

Shuttle Buses for Arsenal and Pleasant Streets: What's Happened, What Hasn't, Why?

Summary:

For more than three years now residents have been led to expect Transportation Management Association (TMA) shuttle buses would soon serve the vital, traffic-burdened Pleasant Street and Arsenal Street corridors in Watertown, where significant new development is underway. The results have fallen far short of expectations. Why?

Our group, the Watertown Transportation Task Force, concludes:

- From 2008 to 2012 the Town encouraged and approved development on these corridors with no realistic plans to reduce the increased traffic from these developments -- hoping that eventually better MBTA service would solve the problem being created.
- After 2012 the Town began requiring major developments to participate in forming a Transportation Management Association with shuttle services. The requirements contained few specifics and the Town has not enforced the requirements in a way to cause a shuttle program to be operating now or in the near future without significant Town funding.
- Changes in the personnel working on the TMA have resulted in delays and inconsistent plans and timetables.
- Key developers along the Arsenal and Pleasant Street corridors have not lived up to their responsibilities. They have not committed enough funding to operate a shuttle service and some have provided only their own private shuttle services rather than participating in joint community-based services
- The moment of opportunity for consolidated TMA shuttle services, instead of multiple private shuttles or no shuttles, may be passing us by.
- Transportation advocates (including us), concerned citizens and political leaders of Watertown have not insisted enough on accountability and a revised implementation plan.

What Can We Do Now?

- The Town should fully **enforce the permit conditions** that require "proportionate financial participation" to fund effective TMA shuttle operations on the two corridors. The public expectation, encouraged by Town officials, has been that this was the meaning of development permits which included this language.
- Ask the Town **defer committing funds to any TMA shuttle program** until (1) a financial analysis is prepared to realistically forecast the total budget for shuttle operations on each corridor for multiple years and to estimate any shortfall due to inadequate funding from the TMA participants other than the Town, and (2) following public debate, the Town sets appropriate pre-conditions for all Town contributions to a shuttle program.

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- Insist that the Town **develop new special permit language to remedy any problems with special permit language used to date** in the AODD, RMUD and PSCD¹ with the goals of consolidating and realistically funding shuttle operations.
- Residents, employees and drivers affected by traffic on these corridors should **lobby large residential and commercial developments on these corridors to participate as necessary to establish shuttle services** along Arsenal and Pleasant Streets.

Purpose of This Report:

Large, dense and increasingly rapid property development along Pleasant Street and Arsenal Street in Watertown since 2008 coincided with a crisis of worsening MBTA services. At the same time as Watertown approved several projects adding hundreds of residential units and vehicle trips on these corridors — and proposals were in the works for still more residential and office developments — it became clear that even if the MBTA recognized the problem in Watertown it would be in no position to add a T bus route to Pleasant Street or improve Arsenal Street T service for years to come. In this context, the idea of adding shuttle bus services along these routes, operated by some sort of new, local public/private partnership and connecting to mass transit stations, became attractive as a way to quickly reduce a new wave of single-occupancy-vehicle gridlock.

For many years public transit authority services in many communities have been supplemented with transit options created using other resources, such as public-private transportation management association (TMA) partnerships.² The Watertown Transportation Task Force (then known as the Public Transit Task Force) initiated a Public Forum in June 2015 about transportation management associations and shuttle bus services in places like Watertown.

¹ These are zoning districts. AODD is the Arsenal Overlay Development District and RMUD is the Regional Mixed Used District, both on the Arsenal corridor; PSCD is the Pleasant Street Corridor District.

² See *TMA Handbook: A Guide to Successful Transportation Management Associations*, Center for Urban Transportation Research, 2001.

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It brought together about 100 attendees to hear from five Massachusetts TMA and shuttle service administrators.³

Since 2015 efforts have been underway in Watertown to create a local transportation management association with shuttle bus service on the aforementioned streets. The Watertown Transportation Task Force has advocated for this goal. A succession of public pronouncements by the Town's Department of Community Development and Planning (DCDP) and a succession of its consultants have held out hope that a shuttle program would begin operating by late 2016, or early 2017, or the spring of 2017, or July 2017, or the fall of 2017 or early spring 2018. As 2019 approaches, a Watertown TMA has been created, the Town has committed almost \$50,000 toward a pilot shuttle bus service on Pleasant Street now under discussion. In our view, the prospects for that pilot to result in a viable shuttle bus service on Pleasant Street any time soon is questionable. On Arsenal Street it appears very unlikely that three existing private shuttle routes will be consolidated under the TMA and open to the public.

The story of how Watertown got to this place is long and involved. We encourage you to follow this narrative and see for yourself how our community got to where we now find ourselves. The first part of this report reviews the treatment or absence of shuttle buses in Town planning documents and project approvals since approximately 2000. The second part reviews Town efforts to establish a TMA shuttle bus service on Arsenal Street or Pleasant Street. The last section offers analysis, conclusions and recommendations.

³ Videos of the Forum presentations are available via the WPTTF YouTube page: [youtube.com/channel/UCWsTjeX6jtryzobSfeDRbVg](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWsTjeX6jtryzobSfeDRbVg), at the following links:

[WPTTF TMA Forum part 1, Andrea Leary](#)

[Watertown TMA Forum part 2, Steve Magoon](#)

[Watertown TMA Forum, Part 3, Jim Gascoigne](#)

[Watertown WPTTF TMA Forum, Part 4, Monica Tibbits Nutt](#)

[Watertown WPTTF TMA Forum, Part 5, Allison Simmons](#)

[WPTTF Watertown TMA Forum, June 4, 2015, Part 6, Michelle Ciccolo](#)

[WPTTF Watertown TMA Forum, June 4, 2015, video Segment 7, Q&A](#)

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The Role or Absence of Shuttle Buses in Town Planning Documents and Project Approvals:

In the early 2000s the developer of the new Arsenal on the Charles office park established a shuttle bus to and from Harvard Square as part of a transportation demand management plan required by the Watertown Arsenal Development Corporation (for the Town) under a Land Disposition Agreement with the developer. It was available only to employees of the property tenants, not the general public.⁴

After an industrial facility on Pleasant Street was redeveloped into the first phase of Repton Place (196 of a planned 385 unit residential condominium), the Town imposed a six-month moratorium on development in the Pleasant Street corridor during which time the **Pleasant Street Corridor Concept Plan and Implementation Strategy** was prepared for the Town (November 2007). The Plan recommended changing the Watertown Zoning Ordinance by replacing the Pleasant Street Industrial zoning with a new mixed use zoning district within which the permit review process would be expedited. It also recommended that the Town allow bonuses for developments that achieve various “civic goals,” but none of the listed goals included transit improvements. The Plan modeled replacing existing uses with a mix of 764 residential units and 686,000 square feet of various commercial uses, but projected these changes would result in a net increase of only 262 trips. The Plan took note that corridor had “limited public transit service.” It said that better MBTA service on Pleasant Street “will be key to managing traffic,” but the only transit-related recommendation for priority implementation action was, “Advocate for improved transit service along river corridor.” No suggestion was made about the Town or the project developers augmenting MBTA service. (See [Appendix 1](#) for additional information about this Concept Plan.)

⁴ The first shuttle bus in Watertown was probably the “shopping shuttle” offered by the Senior Center, which reportedly began operation in 1991 or earlier.

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The Town followed through on the Concept Plan in 2008 by amending the Watertown Zoning Ordinance to create the mixed-use **Pleasant Street Corridor District (PSCD)**.⁵ No transportation demand management programs were required. The new zoning offered that, “Developments that encourage the use of alternative modes of transportation shall be eligible to receive a reduction of the required amount of automobile parking spaces. This credit may be achieved by demonstrating a reduced demand for automobile parking by the encouragement of cycling, walking, car sharing, and use of public transit.”

After adoption of the 2008 PSCD zoning, the Town approved the following projects on the Pleasant Street corridor *without* any requirement of TMA or shuttle participation⁶:

- Riverbend on the Charles, 270 Pleasant, 170 units (2011)
- Riverworks, 480-488 Pleasant St., 200,000 sf office space (2011)
- Bell Watertown, 100 Woodview Way, 155 Units (2012⁷)
- Riverpark Lofts, 60 Howard St., 65 units (2013)

The permit for Watertown Mews (1 Repton Circle & Pleasant Street, 206 units), approved in 2012, requires participation in the planning and implementation of a shuttle service to a “reasonable” and “proportionate” extent. (See permit language in [Appendix 2.](#))

Shuttle bus service was suggested in a limited way in the Town’s **2011 Strategic Framework for Economic Development**. That report identified “major gaps in transit service ... along Arsenal Street and Pleasant Street and access to commuter rail, especially at Waverly [commuter rail] Station.” It did not address shuttle service on Arsenal or Pleasant Street but suggested, “Small shuttle buses similar to those run by the Arsenal on the Charles could provide more direct access to Waverly [station] if demand is sufficient,” without suggesting the service

⁵ The 2008 PSCD zoning can be found in the Planning Board’s recommended 2015 amendments at https://www.watertown-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/16678/04-07-2015-Corridor-Zoning_2015_0318-docx?bidId=

⁶ Source: [Memorandum, June 19, 2018, from Laura Wiener, Senior Transportation Planner, to Town Council Committee on Economic Development and Planning and Steve Magoon, Director of Community Development and Planning/Assistant Town Manager.](#)

⁷ https://www.watertown-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/20092/6_Decision_Watham-StreetStanely-AvenueALTA-Bell-Properties and Doc 1624788 on Cert. of Title. 241676

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area for it. It also suggested, as a long term action, “to coordinate with private businesses on expanded, shared shuttle services.”

In December 2014 the Town Council approved the **Fiscal Year 2016 Budget Policy Guidelines** including: “Develop plans, including staffing needs, to initiate implementation of a local public transportation system in Watertown to supplement MBTA service, that will both mitigate traffic congestion from new developments as well as providing residents with alternatives to using private automobiles.” This guideline was ranked 5th out of 12 by Town Councilors, ahead of several other recommendations which have been fully achieved.

In the spring of 2015 the Town Council Committee on Economic Development and Planning passed a motion to ask the Council to instruct the Town Manager to hire a transportation planner for a period of one year. This recommendation was followed in December 2015 by a Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Policy Guideline to the Town Manager from the Council to “Enhance the capabilities of the Department of Community Development and Planning by adding resources to manage transportation and parking issues.”

The PSCD zoning was amended in 2015. The 2008 Zoning Ordinance amendment’s phrasing that encouraged the “use of public transit” as possible means of reducing parking demand⁸ was changed to “providing connections to public transit, on-site car sharing services, *participation in a Transportation Management Association or shuttle/transit service* [emphasis added], providing for infrastructure like bus stops onsite, etc.” Such programs were still not required on Pleasant Street by the Ordinance, but the 2015 amendment made it easier for special permits to be conditioned on participation in a shuttle.

Three projects were approved along Arsenal Street in 2014 and 2015 with a permit condition requiring some participation in a Watertown TMA shuttle program. (See permit language in [Appendix 2](#).) They are:

- Gables, 204 Arsenal St. (2014)
- Marriott Hotel, 570 Arsenal St. (2015)

⁸ Section 5.16(h)(3).

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- Linx, 480-490 Arsenal St. (2015)⁹

Following a more than two year process the Town adopted its **Comprehensive Plan** in June 2015. One of the implementation steps recommended by the Plan is, “Coordinate with private businesses and residential complexes, especially along Arsenal and Pleasant Streets, to *provide expanded, shared shuttle bus services* [emphasis added] to accommodate demand between business locations and key transit stops such as Harvard Square, Alewife, etc.” (See [Appendix 1](#) for additional information about Comprehensive Plan.)

Shortly after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, the permit for Elan Union Market (130 Arsenal St., 2015) was approved, conditioned on TMA shuttle participation in language similar to the Gables and Marriott permits. (See permit language in [Appendix 2](#).)

The Town approved a Master Plan Special Permit for changes to the athenahealth campus on Arsenal Street (Arsenal on The Charles office park) in July 2016 under the Zoning Ordinance’s **Arsenal Overlay Development District (AODD)**. The AODD had been revised by the Town at the request of athenahealth in June 2015. The permit required the property owner to perform an agreed Transportation Demand Management Program¹⁰ which said the following:

“Athena Arsenal, LLC will continue to operate and seek to expand its shuttle bus program to service additional MBTA subway and commuter rail stations based on an on-going assessment and analysis of commuting patterns of its employees ... as a benefit to Campus employees To the extent feasible and subject to insurance requirements, the shuttle service may be expanded to serve other nearby developments, with participants contributing to the overall cost to operate the shuttle service. ... Should the Route 128 Business Council or the Watertown TMA (when established) offer a shuttle service program for the area, Athena Arsenal, LLC will participate in the shuttle program as an adjunct to or in place of the current shuttle service to the extent that the service provides a similar level of benefit.”

The permit also required athenahealth to “participate in the formation of and continued participation in the Watertown Transportation Management Association (TMA), which will include shuttle service, including financial contributions in a proportionate share.”

⁹ With a cap on the financial contribution toward the TMA.

¹⁰ Dated 7 /1/16

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The extensive **Regional Mixed Use District (RMUD)** zoning amendment (a revised version of a proposal by Boylston Properties, developers of the Arsenal Yards project) was approved by the Town in March 2016¹¹ for the immediate purpose of creating a process for public review and approval of a private master plan for the redevelopment of the Arsenal Mall property (though the RMUD district also encompasses the Watertown Mall and other land along Arsenal Street). The purposes of the zoning include “[to] Encourage development that accommodates and promotes ... transit between the Arsenal Corridor and mass transit stops, [and] management of transportation demand to reduce automobile use.”¹² All applications for an RMUD Master Plan Special Permit (MPSP) must include a Transportation Demand Management Plan.¹³

On November 22, 2016, the Town Council approved their FY2018 Budget Policy Guidelines and ranked 3rd of 12 was “Implement the Watertown Transportation Management Association (TMA).”

The January 2017 MPSP approval for Arsenal Yards required participation in a TMA “which will include shuttle service” on “a proportionate basis consistent with other development projects in the area.” The Permit was later amended to say, “Any shuttle service will be coordinated with the TMA with the goal of reducing duplicative service along the corridor.”

In May 2017 the Town adopted General Ordinance chapter 72, An Ordinance Establishing Requirements for Transportation Demand Management Plans¹⁴ with the goal of reducing single occupancy vehicle trips. The Ordinance and its implementing regulations apply only to certain large new construction or additions, which are required to create their own plan to use TDM measures approved by the Town. One of the measures rated most highly by the Regulations is providing shuttle bus service “either as part of the TMA service or separate, if appropriate.”

¹¹ Ordinance section 5.18.

¹² Section 5.18(a) (8).

¹³ Section 5.18(h) (2) (H).

¹⁴ <https://www.ci.watertown.ma.us/DocumentCenter/View/22201/2017-05-01-TDM-Ordinance-and-Reg>

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In that same month the Town Manager presented a Fiscal Year 2017 budget which included funding for the position of Transportation Planner. In March 2018 that position was filled.

The following two additional Pleasant Street developments were approved in 2017-18, both requiring participation in the Watertown TMA. (See permit language in [Appendix 2](#).)

- Water Mills at Bridge Point, 330-350 Pleasant St. (2017). Note that the permit requires participation in the TMA limited to only \$2,995 annually.
- Amstel Heritage, 385-393 Pleasant St. (2018) (This project was approved after the 2017 Town approval of a new General Ordinance requiring Transportation Demand Management Plans, mentioned below).

There were then three Pleasant Street developments required to participate in the TMA shuttle service. (As of the time of writing this report, the Mews is occupied and Water Mills and Amstel Heritage are expected to be occupied within the next 1-2 years.)

On November 28, 2017, the Town Council approved their FY2019 Budget Policy Guidelines and ranked 6th of 15 was “Work with the Watertown Transportation Management Association (TMA), including the pilot shuttle bus program.” This guideline was ranked by councilors ahead of several other priorities, several of which have been fully achieved.

On November 11, the Town Council adopted the FY2020 Budget Policy Guidelines to include, “Work with the Watertown Transportation Management Association to identify sustainable sources of funding for the pilot shuttle bus program.” The Town Council is expected to rank this guideline in January 2019.

Town Efforts to Establish a TMA and Shuttle Bus Service

In September 2015 Assistant Town Manager Steve Magoon reported to the Watertown Town Council that the Town had hired the 128 Business Council to help develop a TMA, potentially including shuttle service.

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In February 2016, Patrick Sullivan, an employee of 128 Business Council, told the Town Council Ad Hoc Committee on Transportation that the timeline for setting up the TMA called for starting the first shuttle by late 2016 or early 2017. He projected that TMA membership dues collection would begin in June or July 2016. He confirmed that use of the shuttle by Watertown residents would be as much a priority as use of the shuttle by large employers. The Committee heard from Mr. Magoon and Mr. Sullivan again in June and July 2016. Mr. Sullivan reported the 128 Business Council had developed draft shuttle routes to Harvard Square and a draft budget, with each shuttle route costing about \$200,000 annually. Mr. Magoon said property owner-members of the TMA would pay the vast majority of the cost, but a financial contribution by the Town would be needed.

The 128 Business Council reported at a September 2016 meeting of the Transportation Committee that there had been limited progress in forming the TMA due in part to a staff change at the 128 Business Council. They still needed to meet with representatives of the businesses and residential developments on Arsenal and Pleasant Streets and the Town to determine the structure of the TMA, costs for becoming a member of the TMA, the shuttle service routes, and the possible integration of existing shuttle services (such as the athenahealth shuttle) with a TMA shuttle. The new goal for the start of shuttle service was the spring of 2017.

Allison Simmons was introduced at the January 2017 meeting of the Transportation Committee as the new 128 Business Council staff member working on a Watertown TMA. She downplayed the necessity for a shuttle service and said that one possible alternative would be the consolidation of the shuttles operated by athenahealth and planned the Linx project. She reported that in November, the seven developers whose permits include a requirement to participate and fund a TMA and shuttle services and other property owners met to plan the establishment of a TMA corporation. The meeting participants tentatively approved a total of \$30,000 of an estimated one-year \$150,000 budget to run the TMA operations other than a shuttle service. She projected formal establishment of the Watertown TMA would happen between April and July 2017. The Committee asked for Mr. Magoon or the consultant to propose the goals, timeline, and budget for starting the Watertown TMA within six months. According to

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WatertownMANews.com, the consultant said shuttles would not start until the fall of 2017 at the earliest.

Steve Magoon announced at the March 2017 meeting of the Transportation Committee that the Town had ended its contract with the 128 Business Council but Allison Simmons (as Ease Consult) remained as the consultant. Ms. Simmons reported to the Committee that the plan is as follows:

- The TMA is to be incorporated as a non-profit tax exempt organization.
- Its annual budget will be \$158,000, not including a shuttle.
- The TMA members will pay dues based on square footage for commercial developments, the number of units for residential developments, and number of residents for municipal members. (A dues schedule was presented).
- The TMA will have 9 members who have a permit obligation to participate in the TMA (Permit Members), who will pay a total of \$68,000 in annual dues, 6 other parties whose permits do not require participation (Non-Permit Members) are interested in membership, some of which have verbally committed to \$38,000 in dues. The Town of Watertown is to be a member paying annual dues of \$5,000.
- There is a proposal for the 9 Permit Members to pay an additional assessment totaling \$53,664, so she estimated that about 75% of the first-year budget will be available. The budget shortfall would be made up by recruiting more members.
- The separate cost of shuttle service would be shared equally by those who used it.
- The target date for launching the Watertown TMA was then still July 2017.
- If there is to be a shuttle service, Arsenal and Pleasant Streets are the first two corridors that would have it, running during the morning and evening commute.
- She recommended exploring consolidation of the shuttle services operated on Arsenal Street by Athenahealth and the Marriott, and potentially by Linx.

Allison Simmons reported to the May 2017 meeting of the Transportation Committee that the Town's attorney approved draft by-laws of the TMA corporation. A three-year budget was being finalized. Because the TMA's budget and programming would be determined by the board and the Town had only one seat on the board, there was no mechanism built into the corporate structure whereby the Town could require the TMA to budget for and operate shuttle buses.

Ms. Simmons had been an invited speaker at the 2015 TMA forum when she worked for the Allston-Brighton TMA. At that forum, she spoke about how many TMA's never run shuttles

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and how in all of her professional life, she had never worked for a TMA with shuttle service. Speaking of the Allston-Brighton experience, she said that it had been very difficult to convince member/participants like WGBH and Boston University to come together on a shuttle service because they each already had their own shuttle systems in place by the time the TMA was formed. She also spoke to the importance of strong municipal policies to guide TMA’s towards certain practices like shuttles within her presentation’s ‘Six key things for a successful TMA’.

By the August 2017 Committee meeting, Ms. Simmons reported the WTMA non-profit corporation had been created. The TMA Board approved a budget for year one of \$167,800, for year two at \$156,650 and for year three at \$175,450. The budget included \$25,000 for a shuttle pilot program, likely on Pleasant Street.¹⁵ The plan would be to fund the pilot for three months and if successful, the remaining 9 months would be funded by the participating commercial or residential businesses. Watertown residents not affiliated with a participating funder would be able to use the shuttle at a fee that had yet to be determined. Ms. Simmons projected the shuttle could be operating by the end of the fall of 2017 or early spring 2018. The Board chose TransAction as manager. The following assessments were approved by the Board for its members:

<u>Member</u>	<u>Year One/ \$20</u>	<u>Year Two/ \$10</u>	<u>Year Three/ \$10</u>
Boylston Properties--Marriott Residence Inn	\$2,120.00	\$1,060.00	\$1,060.00
Boylston Properties--The Linx	\$3,700.00	\$1,850.00	\$1,850.00
Boylston Properties--Arsenal Project	\$21,700.00	\$10,850.00	\$10,850.00
Athena Health	\$23,080.00	\$11,540.00	\$11,540.00
Gables Residential	\$5,940.00	\$2,970.00	\$2,970.00
Elan Watertown	\$5,640.00	\$2,820.00	\$2,820.00
Watertown Mews	\$4,120.00	\$2,060.00	\$2,060.00
Cresset/WS Development	\$620.00	\$310.00	\$310.00
World Realty Development	\$1,980.00	\$990.00	\$990.00
	\$ 68,900.00	\$ 34,450.00	\$ 34,450.00

¹⁵ Editorial Note: prior estimates for running one shuttle route to Harvard Square at morning and evening rush hours for a year were about \$200,000.

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In October 2017, instead of Allison Simmons, Michelle Brooks of TransAction Associates updated the Transportation Committee on the TMA status. She reported “good conversations” with athenahealth, Tufts, Western Properties and the Gables, and that conversations with the City of Newton and Newton businesses were ongoing and with a high likelihood of their joining the TMA. Ms. Brooks explained that an assessment of a Pleasant St. pilot shuttle program was underway, including identifying needs and demand for service, conducting surveys and zip code analysis, and reviewing future hiring plans. Notably, she said she saw it essential for committed partners to plan for 6 months or a full year in order for the pilot program to be successful.

In 2018, the Town Council President dissolved the Transportation Committee and assigned its responsibilities to the Council's Committee on Economic Development and Planning.

Michelle Brooks (TransAction Associates) reported to the Economic Development and Planning Committee in April 2018 that TMA activities as of then had been primarily data collection and marketing outreach. She said that three committed partners were required to make a one-year shuttle pilot program work, at a cost of about \$150,000, and at that time there was only one committed party. Ms. Brooks said she recommended against starting a shuttle without solid financial backing. No businesses were willing to commit to a shuttle connection between Pleasant St. businesses and the Red Line via Watertown Square, so the idea was tabled at that time.

At the June 2018 Economic Development and Planning (EDP) Committee meeting, Laura Wiener, the Town's new Senior Transportation Planner, reported that only three Pleasant St. developments are required by their Special Permits to participate in funding shuttle service, and that of these only one, Watertown Mews, is occupied; the other two — Amstel Heritage and Water Mills — are expected to be occupied within the next 1-2 years. Seven other developments were permitted on Pleasant St. without any requirement to participate in a TMA shuttle (Bell Watertown, Riverbend on the Charles, Riverbank Lofts, Repton Place Condos, Riverpark Lofts, Riverworks, and Centerpoint, Waltham). She invited these potential Pleasant St. corridor shuttle

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participants to a June 14 meeting to assess interest, and only four attended. The TMA estimates \$150,000 is needed for the first year shuttle operation. Ms. Wiener reported that TMA staff is looking for sources of funds, including \$25,000 from the TMA budget, Town in-kind contribution of a vehicle and fuel, and funding from the Commonwealth Transportation Infrastructure Fund.¹⁶ She said at least another \$50,000 would still be needed to fund a one-year pilot. The TMA's next step, she said, is to develop a survey for prospective participants and ask the owners to help distribute it.

At the request of Town Manager Michael Driscoll, in July 2018 the Town Council asked its EDP Committee to consider a request from Ms. Weiner to discuss the best use of about \$47,000 the Town would receive from the Transportation Infrastructure Fund.

In August 2018, the Town Council unanimously approved the recommendation of the Economic Development and Planning Committee to appropriate the \$46,912 from the Transportation Infrastructure Fund to the Watertown TMA to partially fund the Pleasant St. shuttle bus pilot program. The Council vote did not establish any conditions for the appropriation.

In a November 8, 2018, memo to the Town Council, Ms. Weiner reported that there were not yet enough TMA partners to support successful shuttle operation on Pleasant Street, that (as noted above) the only occupied development required to support a shuttle on Pleasant Street was Watertown Mews; three other property owners — Centerpoint (in Waltham), Bell Watertown, and “possibly” Repton Place — have expressed an interest but have not committed to fund a shuttle. She reported, “The multiple points of origin and destination create a complicated situation with no easy solution.”

The agenda for the Economic Development and Planning Committee's January 28, 2019, meeting includes “Obtain a Review and Update on the Status of the Transportation Management Association.”

¹⁶ Funded by a state tax of ten cents per Uber or Lyft ride originating in the Town, to be used for transportation-related projects to offset the impact of the vehicle trips

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Analysis, Conclusions, Recommendations:

Beginning in 2008 official Town planning efforts and zoning amendments encouraged more and speedier development on the Pleasant Street and Arsenal Street corridors but generally did not recommend or require a local transit option such as shuttle buses to reduce vehicle trips to and from the developments. Instead, the Town's plans relied on advocating for better MBTA service as an ongoing or long term implementation action. Even before the crisis condition of the MBTA system was generally recognized in 2015, reliance on advocacy for better MBTA service as a solution to immediate, short term and medium term transportation problems on the Arsenal and Pleasant Street corridors was unrealistic. Today, no such recommendation would be taken seriously as anywhere near sufficient.¹⁷ No one doubts that the development process for the Pleasant Street and Arsenal Street projects before about 2012 included traffic studies and requirements to address road/intersection conditions, parking and such. At issue is whether the Town planning documents and the approval process up to that time realistically tried to reduce the number of average daily trips to/from the development sites and, if they did try, what those plans and permits proposed.

Developments, particularly along Pleasant Street, were given permits between 2008 and 2012 without requiring that they provide their own shuttle service or share financially in a joint shuttle service under a structure like a TMA. The one exception to this was redevelopment of the last part of the Arsenal under WADC auspices, in which the transportation demand management plan under the development agreements between the Town and the developer included a shuttle bus for that development. It was only starting in 2012 that TMA financial participation requirements were eventually included in permits.

The post-2012 permits which required TMA participation included, as a condition to the issuance of those permit, language such as, "*Participate in the formation of a transportation management association, which would include shuttle service, including financial contributions*

¹⁷ This report only addresses developments in Watertown. The inadequacy of MBTA bus service on these corridors in Watertown is significantly affected by developments beyond Town lines, such as the New Balance and Boston Landing complex, the large Harvard Science Complex under construction as part of the university's Allston Master Plan, 530 Western Ave. apartments, and other Western Avenue developments.

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in a proportionate share.” It is our understanding that this type of condition requires that: the permit-holder to join a TMA which offers shuttle service; the permit holder’s participation in that TMA consist of ongoing financial support for it all of its programs — including the TMA’s shuttle service; and the permit holder’s financial contribution would be “proportionate.” Because this TMA condition is intended as mitigation of the transportation impacts of the development, we understand “proportionate” in this context to mean each permit holder’s payments to the TMA would be in proportion to the intensity of impact of the development as compared to the impact of the developments of the other TMA members who are required by the Town to join the TMA (using a reasonable measure of intensity such as square feet of office space or number of residents). It is implied in this type of permit condition that the TMA’s budget must be able to sustain operation of a shuttle program: if the budget cannot sustain shuttle operations, then the TMA cannot be classified as one “*which would include shuttle service,*” and the condition would not be satisfied. Obviously, the more participants there are in the TMA (or at least in its shuttle program), the smaller the proportionate share of any one member may be, but this permit condition need not be read as in any way exempting the permit-holder by putting a cap on their financial contributions if too few voluntary participants sign on.

The consultants who’ve been engaged by the Town or the TMA to assist in forming the TMA and starting its programs, including the shuttle service, have taken the approach that not only is it better policy for a shuttle program to grow organically out of the voluntary participation of the TMA members, but also that (i) the TMA budget is not required to include funding for a viable shuttle service on either corridor, and (ii) the TMA members who hold permits requiring participation in the TMA shuttle should not be required to either collectively fund a viable shuttle service on either corridor or to consolidate (under the TMA) any shuttle service they now operate independently.

In this context, it defeats the primary purpose of the TMA shuttle when properties on a corridor operate their own shuttle service independently of the TMA, even if the independent properties contribute proportionately to the TMA shuttle budget. The primary purpose of the TMA shuttle is to reduce the number of vehicles on the corridor. While each independent shuttle

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may assist with this goal, that assistance is not as efficient in achieving the goal, and not as efficient financially, as a single consolidated TMA shuttle operation. Worse, if the properties operating independent shuttles do not contribute proportionately to the TMA shuttle budget, they actively harm the TMA shuttle. Once a property owner chooses to operate an independent shuttle, it likely becomes harder to convince that owner to voluntarily consolidate its shuttle within the TMA. On the Arsenal corridor, the Arsenal on the Charles (athenahealth), Linx and Marriott already have independent shuttles each going to Harvard Square. The Arsenal Yards project is underway. It is probable that the window of opportunity for the creation of a consolidated shuttle services on Arsenal Street is closing fast. Construction of two large developments on Pleasant Street is underway and will see completion and occupancy in the near future. Delay in creation of a consolidated TMA shuttle on Pleasant Street also may lead owners to create multiple independent shuttles.

Without enforcement of Town mandates for adequate financial support for a TMA shuttle, the shuttle effort is dependent on the voluntary participation by property owners and operators. To date, there has not been enough voluntary contribution to fund a viable shuttle service on Pleasant Street or any voluntary unification of the independent shuttle services operated on Arsenal Street. The duration of the proposed pilot program has not been made clear but a pilot of only six months may not be long enough to serve as a proof of concept. The commitment of one year's Commonwealth Transportation Infrastructure Fund monies has been made without conditioning the release of those monies on the TMA putting in place any policies or procedures or achieving any performance goals. It is likely that operation of a sustainable Pleasant Street TMA shuttle will require either stronger enforcement of permit conditions, or significantly more time for property owners and operators to recognize that it is in their self interest to join in and provide sufficient stable financial support, or will require substantially more financial commitment from the Town.

The permit holders which are required to proportionately fund the TMA shuttle service are not being required to fund the \$150,000 cost of one year of shuttle operation, but rather the

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current Town policy expects these permit holders to collectively fund 17% of that cost,¹⁸ while the Town is expected to fund (in kind or in cash) 50% of the cost (\$75,000), and funding for the remaining 33% of the cost has not yet been identified.

It is reasonable to conclude that until a source has committed to fund the \$50,000 shortfall for a Pleasant Street shuttle, it is questionable whether the shuttle will be able to operate. If that funding source is to be the two unoccupied Pleasant Street projects which are required to fund a shuttle, the funding gap won't be filled until those projects are occupied (projected to happen in a year or two).

If the Town believes that the permit conditions requiring proportionate financial participation in a TMA shuttle are enforceable to fund shuttle operations on the two corridors, the Town should enforce those conditions to establish operating shuttle service. It should do so regardless of the number of committed entities and regardless of changes in property ownership or an owner's internal corporate changes. If the Town does not believe it has the authority to enforce those permit conditions to require adequate shuttle funding or consolidated shuttle operations, or chooses not to enforce those conditions in that way, then the Town should not commit funds to any TMA shuttle program until certain steps are taken. A financial analysis should be prepared to realistically forecast (1) the total budget for shuttle operations on both corridors for multiple (e.g., five) years, (2) the timing and amounts of payments required under each conditional permits and the amounts, if any, committed to shuttle participation by any other developments, and (3) the shortfall between the budget and the forecasted payments. The Town should then decide whether, and under what conditions, it would commit to making up that shortfall. If the Town is unwilling to do this, or determines that it cannot make such a financial commitment without reducing developers' and employers' incentive to voluntarily underwrite a shuttle program, then the Town should reset public expectations as to when shuttle buses might begin operations on these two corridors.

The Town may not believe that it has the authority to enforce the conditions to fund a shuttle service despite a well-intentioned effort to require it in the language of some permits. If

¹⁸ It is not clear from the public records available to us where the \$25,000 allotted by the TMA budget is coming from – whether it is to come from the dues of all TMA members, from the three Pleasant St. projects with shuttle funding requirements, or from the Mews exclusively.

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this is the case, the Town should take steps to ameliorate the situation. If special permits have been granted with inadequate language, the Town should not abandon the requirement of shuttle service until every legal means have been exhausted to remedy the shortcomings of any ambiguity in the permit language. Further, the Town should develop more appropriate and authoritative language to require future developments to participate in and adequately fund consolidated TMA shuttle operations. This language should be used in all new special permits in the AODD, RMUD, PSCD and anywhere else the Town determines TMA shuttle service is appropriate. If there is any possibility that existing permits allow development owners to be excused from full permit compliance if the TMA shuttle does not stop at their front door or does not offer the frequency of service (so-called "headway") they ideally want, the new permit language should expressly state that compliance is not excused or reduced depending on the location of stops or headway.

Transportation demand management generally and shuttle service particularly is meant to reduce significant harm to the public. The increase in traffic congestion causes economic harm to our Town and to the people trying to travel on our roads, whether in cars or by any other mode. It harms the quality of life of everyone who lives and works here. The Town's concerns of excessive single occupancy vehicle (SOV) trips from a site are not a matter of mere convenience for Watertown commuters. Reducing the number of cars on our roads is necessary to protect air quality for the health and well-being of residents and employees, to protect the safety of cyclists and pedestrians, and to do our part against climate change. Having recognized the importance of this issue in the intent of the Town's policies and permits, no one should be asked to endure dire consequences simply because of a single line of improperly-worded text.

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APPENDIX 1, Excerpt from Town Plans

Pleasant Street Corridor Concept Plan and Implementation Strategy, November 2007

After a cold storage facility was redeveloped into Repton Place, a 385-unit residential condominium, the Town imposed a six-month moratorium on development in the Pleasant Street corridor during which time the Pleasant Street Corridor Concept Plan and Implementation Strategy was prepared for the Town (November 2007). The goals recommended by the Plan included defining a mixed use character for the area to replace underutilized industrial properties, managing traffic impacts and maintaining and enhancing the Town tax base. The fiscal impact analysis in the Plan Traffic reported, “approximately 50 acres of development were identified as potential for redevelopment over time The tax assessment today on these properties is \$306,000, and these uses generate about 800.” The Plan modeled replacing existing uses with a mix of 764 residential units and 686,000 square feet of various commercial uses, and projected these changes would result in a total 1,062 pm peak trips; a net increase of only 262 trips. The Plan took note that corridor had “limited public transit service”: “The Pleasant Street Corridor lacks direct proximity to any regional highway system. ... Local access from Main Street/Route 20 to the parallel Pleasant Street is difficult since there are limited cross streets..... The MBTA Route 70/70A bus on Main Street ... lies fairly close - within a five to ten minute walk of Pleasant Street – but becomes increasingly hard to access on foot as one moves west, especially between Bridge and Seyon Street. The MBTA #558 has multiple stops along Pleasant Street before turning onto Bridge Street and continuing to Newton Corner where it becomes an express bus to Boston, but has only three peak hour buses per day.”

The first recommended priority action for implementation of the Concept Plan was to update the Watertown Zoning Ordinance by replacing the Industrial zoning with a new mixed use zoning district within which the permit review process would be expedited. It also recommended that the Town allow bonuses for developments that achieve various “civic goals,” but none of the listed goals included transit improvements. Nevertheless, the report did said, “As the number of jobs and residents in the Corridor grows over time, better MBTA service on Pleasant Street will be key to managing traffic. Improvements might involve more frequent

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service on the existing #558 Express Bus Route, but could also involve a line that extends down either Pleasant Street or California Street or both. This line would connect the underserved areas along Pleasant Street and in Nonantum to Watertown Square, where other transit connections can be made.” Thus, the sixth recommendation for priority implementation action was “Advocate for improved transit service along river corridor.”

Comprehensive Plan, adopted June 23, 2015¹⁹

The Comprehensive Plan was created as “a policy guide and provides a framework for future land use decision-making and the physical development of the municipality.”²⁰ The Plan addresses transportation among many other topics. The Plan seems to suggest that public transit is not to be seen as a mode of transportation favored by those who have other choices, when it says, “The availability of public transit provides greater mobility to populations that do not have access to a private automobile such as low income, disabled community, young adults, and the elderly. The MBTA is responsible for public transportation services within the region.” It recognizes that transportation generally, including public transit, and economic development impact each other: “MBTA bus routes ... capacity issues ... has raised concerns regarding the ability to serve and support future economic development efforts ongoing in the Pleasant Street and Arsenal Street corridors”; and “If not planned for correctly, future redevelopment or development in Watertown could have a negative impact on the Town’s transportation system.” The goals of the Plan include expansion of mass transit and promoting “alternative transportation options in town by further improving intermodal access and connections.” One of the “ongoing” implementations steps recommended is, “Coordinate with private businesses and residential complexes, especially along Arsenal and Pleasant Streets, to provide expanded, shared shuttle bus services to accommodate demand between business locations and key transit stops such as Harvard Square, Alewife, etc.” The Plan also recommends as “essential” the creation of a comprehensive transportation plan.

¹⁹ http://projects.vhb.com/watertowncompplan/pdf/Watertown%20Comp%20Plan_FINAL_04-14-15_small.pdf

²⁰ <http://projects.vhb.com/watertowncompplan/>

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APPENDIX 2, PERMIT CONDITIONS

Watertown Mews, Repton Circle (2012): ²¹

One of the Zoning Board of Appeals' finding for the permit included, "Petitioner agreed to participate in the development and support of a potential shuttle service."

When requested by DCDP staff, Petitioner will participate to a reasonable extent in light of its proportionate use of such shuttle with other private and public stakeholders in the planning and implementation of a potential shuttle bus service along the Pleasant Street corridor.

Gables, 204 Arsenal St. (2014)²²

Participate in the formation of and participation in a Transportation Management Association, which would include shuttle service serving the corridor, including financial contributions in a proportionate share.

Marriott Hotel, 570 Arsenal St. (2015)²³

Participate in the formation of a Transportation Management Association, which would include shuttle service serving the corridor, including financial contributions in a proportionate share.

Linx, 480-490 Arsenal St. (2015)²⁴

The petitioner agrees to participate in the formation of and continued participation in a Transportation Management Association (TMA), which would include shuttle service serving the corridor, including financial contributions in a proportionate share. The petitioner has agreed to support the TMA through annual funding in an amount not to exceed \$50,000.

Elan Union Market, 130 Arsenal St. (2015)²⁵

²¹ https://www.watertown-ma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/4587/Repton-Phase-II_PB_Report_FINAL , Bd. of Appeals Decision at Middlesex So. Registry of Deeds Book 61068-Page 135.

²²Decision at Middlesex So. Registry of Deeds Book 64357- Page 516, 2014

²³ Decision at Middlesex So. Registry of Deeds Book 65145- Page 350, recorded 2015

²⁴ Decision at Middlesex So. Registry of Deeds Book 71544- Page 323, 2015

²⁵ Decision at Middlesex So. Registry of Deeds Book 66476- Page 509, 2015

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In addition to the Transportation Improvement Program, the petitioner agrees to participate in the formation of and continued participation in a Transportation Management Association (TMA), which would include shuttle service serving the corridor, including financial contributions in a proportionate share.

Arsenal Yards, Harvard Vanguard, former Arsenal Mall, and Miller Alehouse properties, 2017²⁶

Transportation Management Association (TMA) - The Petitioner agrees to participate in the formation of and continued participation in a Watertown Transportation Management Association (TMA), which will include shuttle service, including financial contributions in a proportionate share.

This was amended, 2017,²⁷ to add:

Shuttle Service/TMA: Any shuttle service will be coordinated with the TMA with the goal of reducing duplicative service along the corridor.

Site Plan approval, 2018, contained the same language.²⁸

Control plans for the Arsenal Yards MPSP include the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program as amended on 12/9/16²⁹ which states: “The Arsenal Project, the Owners will commit to the following measures:... Join the Watertown TMA” “The Owners will participate in the establishment of a TMA for Watertown, including contributing monies to the TMA on a proportionate basis consistent with other development projects in the area. Services that the TMA may provide include ... Shuttle Service -- the TMA will assess area shuttle service with its members with the goal of providing connection to area transit stops.”

²⁶ MPSP Decision at Middlesex So. Registry of Deeds Book 69000- Page 541 1/11/2017, Site Plan Bk 69462-P 203 6-2017, Bk 69732- P 491 site Plan 8-2017, Bk 70329-P 317 MPSP Amendment Dec. 2017, Bk 71347-P 269 Site Plan approval 6-2018, BK 71779-548 Site Pl app 10-2018.

²⁷ MPSP 12-2017 Amendment Decision at Middlesex So. Registry of Deeds Book 70329- Page 317

²⁸ Decision at Middlesex So. Registry of Deeds Book 71347- Page 269

²⁹ https://www.ci.watertown.ma.us/DocumentCenter/View/21168/Updated-TDM-measures_2016_1209

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Water Mills at Bridge Point, 330-350 Pleasant St. (2017)³⁰

Transportation Management Association (TMA) - The Petitioner agrees to participate in the formation of and continued participation in a Watertown Transportation Management Association (TMA), which will include shuttle service, including financial contributions in a proportionate share, not to exceed \$32,500 per year.

The Water Mills permit conditions are subject to a 1/5/2017 letter from the Petitioner's attorney to the Town Engineer, which includes the following:

- (a) Payment of the fee to the Transportation Management Association (TMA) for Watertown not to exceed the sum of \$2,995 per year.

Amstel Heritage, 385-393 Pleasant St. (2018)³¹

Control Plans include Transportation Demand Management Program (TDM), 10/4/2017, which states:

“A preliminary list of potential TDM program elements *may* include the following, subject to refinement of the development program and further evaluation by the Proponent and Town:

- Watertown Transportation Management Association (TMA) – 2 Points. The Proponent agrees to participate in the formation and maintenance of a Watertown Transportation Management Association (TMA), including financial contributions *in a proportionate share for both TMA membership and provision of on-going services, including shuttle service* along the Pleasant Street corridor. [Emphasis added]

A letter from the Petitioner's attorney to the Town Superintendent of Public Works and Town Engineer, 12/7/2017, affirms that the TDM program will include that financial contribution.

Conditions include:

³⁰ Decision at Middlesex So. Registry of Deeds Book 69015- Page 001, 2017

³¹ Decision at Middlesex So. Registry of Deeds Book 70954-Page 341, 2018

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Transportation Management Association: The Petitioner shall participate financially in the formation and support of the Watertown Transportation Management Association in a proportionate share. Such financial contributions shall include support of a TMA-provided shuttle along the corridor.

Shuttle: Any Petitioner-provided shuttle service shall be coordinated with the Transportation Management Association, with the goal of reducing duplicative service along the corridor.

Transportation Demand Management and TMA: The Applicant proposes a TDM program that complies with the recently adopted Town Ordinance No. 31 (*An Ordinance Establishing Requirements for Transportation Demand Management Plans, Watertown City Council dated May 9, 2017*) to meet or exceed a minimum of 14 points based on the Towns point system and 20% reduction in single occupant vehicle (SOV) use over time. The Proponent agrees to participate in the formation and maintenance of a Watertown Transportation Management Association (TMA), including financial contributions in a proportionate share for both TMA membership and provision of on-going services, including shuttle service along the Pleasant Street corridor. Specific TDM program elements are identified in the October 4, 2017 TDM program.