



Chicopee Center Walk Assessment Chicopee, MA

September 20, 2018

Sponsored by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security's Pedestrian Safety Planning Initiative for High-Fatality Communities

Walk Assessment Overview

On September 20, 2018, WalkBoston conducted a walk assessment in Chicopee Center, with support from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security (EOPSS). The goal of the walk assessment was to recommend improvements to the local built environment that improve pedestrian safety. Participants included WalkBoston staff and representatives from the Mayor’s Office, Planning Department, Engineering Department, Department of Public Works, Police Department, Chamber of Commerce, and Valley Opportunity Council.



HSIP Pedestrian Clusters

A pedestrian crash cluster centered on Chicopee Center indicates potentially dangerous conditions for people walking.

WalkBoston consulted MassDOT’s Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) crash portal to determine potential locations for the walk assessment. The data through 2015 show a pedestrian crash cluster in the heart of Chicopee Center that indicates potentially dangerous conditions for people walking. (The other pedestrian crash cluster in Chicopee is centered on Chicopee Street and Bolduc Lane in the Willimansett neighborhood, several miles north of the Center.) The City is working to encourage more business and pedestrian activity downtown, and the forthcoming redevelopment of two mill buildings on Front Street will mean hundreds of new residents living and walking in the Center. As such, improving pedestrian safety, accessibility and connectivity downtown is critical to advancing the City’s broader goals around housing and economic development.

Walk assessment participants met at Chicopee City Hall and walked in a loop along Front Street, Depot Street, Exchange Street and Center Street to examine pedestrian conditions in Chicopee Center. The group discussed a number of general recommendations to improve walkability throughout Chicopee Center, as well as more specific recommendations at targeted intersections and locations.

The report sections that follow discuss these “Overall Recommendations” and “Specific Improvements” in more detail. These recommendations can also be applied to other locations in Chicopee. “Overall Recommendations” include the following:

- **Use fog lines, bike lanes, curb extensions/bumpouts, and pedestrian refuge islands to calm traffic, reduce long crossing distances, and improve pedestrian visibility.**

- **Create a comprehensive plan to add and improve crosswalks.**
- **Create a comprehensive plan to add and improve sidewalks and curb ramps.**
- **Explore opportunities for pedestrian signal timing changes and equipment upgrades.**
- **Explore opportunities to implement road diets and reduce the number of vehicular travel lanes.**

Overall Recommendations

- **Use fog lines, bike lanes, curb extensions/bumpouts, and pedestrian refuge islands to calm traffic, reduce long crossing distances, and improve pedestrian visibility.** Wide travel lanes induce motor vehicles to travel at high speeds and long pedestrian crossing distances leave pedestrians exposed to this fast-moving traffic, creating safety hazards throughout Chicopee Center. Fog lines and bike lanes can narrow vehicular travel lanes to help slow traffic down. Curb extensions/bumpouts and pedestrian refuge islands reduce crossing distances and improve pedestrian visibility while also helping to calm traffic. All the aforementioned measures can be installed at low cost in the near term using paint, planters and/or plastic flex posts.
- **Create a comprehensive plan to add and improve crosswalks.** Several crosswalks in Chicopee Center are marked with a red brick design, but many others only utilize two parallel lines, which are less visible to people driving. In some locations, such as Cabot Street at Front Street and Exchange Street between Depot Street and Cabot Street, crosswalks are missing and should be added. New crosswalks across Front Street at Cabot Street, Perkins Street and Dwight Street should also be considered as the mill redevelopment projects on Front Street move forward.

WalkBoston encourages the City of Chicopee to implement a highly visible ladder or continental crosswalk design with perpendicular white lines. This design should be installed in conjunction with high-visibility pedestrian signage, including the usage of in-street pedestrian delineators at unsignalized or midblock crosswalks.

- **Create a comprehensive plan to add and improve sidewalks and curb ramps.** Sidewalks and curb ramps that are in poor condition should be fixed and cleared of overgrowth, curb ramps should be installed at crosswalks and driveways where they are missing, and curb ramps that lack tactile warning panels should be upgraded for ADA compliance. Walk assessment participants noted that several sidewalks in Chicopee Center were expanded as part of past streetscape projects, and that similar sidewalk expansions were planned in other parts of downtown but were never implemented because funding fell through. The City should revisit opportunities to widen sidewalks as part of future streetscape projects. This will provide more space for pedestrians, while also helping to calm traffic by narrowing vehicular travel lanes.
- **Explore opportunities to improve pedestrian signal timing and upgrade signal equipment.** Several pedestrian signals in Chicopee Center do not provide sufficient time to cross the street. In other instances, the WALK signals have outdated equipment that does not display pedestrian countdowns, which are a proven crash reduction measure. Signal timing should be updated in

the near term to provide more frequent WALK signals with more pedestrian crossing time. In the longer term, new equipment should be installed to display pedestrian countdowns at all signalized intersections.

- **Explore opportunities to implement road diets and reduce the number of vehicular travel lanes.** Chicopee Center has a number of wide streets that primarily facilitate vehicular movement at the expense of other travel modes. Some walk assessment participants suggested that there is excess lane capacity in Chicopee Center and that the number of travel lanes along key corridors (including Cabot Street between Front Street and Exchange Street) can be reduced without causing traffic congestion. Implementing road diets will help calm traffic and provide space for an expanded and more attractive pedestrian realm.

Specific Improvements

Front Street at Center Street

Just outside City Hall, people driving utilize a right-turning slip lane to merge from Center Street onto Front Street. Walk assessment participants noted that turning vehicles at this location often fail to slow down as they approach the crosswalks, creating a pedestrian safety hazard. **Strategies to improve walking safety include the following:**

- **Paint a fog line along the slip lane to narrow the travel lane and calm traffic.**
- **Upgrade the crosswalk at the entrance to the slip lane to a raised crosswalk.** This will slow motor vehicles as they approach the slip lane, which will also improve pedestrian safety at the subsequent crosswalk across Front Street. Walk assessment participants noted that raised crosswalks are planned for several locations along Front Street east of City Hall, providing a replicable model for other parts of the City.
- **Upgrade crosswalks with a highly visible ladder design and signage, including in-street pedestrian delineators.**



Installing a raised crosswalk at the entrance to the right-turning slip lane outside City Hall will help calm traffic and improve pedestrian safety.

Front Street at Springfield Street

The intersection of Front Street and Springfield Street presents a number of pedestrian safety challenges. The elongated roadway geometry results in poor sightlines for pedestrians as well as drivers, and wide turning radii induce drivers to make turns at high speeds without slowing down. There are no pedestrian accommodations along Front Street on the northwest side of the intersection, and the sidewalks along Front Street on the northeast side of the intersection are relatively narrow.



Long crossing distances and wide turning radii for motor vehicles present safety challenges for pedestrians at the intersection of Front Street and Springfield Street.

There are traffic and pedestrian signals regulating the westbound and northbound approaches to the

intersection along Front Street and Springfield Street, respectively, but the WALK signals at these locations do not display pedestrian countdowns. There is no traffic or pedestrian signal on Springfield Street regulating the southbound approach to the intersection, which is one of the major vehicular access points into Chicopee Center. Drivers entering the Center this way have to take a roundabout loop on Front Street, Cabot Street, Exchange Street and Center Street, due to the current one-way westbound traffic pattern on Front Street.

Walk assessment participants discussed the possibility of reconfiguring the current one-way traffic patterns, which may require additional signalization. **Strategies to improve walking safety include the following:**

- **Develop specific plans to address the lack of pedestrian accommodations along Front Street on the northwest side of the intersection.** Walk assessment participants discussed a future vision for a multiuse path in this area, as well as need to install new sidewalks as the mill redevelopments on Front Street move forward. Ensuring safe pedestrian facilities is critical to accommodate the future growth in residential and commercial activity projected for this area.
- **Install curb extensions/bumpouts and a pedestrian refuge island along the northern leg of the intersection at Springfield Street to calm traffic, reduce the long crossing distance, and improve pedestrian visibility.** Bumpouts and refuge islands can be added at low cost in the near term using paint, planters and/or plastic flex posts.
- **Upgrade crosswalks with a highly visible ladder design and signage, including in-street pedestrian delineators.**
- **Assess the current pedestrian signal cycle to ensure that pedestrians get frequent WALK signals with sufficient time to cross the street.**

- **Upgrade WALK signal equipment to display pedestrian countdowns in the longer term.**
- **Explore opportunities to widen the sidewalk along Front Street on the northeast side of the intersection.**
- **Consider implementing road diets on Front Street and Springfield Street.** Both Front Street and Springfield Street are two lanes wide at the eastbound and northbound approaches to the intersection, respectively. Front Street has one travel lane and one right-turning lane, and Springfield Street has one travel lane and one left-turning lane. This lane capacity is underutilized, which presents opportunities to reduce the number of travel lanes and reallocate excess roadway space to the pedestrian realm. This will also help calm traffic and further reduce pedestrian crossing distances.

Front Street at Cabot Street

The turning radius for traffic turning left from Front Street onto Cabot Street is extremely wide, and as a result drivers can make this move at high speeds without slowing down. The lack of a crosswalk for pedestrians to get across four travel lanes on Cabot Street only compounds the pedestrian safety challenges at this location. Walk assessment participants noted that past construction plans for this intersection, which were never implemented due to lack of funding, included wider sidewalks on the west side of Cabot Street and the creation of a bus-only lane for PVTA buses. These measures should be incorporated into a future redesign of this intersection.



An extremely wide turning radius for motor vehicles and the lack of a marked crosswalk present safety challenges for pedestrians at the intersection of Front Street and Cabot Street.

Additional strategies to improve walking safety include the following:

- **Install a curb extension/bumpout on the southeast corner of the intersection to calm traffic turning left from Front Street onto Cabot Street.** As part of an installation at this corner, the excess roadway space can be repurposed into a pedestrian amenity like a small plaza or pocket park. A Bumpout can be added at low cost in the near term using paint, planters and/or plastic flex posts.
- **Install a crosswalk with ADA-compliant ramps and highly visible ladder design across Cabot Street.** This crosswalk should be installed in conjunction with the bumpout described above, which will also narrow the overall pedestrian crossing distance. In the longer term, crosswalks

should also be installed across Front Street as the mill redevelopments move forward and pedestrian accommodations are added on the north side of Front Street.

- **Implement a road diet on Cabot Street.** Cabot Street between Front Street and Exchange Street is four lanes wide (two travel lanes, plus a left-turning lane and a right-turning lane). This lane capacity is underutilized, which presents opportunities to reduce the number of travel lanes and reallocate excess roadway space to the pedestrian realm. This will also help calm traffic and further reduce pedestrian crossing distances.

Front Street at Dwight Street

Dwight Street between Front Street and Exchange Street has several multifamily housing buildings with driveways in between them. The driveways interrupt the sidewalks and lack curb ramps. Walk assessment participants noted that in some instances the sidewalks are on private property, meaning that the City cannot install ramps directly. Some of the sidewalks are also completely blocked by shrubs and weeds. **Strategies to improve walking safety include the following:**



Overgrown sidewalks on Dwight Street should be cleared to ensure safe pedestrian access.

- **Explore property takings along the sidewalks or code enforcement via the Building or Health Departments as mechanisms to create ADA-compliant curb ramps at the driveways.**
- **Clear the overgrown sidewalk on the east side of Dwight Street to enable safe pedestrian access.**
- **Upgrade the crosswalk across Dwight Street to a more highly visible ladder design.**
- **Consider the future installation of crosswalks across Front Street as the mill redevelopment projects move forward.**

Front Street at Depot Street

Walk assessment participants noted that the intersection of Front Street and Depot Street is a critical link to connect the nearby Connecticut Riverwalk and Bikeway with sidewalks and bike paths in Chicopee Center and beyond. A bike and pedestrian bridge is proposed for the area as part of this effort. Safe crossings and accommodations for pedestrians and cyclists must be addressed as part of the forthcoming mill redevelopments on Front Street.

Exchange Street between Depot Street and Cabot Street

Exchange Street is relatively wide between Depot Street and Cabot Street, which can induce traffic to move at high speeds. There is also a lack of marked crosswalks along this stretch of Exchange Street, even though curb ramps are present. Many of these curb ramps lack the tactile warning panels required for ADA compliance. The sidewalks are largely comprised of brick, which some walk assessment participants suggested could be eliminated as part of future sidewalk reconstruction/expansion projects to create a smoother walking surface. **Additional strategies to improve walking safety include the following:**



Adding fog lines, crosswalk markings and signage, and ADA-compliant curb ramps and tactile warning panels will improve conditions for pedestrians on Exchange Street.

- **Add fog lines on Exchange Street to narrow the travel lanes and calm traffic.**
- **Add and upgrade crosswalks along and across Exchange Street (at Depot Street, Chestnut Street, Dwight Street and Perkins Street) with fresh paint and a highly visible ladder design and signage, including in-street pedestrian delineators on Exchange Street.**
- **Assess whether curb ramps are in a state of good repair and add tactile warning panels for ADA compliance where needed.**
- **Expand the sidewalk on the north side of Exchange Street between Perkins Street and Cabot Street.** Streetlights and parked cars at the Market Square Plaza shopping center create a crowded and unpleasant walking environment for pedestrians at this location. Creating an expanded sidewalk here will improve walkability and also help calm traffic by narrowing the vehicular travel lane on the north side of the street.

Exchange Street at Cabot Street

The intersection of Exchange Street and Cabot Street features well-marked crosswalks with a highly visible red brick design. A bumpout was installed on the southwest corner of the intersection as part of a past streetscape project. The outdated WALK signal equipment at the intersection does not display pedestrian countdowns. **Strategies to improve walking safety include the following:**

- **Install additional curb extensions/bumpouts to calm traffic, reduce crossing distances, and improve pedestrian visibility.** Bumpouts can be added at low cost in the near term using paint, planters and/or plastic flex posts.
- **Assess the current pedestrian signal cycle to ensure that pedestrians get frequent WALK signals with sufficient time to cross the street.**
- **Upgrade WALK signal equipment to display pedestrian countdowns in the longer term.**

Exchange Street at Center Street/Springfield Street

The intersection of Exchange Street, Center Street and Springfield Street presents several pedestrian safety challenges. The traffic pattern is confusing, sightlines are poor for pedestrians as well as drivers, and wide turning radii induce drivers to make turns at high speeds without slowing down. In addition, the WALK signal cycle does not provide pedestrians with enough time to cross the street. **Strategies to improve walking safety include the following:**



Wide turning radii for motor vehicles present safety challenges for pedestrians at the intersection of Exchange Street, Center Street and Springfield Street.

- **Install curb extensions/bumpouts on the eastern leg of the intersection at Springfield Street to calm traffic, reduce crossing distances, and improve pedestrian visibility.** Bumpouts can be added at low cost in the near term using paint, planters and/or plastic flex posts.
- **Update the pedestrian signal cycle to provide more WALK time to cross the street.**
- **Implement road diets on Exchange Street and Center Street.** Both Exchange Street and Center Street are three lanes wide at the intersection. Exchange Street has one travel lane and two left-turning lanes, and Center Street has two travel lanes and one right-turning lane. This lane capacity is underutilized, which presents opportunities to reduce the number of travel lanes and reallocate excess roadway space to the pedestrian realm. This will also help calm traffic and further reduce pedestrian crossing distances.