



## TOWN OF NORTHBOROUGH

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### **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Board of Selectmen

FROM: John W. Coderre, Town Administrator

SUBJECT: Traffic concerns on Bartlett Street and surrounding area

DATE: December 20, 2020

CC: Assistant Town Administrator, Police Chief, DPW Director, Town Planner, Town Engineer

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Staff has been working diligently to address traffic concerns as they arise in the area of Bartlett Street. Below is a comprehensive update on completed items, items in process, and items to be considered for future action.

#### **Completed Items:**

1. **Parked Trucks on Bartlett Street in pull off area:**

To address parked trucks on the side of Bartlett Street in a small pull off area near 200 Bartlett, the Department of Public Works installed concrete barriers which eliminate any ability for trucks to pull off and use that space as a rest area. The Police Department increased patrols and continued to monitor the area to evaluate if a No Parking Zone is warranted. Please see #6 under "Items in Progress" for more information regarding the proposed No Parking Zone on Bartlett.

2. **Advance HCVE warning signs installed on Bartlett and Lyman:**

Concern regarding a lack of advance warning for truck traffic on the section of Maple Street between Route 20 and Ridge Road where there is a Heavy Commercial Vehicle Exclusion (HCVE) was addressed with the installation of advance warning signs alerting drivers of the upcoming HCVE. The signs have been placed at the intersections of Maple Street at Bartlett Street and Ridge Road at Lyman Street. The

Police Department is continuing increased patrols of Maple Street to monitor for violations.

3. State authorization to install advance HCVE warning sign on Route 20:

The Town requested and received approval from Mass DOT to install a CVCE advance warning sign on Route 20 eastbound ahead of Maple Street. The sign has been ordered and will be installed as soon as weather conditions permit.

**Items in Progress:**

4. New Traffic Counts for Maple Street and Ridge Road to consider additional HCVE:

The Town previously performed truck traffic counts on the entire length of Maple Street, Ridge Road, and Collins Road. The resulting data showed, at that time, the section of Maple Street between Ridge Road and Bartlett Street did not meet the required 5%-8% of traffic being heavy commercial vehicles. Due to this factor, only the currently restricted section of Maple Street was issued a HCVE permit from MassDOT.

New traffic counts have been scheduled for the easterly segment of Maple Street and all of Ridge Road for the Spring when the new Bartlett Street warehouse facilities are open and operational. The counts will be performed by the Central Mass Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) as confirmed earlier this month. In response to inquiries as to why the Town does not perform a count prior to the Spring, the answer is twofold: first, we do not want to do traffic counts before the new facilities are completely open and operational as that may jeopardize approvals for a HCVE; and secondly, traffic counts are not conducted in winter months due to snow plowing activities that would rip up the equipment that must be affixed to the roadway. The Town is committed to pursuing additional HCVEs if the supporting data allows it.

5. Crosswalk Improvements at Maple Street and Route 20:

The request was made to MassDOT for Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) at the crosswalk on Main Street at Maple Street. MassDOT did approve some modifications to this intersection, including repainting and other minor improvements, but denied the request to install the RRFB. Town staff has sent a follow-up correspondence to MassDOT requesting that they reconsider this decision and, received notice on December 17<sup>th</sup> that the State would investigate further. We will notify our Legislative Delegation that this request is still being considered by MassDOT and ask for their support in attempting to reverse that initial decision by MassDOT.

6. No Parking Along Bartlett Street:

Town staff has prepared information attached to this memo recommending that the Board of Selectmen consider implementing a No Parking Zone along Bartlett Street. The Board will consider voting on this matter at their December 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. There

is no public hearing requirement for this vote; however, in the interest of notice and transparency for residents along Bartlett Street, the Board may choose to discuss it at their December 21st meeting and then provide written notice to the residents along Bartlett Street that this matter will be discussed and voted on at their January 11, 2021 meeting. If the Board chooses to implement a No Parking Zone, staff will order and install the appropriate signage. Please be advised that there may be a delay in the installation of the signage due to the weather, but the ban will become effective upon posting.

7. Ambient Sound Level Study for Amazon Facility—Zoning requirement (7-05-040C):  
Included as condition #2 of the Planning Board's site plan approval for the Amazon facility is a sound study which states: "*A base line ambient sound level study shall be performed and a base line ambient sound level shall be established prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy. This study shall be provided to the Inspector of Buildings/Zoning Enforcement Officer.*" These routine studies are done in two parts. The first part of the study is intended to provide a baseline and is completed when there is no occupancy in the building, but after the building is constructed. This portion of the noise study for these facilities (330 and 350 Bartlett) was completed. Staff expects to receive the report for the first portion of the study by calendar year-end. The second portion of the study is done when the building is fully operational and is intended to be a comparison to the first part of the study. It is important to note that these studies look at the building itself. Major items of consideration are machinery in and outside of the building, HVAC systems, trash compacting systems, etc. Vehicular noise, including truck traffic, is specifically exempt from the study and is not considered in either the baseline or part two and has no effect on the results. For more information please refer to Town Code section 7-05-040C—Noise. There is no established timeline for the second part of the study, as there may be delays in getting the facility fully operational, which is at the discretion of the tenant.
8. Request for HCVE on Lyman Street in Northborough and Westborough:  
Staff reviewed the recent suggestion that a HCVE be placed on Lyman Street in conjunction with Westborough. All heavy commercial vehicle exclusions require a suitable alternate route with an effective width and pavement structure which can safely accommodate the additional truck traffic. A HCVE for the segment of Lyman Street in Westborough from Chauncy Street to Talbot Road would require the northbound alternate route to be along Chauncy Street to Oak Street to Route 135. It is unlikely that Westborough would consider directing all truck traffic from Lyman Street onto Chauncy Street as a suitable alternate route, given that it is a narrow winding residential road. A secondary alternate northbound route would be Route 9 to Route 135 which would hinder access to Route 9 for Northborough commercial properties on Lyman. Southbound truck traffic from Lyman Street in Northborough would have their alternate route as Ridge Road to Maple Street eastbound and then onto Bartlett Road adjacent to the regional high school. A secondary alternate route

would be for trucks to continue on Bartlett Street in Northborough to Route 20. Staff could not support truck traffic bypassing Lyman Street and driving westbound on Bartlett Street as an alternate route. A HCVE on Lyman Street in Westborough would also adversely affect Northborough due to the mandated alternate route(s).

9. Contact with various facilities along Bartlett:

The Town has established contact at the corporate and onsite level with all the major transportation facility owners and operators on Bartlett Street, including Amazon, FedEx and A. Duie Pyle. We have also reached out to the owner of 301 Bartlett which houses several smaller tenants. I am pleased to report that all these facilities have agreed to the installation of appropriate signage at the exit of their driveways directing truck traffic to Cedar Hill and Hayes Memorial, unless the truck is making a local delivery. In addition, Amazon will be implementing a new “Geofencing” GPS application that will direct their drivers to remain off local roads and onto the preferred routes.

Attached please find communications with the major facilities outlining their understanding of the Town’s concerns and their commitment to being good corporate neighbors. Without exception, each has pledged to work with the Town to continue to train drivers and put protocols in place to reduce or eliminate neighborhood concerns.

**Items to be Considered for Future Action**

Lastly, the Town continues to explore possible mitigation improvements on Bartlett Street as they pertain to pedestrian safety such as additional Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons at pedestrian crossings and permanent radar speed signs. We will keep residents and the Board informed as progress is made and welcome any ideas or suggestions.

The DPW Director and I look forward to discussing these items in more detail at your December 21st meeting.