

5.12

MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE

walk

BY KEN KRAUSE

20 is plenty for Great Britain — will the US follow?

WalkBoston has long supported a legislative proposal to reduce the default speed limit to 25 miles per hour on local roads in Massachusetts, meaning, local roads would have a 25 mph limit instead of the current 30 mph.

In Great Britain, an organization is going five steps further, advocating for local authorities to establish 20 mph as the default speed limit for residential streets. The group, called “20’s Plenty,” was inspired by a 2009 report by the UK Department for Transport titled “A Safer Way: Consultation on Making Britain’s Roads the Safest in the World.” That report, triggered in part by an annual increase in pedestrian road deaths from 2005-08, recommended the lower default speed limit, citing research that suggested that pedestrians struck at 30 mph have about a 1 in 5 chance of being killed, while at 20 mph the chance of a pedestrian dying is 1 in 40.

But the rationale for slower speed limits is not just to improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers. Other benefits include the reduction of air pollution, traffic congestion, and even driving costs due to lower incidences of crashes and reduced insurance premiums offered in 20 mph areas. Municipalities like the lower speed limit because it can prevent the need [and expense] of making infrastructure changes to attempt to calm traffic.

Slower traffic speeds make people more inclined to walk or ride a bicycle, as they feel less endangered on or near the streets.

“We need to ask ourselves how moral is it to promote walking and cycling if at the same time we do not make our streets safer places to cycle and walk,” wrote Rod

King, campaign manager for 20’s Plenty for Us, in a 2009 article for Travelwise Action magazine.

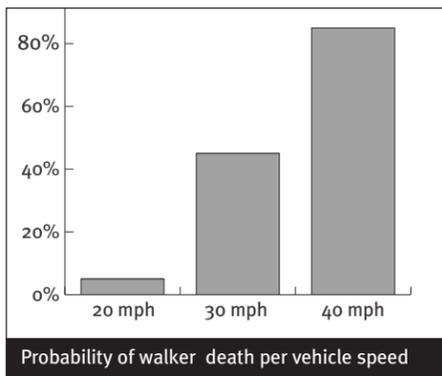
The more conditions favor walking and biking, the more those modes are used. The city of Bristol reported a 12% increase in walking and cycling after it enacted the 20 mph speed limit on residential streets.

Local authorities representing more than 7.5 million UK residents have already implemented or are committed to implementing the 20 mph default speed limit, and the members of the European Parliament are proposing its adoption throughout the European Community.

“We know it works,” King said in a segment for Streetfilms. “It reduces traffic speeds, it reduces collisions. It results in a better quality of life. It’s an argument that we’re winning, and it’s also something that’s coming up with really great results in our towns and cities.”

Could this idea catch on the US? Several states have speed limits of 15 to 25 mph in certain school, business and residential districts. New York City has experimented with 20 mph in the Bronx.

New York State Sen. Eric Adams is a believer. After learning about 20’s Plenty for Us [www.20splentyforuk.org.uk] on a walk with King through the Park Slope area of Brooklyn, King told Streetfilms: “People often ask me, why is this such a major issue? The universe we lived in yesteryear is not the universe we live in today. Our roads are not only for vehicles. They’re for skateboarders, bicyclists, roller-bladers. The street is being used for alternative means and modes of transportation. Those who ride bikes or use other modes of transportation must feel that they are safely moving about.”



Slow the speeds in your community—your support matters.

- \$50 Activates members & community groups via e-news updates
- \$100 Sends us to a community meeting to speak up for walkers
- \$300 Supports our work for lower speeds to increase pedestrian safety

Donate to our advocacy fund drive today to show you support slower, safer streets. Give online at www.walkboston.org or mail to: WalkBoston, 45 School Street, Boston, MA 02108

BY JOE CUTRUFO

Not so fast? Hoboken is adopting slower speed limits

In Hoboken, NJ, an educational campaign aimed at reminding drivers to slow speeds in neighborhood streets became one of the first American versions of the 20 is Plenty approach to traffic control. Due to the density and narrowness of Hoboken’s streets, “we wanted to make absolutely sure we’ve done everything possible to get people driving at safe speeds,” said Ryan Sharp, Principal Planner at the City of Hoboken’s Department of Transportation and Parking. Sharp’s agency sent flyers to homes and published statistics in a local newspaper about pedestrian survival rates when hit by vehicles at speeds of 40 and 50 mph. “We used the infamous ‘likelihood of death’ chart to create shock value for people to think about when driving,” Sharp said. “Then we took things a step further and incorporated our 20 is Plenty logo into the City’s residential parking permits.”

Next Sharp’s team drafted a resolution seeking the support

of the City Council. Instead of opposition, they ended up with a City Council recommendation to reduce the citywide speed limit from 25 to 20 mph. “We initially thought [a citywide speed reduction would] be politically untenable at best,” Sharp said.

The speed limit reduction is currently under study. Highway manuals require that speed limits be set using the 85th percentile rule — that is, set at the speed traveled by 85% of motorists. “If the data shows that the 85th percentile speed is 25 mph or less, we are going to move forward with legislation to pass a citywide speed limit of 20 mph,” Sharp said. Where streets have higher speeds, the City will implement traffic calming devices, and test the speeds again. “Due to the nature of Hoboken, almost all of our streets are slow including our arterials and main streets, so we’re pretty confident that we’ll be getting the reduced speed limit some time this year,” he said.

Boston

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events

Campus walking

Tuesday, June 12 @ 6 pm

Presentation & panel discussion
Boston Public Library, Copley Sq.
Learn about walk-oriented
programs that are changing local
schools and hospitals.

Circle the City walks

June 24 & July 15: Franklin Park

August 5: Rose Kennedy Greenway

An Open Streets initiative connecting
people to parks will launch this
summer on three Sundays. It will
feature free activities for all ages
promoting healthy, active living, and
will draw people out of their homes
and cars and onto safe, car-free
streets to walk, bike, roll, play. Details
at emeraldnecklace.org/circle-the-city

scavenger hunt

Step On It with WalkBoston

Boston's Sidewalk Scavenger Hunt

Saturday, July 21 @ 2:30 pm

2:30 pm race begins
4:00 pm winner crowned
Scholars Bistro, 25 School Street

Think you know all about Boston?
Prove it! Gather a team of 1-5 walk-
ers and search the city for our list
of iconic objects found in or on the
sidewalks of Boston. The first team
to return to Scholars Bistro with
photo evidence will win a \$50 gift
card to Scholars Bistro, a Harpoon
Gift Basket and more.

RSVP with your team name at
www.steponit.eventbrite.com

transportation testimony

Douglas B. MacDonald, Washington State Senate Transportation Committee Testimony in favor of Neighborhood Safe Streets Bill [HB 1217]

You can read journal articles or, in a laboratory environment like one's own
neighborhood, you can trust your own senses and observation. The best is
to do both. One day driving downhill on 78th [it could have been any of a
hundred locations] I said to the driver: "How fast are you going?" "Twenty-
seven," she said. "It's too fast; how would you ever stop in time if a kid
runs out from between parked cars? Or if you meet another car at the
corner and it's going 27, too." "You're right," she said. "Try twenty," I said.
"That works," she said. "And we're going to get home at the same time we
would have anyway."

Safe speeds help establish a neighborhood culture. Even more might be
done, with engineering and construction of traffic calming installations like
speed bumps. But that's expensive when we don't even have money to
pave streets. So the wait for the total solution including expensive street
improvements is an unjustified continuation of an unsatisfactory status
quo when today we could, if we chose, be doing something.

5.12 speed kills

WalkBoston makes
walking safer and easier in
Massachusetts to encourage
better health, a cleaner
environment and vibrant
communities.

mission

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thank you!

RACEWALKER

Massachusetts Convention
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STRIDERS

Eastern Bank
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STROLLERS

Beth Israel Deaconess
Medical Center
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HNTB

Massachusetts General
Hospital
Microsoft NERD Center
New Balance
NStar
Partners Healthcare
Robinson & Cole
TEC Engineering
The Collaborative
Tufts Medical Center
Vanasse Hangen Brustlin

AMBLERS

A Better City
Alta Planning & Design
Antonio DiMambro & Assoc.
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BETA Group
BSC Group
Cecil Group
Cetrulo and Capone
CommuterChoice
Crosby, Schlessinger,
Smallridge

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Environmental Business
Council of New England
Fay, Spofford & Thorndike
Friends of Post Office Sq.
Gilbane
Goulston & Storrs
Harpoon Brewery
Health Resources in Action
HMFH Architects
Howard/Stein-Hudson
Assoc.

Jacobs Engineering Group
Keville Enterprises
McMahon Assoc.
Millennium Partners
Nitsch Engineering
Parsons Brinckerhoff
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STV
The Boston Foundation
Toole Design Group
Zipcar

BY HILLARY BORCHERDING

Walk/bike safety summit

Advocacy groups MassBike and WalkBoston teamed up on May 17, 2012
for Massachusetts' first state-wide biking and walking summit in Nurses'
Hall at the State House in Boston. The summit gathered biking and walking
advocates from across the Commonwealth to meet with lawmakers to
discuss the importance of livable streets and encourage support for
legislation that will keep bicyclists and pedestrians safe.

Three bills aimed at making walking and biking safer are under review:
Vulnerable Road Users [H3079], Senior Safety Zones [H1968] and Lowering
Speed Limits on Local Roads [H1808]. Together these bills protect walkers
and bicyclists by lowering speeds and making motorists more aware of both
modes. The Vulnerable Road Users bill would raise penalties for striking or
injuring vulnerable users. The Senior Safety Zones bill would allow cities
and towns to designate reduced-speed zones near senior facilities, similar
to school zones. The Speed Limits bill would lower the prevailing speed
limit from 30 mph to 25 mph on federally-classified local roads.

Legislators and participants listened as speaker Aaron Naparstek, a Loeb
Fellow at Harvard and founder and former editor-in-chief of Streetsblog,
spoke about advocacy in New York City and recited poems from his book,
"Honku: the Zen Antidote to Road Rage." The event was sponsored by
Representative Sean Garballey from Arlington.