



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Louis A. DePasquale, City Manager

FROM: Joseph E. Barr, Director

DATE: January 29, 2019

RE: Awaiting Report 18-104 - Report on a list of streets where it is recommended that the speed be reduced to 20 MPH.

This memo is in response to Awaiting Report 18-104 (Order 10 from the October 1, 2018 City Council Meeting), requesting a report on a list of streets where it is recommended that the speeds be reduced to 20 MPH. In 2016, Massachusetts State Legislature passed the Municipal Modernization Act, which gave cities and towns the ability to establish 20 MPH safety zones at their discretion on local roadways. The text of the legislation is as follows:

Section 18B. (a) Notwithstanding section 18 or any other general or special law to the contrary, the city council, the transportation commissioner of the city of Boston, the board of selectmen, park commissioners, a traffic commission or traffic director of a city or town that accepts this section in the manner provided in section 4 of chapter 4 may, in the interests of public safety and without further authority, establish designated safety zones on, at or near any way in the city or town which is not a state highway, and with the approval of the department if the same is a state highway. Such safety zones shall be posted as having a speed limit of 20 miles per hour.

On November 7, 2016, the Cambridge City Council accepted this provision of the Municipal Modernization Act, giving the Director of Traffic, Parking, + Transportation the authority to implement 20 MPH Safety Zones. In early 2018, we established Safety Zones in Central Square, Harvard Square, Inman Square, Kendall Square, and Porter Square, to encourage drivers to drive at lower speeds that are compatible with the extremely high volumes of pedestrians in these critical nodes of business, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle activity.

Based on this more recent request and a hearing of the Transportation and Public Utilities Committee held on September 20, 2018, City staff have conducted a review of city streets to identify a list of Primarily Local-Access Safety Zones.

This list includes most of the streets in Cambridge, so it is in many ways simpler to describe the streets that are not included. The list of streets that are proposed as new 20 MPH Safety Zones excludes the following categories of roadways and segments:

1. Existing Safer Square Safety Zones – currently posted at 20 mph;
2. State Roadways not under City jurisdiction;
3. Private ways not under City jurisdiction;
4. Very short and/or dead-end streets and alleys where speed is not a factor; and
5. Arterial roadways serving high volumes of through transit and vehicle trips – currently subject to the citywide 25 MPH speed limit.

The remaining streets typically function as primarily local-access roadways, serving to bring road users from/to their origin/destination rather than serving as a main link on a longer through trip. These streets will each be posted with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation standard Safety Zone Speed Limit sign as shown in Figure 1 below. A draft proposed list of streets subject to the new speed zone regulation is attached to this response along with a citywide map depicting the proposed zones¹.



Figure 1 - Typical Safety Zone Sign

¹ Note that the map of these streets is best viewed online, to allow for users to zoom into specific locations.