

Salem Safe Walking Advocacy Group (Salem SWAG)

Inaugural Meeting

Saturday, 1/7/2023, 10:00 am - Salem Armory Visitor's Center Theater

Minutes scribed by Erin Turowski (organizer)

Welcome - 10:02 am

- One previous informal meeting, **11/5/2022**, 3 attendees (minutes incorporated here)
 - Specific pedestrian concerns may necessitate a distinct planning committee
 - Pedestrian safety currently falls under Traffic and Parking and/or Bicycling and Shared Path Advisory Committee
 - City needs to consider removing parking that abuts/obscures crosswalks
- **7 attendees**, including one long-term Salem resident, one former Salem resident now in Beverly, and one Salem city councillor (Ward 6 - Megan Stott - new CC president), and the commissioner of the Salem Commission on Disabilities (David Moisan)
- Collected **contact information** for internal email list - not for distribution
- Informal poll of attendees - ~50% felt unsafe while walking over the past week, **100% percent of attendees felt unsafe walking at some point in the last month**
- New term codified in MA legislature by Charlie Baker this week - **“vulnerable road user”** - covers all road/sidewalk users who are not protected by a car: pedestrians, cyclists, mobility-impaired people, people with children, people with dogs, runners, etc. - very broad category but important as it encompasses a large portion of population, sets stage for action
 - **Motorized scooters** are a tough intermediate - should be used in road or multi-use paths, using on sidewalks is a major risk to pedestrian safety, must have a city ordinance allowing sidewalk use in MA - and must yield right-of-way to pedestrians in all circumstances

Specific incidents/locations that feel unsafe

- **WALK SIGNAL BROKEN AT WASHINGTON/NEW DERBY FOR SEVERAL WEEKS**
 - Stuck on red “Don’t Walk” hand and number 20 for weeks
 - Several attendees reported on SeeClickFix, no repair
 - Reinforced SeeClickFix to flag issues, both website and mobile app
 - Immediate safety concern, Councillor Stott to flag for escalation ASAP
- **Bridge St and St. Peter St** this morning, crossing Bridge - signal mismatch, pedestrian wanted 5 minutes for light to change and then when the traffic light changed, the walk light did not, crossed anyway
- **Lafayette Street** - marked crosswalks (no lights) near SSU often ignored, lit crosswalks have ambiguous signals (red/yellow), “stroad”
- **Highland Avenue** - always a concern, recent fatality, recent walk audit by MA DOT
- **Salem Community Life Center (Bridge Street)** - one long-term Salem resident uses the center but said specifically, **“I hate going to the Community Life Center.”** Non-driver, pedestrian only, sidewalk leading to CLC from downtown does not exist, huge safety hazard. Center hosts events for many residents and could be much better utilized with better pedestrian/non-motor vehicle access (also currently fenced off).

- **Barton Square** behind Essex/Gulu, etc. - seems to not really be a traveled road but more of a cut-through for parking, misleadingly unsafe for pedestrians
- **Congress Street** - another “stroad,” frequent road racing/speeding/motorcycles
- **Washington St/Bridge St intersection** - always difficult to cross, esp. at night
- Better **MBTA train station access** from Peabody direction - no sidewalks, have to go uphill to come back downhill, also stairs at station to Crescent Lot still out of service
- **465 bus** discontinued in 2021, no real replacement, 435 not good substitute
- **Salem Common/Washington Square** - identified during previous meeting

What can we do as a group?

- Recommend identifying **2-3 key locations** and targeting them for visibility in the early stages of this group, can extend to larger projects/areas as we gain steam
- Can request **walk audits** - Councillor Stott provided helpful info
 - **North Street** - audited previously by Walk Boston - report available to public at <https://walkboston.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/WB-NorthSalemWalkAuditReportFINAL.pdf?8621dc&8621dc>
 - **Bridge Street** - also audited by Walk Boston, report not readily available
 - **Downtown Salem** - <https://walkboston.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/WalkBoston-DowntownWalkAssessment-Salem.pdf?8621dc&8621dc>
 - **The Point** - <https://walkboston.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/WalkBoston-The-Point-walk-audit-report-FINAL.pdf?8621dc&8621dc>
 - Other walk audits available on <https://walkboston.org>
- **SeeClickFix** - website and mobile app (Android/iOS) - flag issues as noted
- **Walkable City - Jeff Speck** - also recommended by Councillor Stott, copies available - please message me if you would like to read and I will obtain a copy for you myself
 - Reviewed “The Ten Steps of Walkability” on page 71

Next meeting

- Targeting **quarterly meetings** - probably early April 2023 for next (maybe an informal meetup in the interim), date/location TBD but will finalize by end of Jan.
- Will start with Discord invite and then extend to **wider audience** - FB, reddit, public postings in Salem?
- Would like to see **demonstrations and printables** as the group gains traction
- Encouraged all to **publicize** to friends, coworkers, neighbors, etc.

Adjourned at 11:47 am