

Existing Sidewalks Report

Public Ways Safety Committee
Daniel Senie, Chair
8 August 2007



Summary of Obstacles and Hindrances

There are several hindrances to using town center sidewalks. The sidewalks are a valuable part of making the town a walk-able community.

Obstacles

- Utility poles
- School zone signs
- Resident's cement, stone, or wooden inner curbs
- Mailboxes
- Lack of ramp access at side street entrances

Maintenance

- Brush
- Weeds
- Irregular (lumpy) pavement
- Snow removal

The width of the sidewalk varies as well as the clearance (passable area) when encountering an obstacle.

The most desired long-term solution is to participate in planning the redesign of the road to provide necessary grass strip for signs and poles and mailboxes. This may mean reducing the overall width of highway by eliminating one of the parking lanes or by using more of the right of way to move the sidewalk or widen the sidewalk.

In the meantime, we recommend setting a workable minimum width of clearance to accommodate persons, strollers, and wheelchairs, then establish ways to achieve that width through either short- or medium-term solutions.

The list of issues with our sidewalks is long. Issues exist both on Main Street and on the sidewalks in other parts of town. A complete inventory of our present sidewalks appears at the end of this document. The issues of greatest import are on Main Street, and this is the primary focus of the issues listed herein.

Width for accessibility

The town learned much about ADA compliance with the new sidewalk construction project, and should apply that to improvements. The present sidewalks are narrow even where there are not obstructions.

Maintenance, Summer and Winter

As itemized in the inventory list, the condition of our sidewalks is poor. The sidewalks are an important part of the town infrastructure. In the summertime, the sidewalks are dangerous due to broken pavement, sand left over from winter snow operations, weeds and encroaching landscaping. In the winter, the sidewalks are not cleared.

Obstructions in sidewalks

There are many obstructions in the existing, narrow sidewalks. These include:

- Utility poles: Some poles leave small clearance. The worst is 24", several are 32" or less. Most of these could be remedied by making the sidewalk wider around the pole (a bump-out), or widening the entire sidewalk.
- School zone lighted signs: currently the north-side sign leaves 25 inch clearance, the south-side leaves 28 inch clearance. Both could be remedied with a bump out.
- Landscaping hardscape and shrubs: Problems on the inside of sidewalk include concrete, stone or wood barriers. Where these exist, it is not easy to "bump out" the sidewalk into lawns to increase the passable sidewalk width. Shrubs in some areas extend out over sidewalks restricting the usable width.
- Mailboxes: especially in the town center, mailboxes are in planters, placed on the sidewalks. The town should work with homeowners to find a solution to mailboxes. A more complete discussion of the Post Office take on mail delivery and the options available is included later in this document.
- Lack of ramp access at side street entrances: Ramps of proper slope will be necessary to comply with accessibility rules.
- Brush and Weeds and Sand: Weeds and sand have made walkway narrower. Taller brush causes walkers to duck their head in some places. Pruning and weed eradication would help.
- Irregular (lumpy) pavement: This is hazardous, especially at night when not obvious. Many have tripped on some sections. The patching done last year at Pond Park was an improvement.

Recommendations

Maintain existing sidewalks

The Public Ways Safety Committee favors a budget line item for regular maintenance of sidewalks. This would include asphalt patching, spring sweeping to remove debris, dust and sand, removal of brush, weed eradication and landscape encroachments. In winter, timely snow removal is also necessary. In the past DPW has cleared snow from the Main Street sidewalks.

A separate town fund line item should be set up for medium to long-term projects financed from monies from developers who opt to contribute to this fund in lieu of building sidewalks in their development. This fund would provide for sidewalk repaving, upgrades (ADA compliance) and installation.

While such funding from developers may help, other sources of funding, including the general budget, would likely be necessary.

Alternative Mail Delivery Options

While alterations to the roadway or to sidewalk structure could allow for room for mailboxes, the option exists for the Selectmen to petition the Post Office to make changes

in the method of delivery. The Public Ways Safety Committee has researched with the post office the options for delivery. These include:

- **Walk-up service:** Postal carrier walks up the front walkway of each house, and places mail in a mailbox or through a door slot. From discussions with the postmaster, it is extremely unlikely this will be permitted. While it was the traditional delivery method in many locales, they are not willing to start any new service using this method.
- **Sidewalk Delivery Service:** With this service, the mailboxes are on the front lawns, beyond the sidewalk. The letter carrier still has to get out of their vehicle to deliver. This is not a preferred method for the post office, but they have allowed this. The implications of this are that the sidewalks would need to be sufficiently clear, year-round, for the postmaster to deliver mail.
- **Shared mailbox systems:** Shared mailbox systems, such as the one behind the office building at 563 Main Street (Friedus building, where the Clinton Savings Bank is located), are the postal service's preferred solution. Including such in the center of Bolton would provide a solution to mail delivery, though fitting such a structure into the historical character of the center, and selecting a suitable location would be challenges. This approach would increase the need for safe and passable sidewalks. Access to mailboxes is required daily, further increasing the need for both summer and winter maintenance of sidewalks and crosswalks. The postal service indicated that they will buy and install such equipment.

Accommodate Mailboxes

As an alternative to changes to delivery, the town might consider sidewalk bump-outs, allowing permanent posts; cemented into the edge of the sidewalk may stand up to snow plow spray better. Permanent posts would eliminate need for large containers and would reduce sidewalk incursions.

Road Redesign

Public Ways has discussed the possibility of removing one of the parking lanes on Main Street, and as a result narrowing the pavement, providing sufficient space for a grass strip between the curb and sidewalk sufficient to accommodate telephone poles, traffic signs, school zone lights and mailboxes.

In the center of town, we have limits on taking of front lawns to provide sufficient room for sidewalks, since the houses were built close to the roadway. Eliminating the parking lane on one side of Main Street is an option to consider.

Remove Telephone poles from sidewalks, or move sidewalks

The solutions to this issue are either to route the sidewalks around the poles, have the utility companies move the poles, or bury the utilities under the street. Each option has its advantages and disadvantages.

Burying utilities would have a benefit in terms of the oft-sought rural character of the town, but some other accommodation would be needed for street lighting. It is likely

most sensible to route sidewalks around poles where possible, and ask the utilities to move a few where topography makes it simpler to move poles than sidewalk.

Redesign sidewalks to have sufficient width for ADA compliance

The new construction underway is compliant. It is time to discuss compliance for the existing sidewalks. Certainly the pavement needs to be level enough, and smooth enough for mobility impaired individuals to travel. Clearly obstructions must be removed, but even when they are, there must be sufficient width available to allow safe passage.

If the sidewalks are sufficiently wide and routed around obstructions, the mailbox support poles, if permanent and narrow may allow for mailboxes to remain close to the road.

Inventory of current sidewalks

Bolton has sidewalks in the center of town, and in some developments elsewhere in town. The condition of all of the sidewalks is a concern.

1. **Main Street:** The sidewalk runs on both sides of the road through the town center. Condition: Poor. Sidewalks are uneven, holes, cracks with grass and weeds growing through, sand, and brush encroachment.
2. **Coventry Wood Road:** The sidewalk runs the whole length of the road on one side. Condition: Poor. Cracks with grass and weeds growing through, moss covering the sidewalk, asphalt is breaking apart, brush encroachment, uneven pavement. Some sections are impassable due to brush overgrowth.
3. **Danforth Lane:** The sidewalk is not very long; it begins at a parking area identified as “Trail Head Parking;” and runs along the road (crossing over a brook) to the end. Condition: good.
4. **Drumlin Hill Road:** (not yet a town way) The sidewalk runs the whole length of the road on one side. This is a new development still under construction. According to Susan Miles, there is no timeline for roads in new developments to be turned over to the town; rather, once the development is completed and it is in compliance with all the regulations and by-laws, it goes to town meeting to be voted on as a town road. Condition: new sidewalk. Asphalt laid in aggregate, looks rough. I don’t know if in time it will wear well.
5. **Fox Run Road.** The sidewalk runs the whole length of the road on one side. Condition: good. At the entrance to the road from Rt. 117 where new houses are being constructed there is some sand and dirt accumulation as well as brush and weeds on sidewalk. The bend near where the gas pipeline crosses accumulates sand from winter snow operations, resulting in deep sand in summer.
6. **Mechanic Street:** The sidewalk runs the whole length of the road to the Sawyer School on one side. Condition: good. Section from Main Street to Emerson School has some cracks with grass and weeds growing through.
7. **Wattaquodock Hill Road:** Tiny stretch that begins at Main Street and ends at the back of Deb Kellett’s yard. Condition: very poor. Large cracks with grass and weeds growing through, uneven pavement, sand, brush encroachment.

8. **Bridge over I-495 on Sugar Road:** The bridge over I-495 on Sugar Road has a pedestrian walkway, which is in good condition. The State is responsible for this stretch.