

From: Jim Weigang <jweigang@gmail.com>

Date: Thu, Oct 31, 2024 at 11:17 AM

Subject: South Main St. "Build Both"

To: William Sayre <wsayre@burgy.org>, Denise Banister <banisterdenise456@gmail.com>, Paul Wetzel <pwetzel@burgy.org>, Nick Caccamo <townadmin@burgy.org>, Elizabeth Van Iderstine <selectmen@burgy.org>

Cc: Heming, Francisca R. (DOT) <francisca.heming@dot.state.ma.us>, Mark Moore <mark.moore@dot.state.ma.us>, Carrie Lavalley (DOT) <carrie.lavalley@dot.state.ma.us>

In his October 20 meeting with South Main Street residents, select board chair Paul Wetzel replaced the Greenway committee's shared-use path option with what he termed "Bike boulevard with widened sidewalk." This design option had been discussed in May 2024 as the "Build Both" proposal: constructing an 8-foot sidewalk/shared-use path ("sidepath") along with 12-foot vehicular lanes marked with sharrows and signs.

Though it was presented to the neighborhood as a possible compromise (see [here](#)), South Main Street residents have never and still do not approve of the Build Both proposal.

If an 8-foot sidepath is constructed along South Main Street, we expect that nearly everyone coming from the Leeds rail trail or the proposed Route 9 bike path will use the sidepath. Traffic on this narrower-than-standard path – our former sidewalk – will include bicycles, e-bikes, pedestrians, young children, people using mobility assistance, and dogs being walked.

We object to the sidepath for the same reasons we have objected to the Greenway's shared-use path design:

- Bidirectional bike traffic very close to numerous driveways with limited sight lines is dangerous and a liability hazard, issues that are specifically warned about in bicycle transportation engineering manuals. (See [here](#).)
- Bicycle traffic on a neighborhood sidewalk is disruptive and hazardous to pedestrians. Residential pedestrians of all ages and abilities should be provided with a safe place to walk without having to deal with bicycles that have been directed onto their walkway.

People who live on South Main St. are familiar with existing levels of bicycle traffic on the street: numerous touring cyclists ride on South Main between River Road in Leeds and High Street towards Whately. We expect these users to continue to ride in the street, and we do not want to make cycling conditions on South Main Street worse for them.

The Greenway committee's proposals add a curb to the east side of the street while keeping the same pavement width as currently exists. Cyclists must stay a distance away from curbs in order to avoid crashing; a curb thus effectively reduces the width of pavement available to cyclists. Moreover, a curb removes the option for cyclists to ride off the road onto grass in an emergency to avoid errant traffic. These issues make the Build Both-configured street less safe

and inviting for cyclists riding in the street. The South Main Street neighborhood cares about bicyclists and wants to make our street *safer* for them, not *less safe*.

At Paul Wetzel's September 15 meeting with the neighborhood, Joe Mai, owner of the bike shop on South Main Street, suggested putting marked bike lanes on the street. The residents realized that this design was acceptable to them, and the neighborhood wishes to reiterate our support for a design with:

- 10-foot vehicular lanes
- 4-foot bike lanes
- no curbs
- 5-foot ADA-compliant concrete sidewalk for pedestrians
- parking allowed on the grass beyond the west side of the street

About bicycles on the sidewalk: Bicyclists in Massachusetts (but not e-bike riders) are allowed to ride on sidewalks *when necessary in the interest of safety*. If South Main Street, with its low traffic volume and 20 mph vehicle speed, is marked with dedicated bike lanes and has a sidewalk OBVIOUSLY intended for pedestrian use, then bicyclists riding among pedestrians and directly in front of driveways should be rare.

About VHB objections to the neighborhood's proposed lane widths: If VHB refuses to design 10-foot vehicle and 4-foot bike lanes on the street, we suggest they simply engineer 14-foot vehicular lanes and have the town paint lines and bicycle markings for bike lanes.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Moran, Jr. – 20R and 4, 6, 18, 20 South Main
Pawel & Magda Pasiut – 29 South Main
Mark Albright &
Mary A. Moriarty – 28 South Main (owners)
Nancy Callahan – 26 South Main
Gerry Shattuck &
Cora Lee Drew – 25 South Main
William & Marilyn Packard – 23 South Main
Marianna Frantz – 22B South Main
Curtis Hamilton &
Jackie Cochran – 21 South Main
Lynn M. Moran – 20R South Main
Anne McCabe – 19 South Main
Madelyn Breen – 17 South Main
Robert & Leslie Schneider – 15 South Main
Jim Weigang – 9C South Main
Ned & Elizabeth Jalbert – 7 South Main
Joseph Mai (Joe's Garage) – 4 South Main

Tanja Nutt – 4A South Main