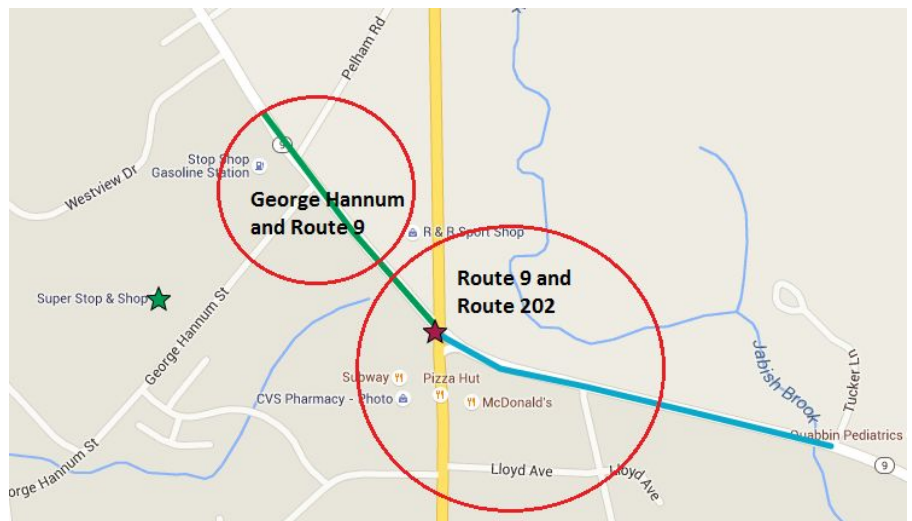
Pictures throughout this report have been taken by participants. We have also used screenshots from Google Maps Streetview, as it is much easier to see the infrastructure and road design.

This report summarizes the data collected through the audit, as well as the observations shared during the discussion.

Study Area

Participants studied two distinct sections in this area, and the report has been organized by these sections.

- ➔ Intersection of George Hannum Road and Route 9 (Stop and Shop)
- ➔ Intersection of Route 9 and Route 202 (Crystal Springs Plaza)



General Recommendations from Walk Audit Group

- **Consolidate curb cuts** particularly into Crystal Springs Plaza and the Quabbin Shops. This would improve safety for pedestrians as well as cars.
- **Redesign Crystal Springs Plaza intersection to maximize pedestrian accessibility and safety**, such as adding curb bump-outs, striped pedestrian crossings, and other infrastructure that enhances pedestrian safety.
- **Implement traffic calming techniques** to slow traffic down in the entire study area.
- **Lower speed limit for entire area**. This is not just a business area, it is also a residential area, with people living in several apartment complexes very close to Route 9 and Route 202.
- **Increase safety and visibility of crosswalks**. Repainting is a great first step. Longer-term, they need to be redesigned to be truly accessible to everyone. Raised crosswalks, blinking lights, curb ramps, detectable warning strips, etc.
- **Pedestrian activated lights**. Consider asking MassDOT to update pedestrian light to the newest standards, e.g. countdown clock.
- **Make sidewalks clearly continuous across curb cuts and driveways** using paint or continuous materials such as concrete to indicate the appropriate path for pedestrians.
- **Add benches, spruce up green spaces and plant shade trees** to make it more inviting to pedestrians, reduce the radiant heat from asphalt, and make it easier for people (particularly those with disabilities) to get from one place to another.
- **Connect sidewalks to walking and recreational trails** and develop a way-finding/signage plan to encourage walkers to walk to the common, to Dana Woods, or other destinations.
- **Sidewalks should always be added** in this area when there is new construction.
- **Plan for bicyclist and pedestrians first** when renovating any street or road.



GEORGE HANNUM/ROUTE 9 INTERSECTION

(NEXT TO STOP AND SHOP)



N Heading East on Route 9 (Federal St). Stop and Shop is off to the right.

S

This is the first intersection with a stoplight that drivers encounter when entering Belchertown. To the right is the Stop and Shop plaza, which includes a bank building and gas station. Drivers may turn right at the light onto George Hannum Road to get to Dana Woods, which is a residential development, and eventually to Jackson Street, where the New England Small Farms Institute and community garden is located. There is a sidewalk on the north side of Federal Street, but not on the south side. Crosswalk design at the intersection is two parallel lines. There is a pedestrian signal at both roads crossing Federal Street and George Hannum Road. Drivers are allowed to go right on red from all directions. The pedestrian light is a hand signal, not a countdown clock. It does not have an audio warning for people who are visually impaired.



N

Stretch of Federal Street with Crown Point Apartments

S

The sidewalk on the south side begins at the intersection. There is no buffer on this side between the sidewalk and the road. The sidewalk continues on the north side and there is a grassy buffer between the sidewalk and the road. There are curb ramps down to the road and crosswalks but they do not have detectable warning strips and markings. The sidewalk crosses several curb cuts in this section of road, including to the Quabbin Shops and the Crown Point Apartments. In both instances the sidewalk does not continue across the curb cut. There is nothing indicating the right of pedestrians to occupy that area. There are two curb cuts for the Quabbin Shops, which may be unnecessary.



S

Looking West on Route 9

N

Opposite the Quabbin Shops are the Crown Point Apartments. There is a bus stop outside of the apartment complex, but the sign is partially hidden by the “Left Lane Must Turn Left” sign.



N

Bus pull off on Federal St.

S

Farther down Federal Street there is a bus pull off. There is no shelter. On the opposite side there are several businesses that have curb cuts, and the sidewalks are not continuous across those driveways. After the bus stop there develops a grassy buffer between the sidewalk and the road. Just after Dunkin’ Donuts the sidewalk on the north side stops. The sidewalk on the south side continues through the Route 9/Route 202 intersection.

Infrastructure Challenges for GEORGE HANNUM/ROUTE 9 INTERSECTION

- ★ Sidewalks are not continuous on both sides of the road.
- ★ Sidewalks are too narrow.
- ★ Sidewalks are bumpy and rough -- could be a tripping hazard for elders or difficult to navigate for a someone in a wheelchair.
- ★ Small gaps in buffer between the sidewalk and the road
- ★ There are no curb ramps with detectable warning strips.
- ★ Numerous driveway and road curb cuts without continuity of sidewalks over those curb cuts.
- ★ Some trees provide shade, but more trees would help to cool the sidewalk and street and make it more inviting to walk.
- ★ Need more places to rest, like benches or parklets (mini green spaces meant for public utilization)
- ★ No trash receptacles.
- ★ There is no indication about where cyclists are expected to be and no facilities for cyclists.
- ★ There is some lighting, but unclear whether it would be properly lit for walking after dusk.
- ★ The crosswalks are not marked clearly.
- ★ There are few pedestrian safety facilities such as signage, pedestrian lights, raised crosswalks, detectable warning strips, etc.
- ★ The pedestrian light is a hand signal, not a countdown clock. It does not have an audio warning for people who are visually impaired

ROUTE 9/ROUTE 202 INTERSECTION

The intersection of Route 9 (Federal St) and Route 202 (North Main St) is a complicated intersection. Two major roads intersect in an “X” pattern. The roads do not come together at right angles, which encourage fast traffic and makes it difficult to add safe pedestrian crossings across such long expanses of road. There is a shopping plaza directly next to the intersection (Crystal Springs Plaza), with three separate curb cuts (none of which link directly to the intersection with a traffic light) and a fourth into an adjoining Bank of America ATM station.



N Approaching the Route 9/Route 202 intersection from Route 9, heading East.

S

The sidewalk on the south side of Route 9 continues through the intersection until it stops at the entrance to the shopping plaza. At this point, pedestrians are supposed to cross at the pedestrian light and continue on to the other side where the sidewalk picks up. In order to reach the other side, pedestrians must also cross a slip lane which has no signal. There is a sign warning that pedestrians may cross, but it is hidden by a tree. The pedestrian traffic signal crossing phase was adequate for the participants, but there was no countdown clock and no audio signal for people who are visually impaired.



S Pedestrian sign in front of slip lane N



N Pedestrian crosswalk and signal at Route 202 S

There are crosswalks painted in the parallel line style over this part of the intersection (note: the parallel lines have recently been updated with new paint). Recently, a “no turn on red” rule was instituted for cars heading from Federal Street turning right onto N. Main St. There are no other pedestrian accommodations within this intersection, so pedestrians cannot safely travel across any of the other lanes. There are no bicycle facilities. There are some street lights throughout this study area.



N

Parking lot of the shopping plaza

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For pedestrians attempting to do shopping by foot, it is not clear how they are expected to negotiate the Crystal Springs Plaza parking lot. The sidewalk ends on one side of the curb cut and doesn't pick up on the other side. There are no walking paths or markings indicating the route that a pedestrian should take to walk through the parking lot safely.



N

N. Main St. heading south on Route 202

S

Beyond the intersection following N. Main Street (Route 202), the sidewalk continues up the east side and crosses several curb cuts. In some cases, the sidewalk material is consistent across the curb cut (such as the one pictured above), making it safer for pedestrians. There is a grassy buffer between the sidewalk and the road. The sidewalk itself is narrow and uneven. There was garbage blocking the sidewalk at 133 N. Main Street, in front of Belchertown Optical. In this vicinity of sidewalk there is a deep eroded depression that could be a tripping hazard.



Garbage blocking sidewalk outside of Belchertown Optical



N Crosswalk at Lloyd Ave and driveway to the Lord Jeffrey Apartments **S**

Continuing on N. Main Street, there is a parallel line-style faded crosswalk at Lloyd Ave. There are also curb ramps and detectable warning strips and a pedestrian crossing sign. The pedestrian sign was partially obscured by the tree. There is a 40 MPH speed limit sign just before the pedestrian sign. Across from Lloyd Ave is the driveway for the Lord Jeffrey Apartments. Cars were slow to yield to walk audit participants trying to cross here. We spoke to a woman and her child who try to cross here frequently and they said it is difficult to cross because cars do not stop. Participants wondered whether a wheelchair could safely make the sharp left turn onto the sidewalk coming from the crosswalk on the south side.



N

Crosswalk at Tucker Lane

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People living on Tucker Lane who want to walk to the shopping plaza must cross at this crosswalk since there is no sidewalk on the side of Tucker Lane. They must cross back at Lloyd Ave or the Route 9/202 intersection to enter the shopping plaza. The pedestrian sign pictured here (from google maps) is partially obscured by a tree. Participants reported difficulty in seeing traffic coming from the north from the Tucker Lane side of the road.

Infrastructure Challenges for ROUTE 9/ROUTE 202 INTERSECTION

- ★ Sidewalks are not continuous on both sides of the road.
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- ★ Small gaps in buffer between the sidewalk and the road.
- ★ Numerous driveway and road curb cuts without continuity of sidewalks over those curb cuts.
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- ★ No trash receptacles.
- ★ There is no indication about where cyclists are expected to be and no facilities for cyclists.
- ★ There is some lighting, but unclear whether it would be properly lit for walking after dusk.
- ★ The crosswalks are not marked clearly.
- ★ There are few pedestrian safety facilities such as signage, pedestrian light, raised crosswalks, etc.
- ★ Speed limit (40 MPH) may be excessive for this section of road