

Time for action

By **Jill Casey**/ Correspondent

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Acknowledging and talking about a problem can go a long way toward giving a group of concerned residents peace of mind. But actually doing something about a fatal traffic intersection is a whole different ball game.

That was how a group who attended the Allston Civic Association meeting felt after hearing a speaker from the Boston Transportation Department discuss pedestrian and traffic safety issues in the area of Franklin and Lincoln streets in Allston.

While they were happy to hear that the city was acknowledging their concerns, they said they will be much more at ease when the city takes actual steps to rectify the problems at this intersection, which was the scene of a recent fatal accident.

Back in June, Kirsten Malone, a 29-year-old Boston resident, was killed after suffering head injuries from an accident at this intersection. Malone was riding her bike around the intersection's hidden bend when it happened. Witness reports documented in the Boston Herald, said it appeared that Malone did not see the car as she made the turn.

In the wake of incidents like this and others in recent months, Paul Berkeley, president of the Allston Civic Association, asked Richard Hardy, associate traffic engineer at the BTDA, to attend the meeting to discuss what can be done to make this intersection safer.

Berkeley also remarked that Hardy was "one of the good guys, so be nice to him," before introducing him.

"Pedestrian safety in the city of Boston is one of my biggest things. I want people to know that I do care and the city cares. There are just some things that we can do and can't do," Hardy said to an attentive ACA audience on July 14.

Hardy said he made several trips to this area to investigate in the last few weeks in response to calls from Berkeley and City Councilor Jerry McDermott's office. What his site visits showed was that there were many more pedestrians and bicyclists passing through this area than he was aware of.

Hardy's immediate solution was to install signage that would encourage drivers to slow down, which he said has been done already. However, Hardy also acknowledged that cost restraints could restrict the city from embarking on major changes on these blocks such as the ones ACA members were proposing. "I honestly don't think the city will get into these things because of the expense," he said in response to requests for stop signs or signals.

Harry Mattison, who lives on nearby Mansfield Street, came to the meeting with fliers displaying maps and pictures of the intersection. The fliers claimed that the plantings and fence at the NSTAR substation on the corner of Lincoln and Mansfield streets obstruct the view of eastbound traffic on Lincoln Street. The flier also claimed that there is a 1-mile stretch without traffic lights or stop signs, furthers a driver's desire to exceed the 30 mph speed limit.

Mattison was asked if he was satisfied with Hardy's remarks and he replied no. He said the city should really embark on a major traffic study of this area and come to real concrete solutions.

"It's really unsafe," Mattison said. "I think we need more than just a sign down there."

John Powell, ACA member and Franklin Street resident, said what that intersection needs is marked crosswalks. In his opinion, the city is not consistent in its distribution of crosswalks. While some streets get crosswalks, others don't and it doesn't make a lot of sense, Powell said.

Another problem is that cars park illegally on the street, which impairs the view of drivers and pedestrians, said Mary Helen Black, ACA member and Franklin Street resident. Even with no-parking signs posted on the block, there is still a problem with illegal parking, she said.

Black said she frequently calls District 14 Police to report illegal parkers, and that within an hour they ticket the car.

In response to some of the ACA's comments, Hardy said some proposed solutions, such as stop signs, were not necessarily the answer. Rumble strips approaching the crosswalks could be, he said.

Photo Gallery



Here is an intersection at the corner of Franklin and Lincoln streets in Allston. The area is not considered safe for pedestrians. Residents are waiting for the city to take action to make the area safer.
 - STAFF PHOTO BY KEITH E. JACOBSON

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Hardy said he will continue to communicate with McDermott's office on the problems at this intersection.

Also at the ACA meeting was a presentation by a Bradbury Street property owner who installed six parking spaces in the rear of his property. Jim Bernhard was seeking landscaping suggestions from ACA members before he heads to the Zoning Board of Appeals for approval of his landscaping plan.

Berkeley and fellow ACA members refused to approve or vote on Bernhard's proposal due its unfinished nature. The drawings he provided were done in pencil and didn't give any indication to how it would actually look, many remarked.

Even though the pavement has already been laid, some ACA members were angry that open space was being compromised with the installation of parking spaces. Others at the meeting were supportive of Bernhard's plan to provide parking for his tenants.

According to Berkeley, the previous owner was sold the land where the parking spaces are located for \$1, on the condition that the site remain as open space. Bernhard said he knew of no such proviso when he purchased the property, and said the property was in total disarray when he bought it. It didn't look anything like a piece of attractive open space, he said.

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