

West Newton

Dangerous interactions between congested vehicle traffic and pedestrians are common throughout West Newton. Additionally, many pedestrians choose their own crossings rather than using the designated crosswalks and walking lights. Other opportunities West Newton presents are improved accessibility to the commuter rail station, implementation of better bus shelters and bike racks, and the implementation of new crosswalks that could inform drivers where pedestrians are likely to cross. These problems and opportunities occur throughout this area including at each intersection of interest.

We focused on four streets that intersect with Washington Street. In this section, we discuss the areas for improvement as well as potential solutions. Below is a map detailing where areas for improvement exist in West Newton.

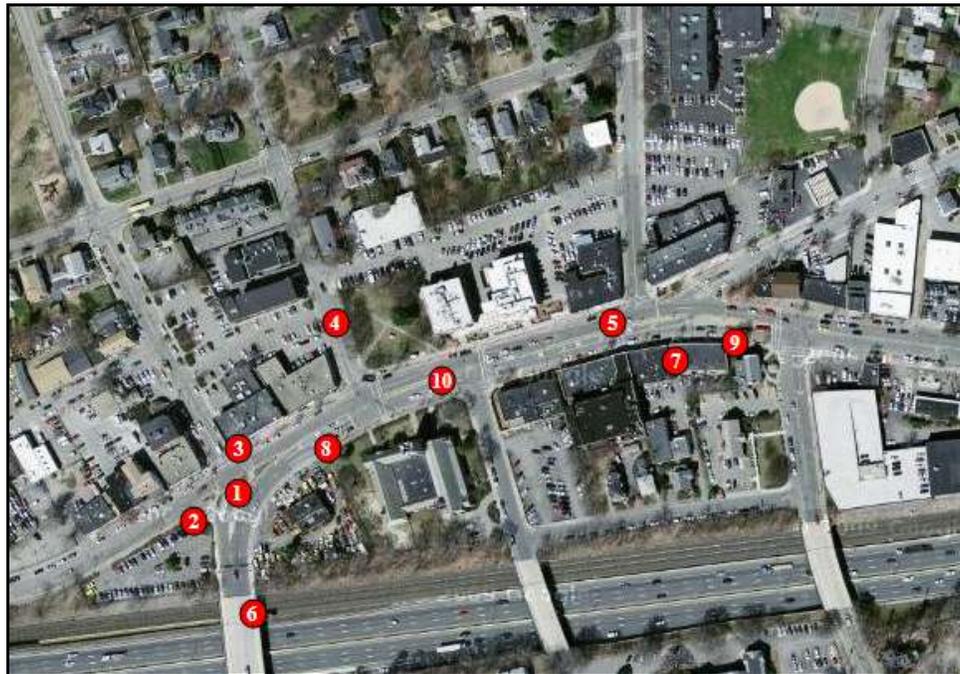


Figure 1: West Newton Problems and Opportunities Map

At the intersection of Elm Street and Washington Street:

- 1. Confusing Crosswalk Design:** The crosswalks at this intersection do not represent the paths pedestrians normally take and are not in the safest place for crossing through this area, as shown in Figure 9.

Recommendation: Implement a new crosswalk. We recommend implementing a new crosswalk across from Elm Street at the north side of the intersection with

Washington Street. This was a common path along one lane of traffic and would provide a safe place to cross.



Figure 2: Potential New Crosswalk Location

- 2. Walking Light Not Visible:** As shown in Figure 10, the walking light is turned away from the crosswalk, making it impossible for a pedestrian to determine when the light indicates it is safe to cross.



Figure 3: Walking Light Not Visible

Recommendation: Rotate the walking light. We recommend rotating the walking light back to facing the crosswalk to encourage pedestrians to use this facility.

- 3. Broken Walking Button:** The button on the eastern corner of Washington Street and Elm Street near Boston Sports Club does not change the walking light.

Recommendation: Fix the walking light. We recommend fixing this mechanism to encourage pedestrians to use this facility.

At the intersection of Cherry Street and Washington Street:

- 4. Opportunity for a New Crosswalk:** Part of Cherry Street connects a parking lot to a small pedestrian park. During our morning observations, we noticed more people crossing at this part of Cherry Street than at the intersection itself.

Recommendation: Implement a crosswalk. We recommend implementing a crosswalk between these two locations to inform vehicles that pedestrians are likely to cross here, creating a safer environment for both pedestrians and vehicles.

At the intersection of Waltham Street and Washington Street:

- 5. Poor Location of Crosswalk:** The crosswalk across Washington Street at this intersection is poorly located. Its current location possesses dangers from rights-on-red and also presents a long crosswalk that possesses heavy traffic congestion, causing vehicles to backup onto it.

Recommendation: Move the crosswalk. Moving the crosswalk across Washington Street to the other side of Waltham Street will allow pedestrians to cross through a median already implemented, reducing the time spent where pedestrians are interacting with vehicles. This will also remove the dangers of vehicles taking rights-on-red onto Washington Street because rights-on-red are already prohibited on Watertown Street.

Outside these four intersections:

- 6. Inaccessible Commuter Rail Platform:** There are three commuter rail stops in Newton, none of which are handicap-accessible. Figure 11 shows the West Newton platform, which only has stairs leading down to it. Since the ADA requires that all public facilities be accessible to all persons, this portrays Newton in a bad light. Therefore, it is important to address this issue.

Recommendation: Construct a ramp to the Commuter Rail platform. We recommend that implementing a ramp at the stop in West Newton will make

Newton more accommodating to all persons. This ramp needs further planning and MBTA involvement and funding.



Figure 4: Inaccessible Commuter Rail Station

- 7. Hidden Pedestrian Pathway:** Currently, most pedestrians access the shops along Spencer Street by traveling down Chestnut Street to Spencer Street. However, there is a public alleyway connecting these two areas from Washington Street to Spencer Street directly.

Recommendation: Make alleyway more appealing to pedestrians. We recommend making this alleyway more aesthetically pleasing and noticeable will encourage its use, shortening the path pedestrians take and at the same time further removing them from the roadways, thereby increasing safety.

- 8. Sidewalks in Poor Condition:** The sidewalks in West Newton are generally in good condition; however, some areas feature cracked and broken sidewalks, as shown in Figure 12, creating tripping hazards that are particularly dangerous to the elderly and the disabled. At the same time, many sidewalks are lined with brick buffers and brick curb cuts.



Figure 5: Cracked Sidewalk (left); Poorly maintained brick (right)

Recommendation: Repair or replace sidewalks: We recommend repairing or replacing these sidewalks, which will provide more even surfaces for pedestrian travel. We also recommend repairing brick surfaces over time as the brick degrades with a cheaper material known as pressed concrete. This will provide a more even surface while at the same time provide a similar aesthetic appeal. The ADA advises against any uneven surface including brick and suggests replacements and repairs to challenges such as these.

- 9. Lack of a Proper Bus Stop:** This bus stop lacked a full shelter and bike racks, making this facility less appealing, as displayed in Figure 13.

Recommendation: Implement full bus shelters: We recommend making bus stops more appealing to pedestrians and bicyclists through implementing full bus shelters and bike racks throughout Newton.



Figure 6: Bus Stop

10. Traffic Congestion: Due to five signals on a quarter mile stretch of Washington Street, there is heavy traffic congestion in this area, causing motorists to stop in crosswalks deterring many pedestrians from using this facility. This forces pedestrians to walk around vehicles presenting dangerous situations because drivers have reduced visibility of pedestrians in between or behind vehicles.

Recommendation: Retime the traffic signals: We recommend retiming the traffic signals along Washington Street to allow better traffic flow. This will reduce stopped vehicles on crosswalks increasing pedestrian safety.

Summary of West Newton Recommendations



Figure 7: West Newton Recommendations Map

| Location on Fig. X | Recommendation | Cost | Impact |
|---------------------------|---|-------------|---------------|
| 1 | Implement a new crosswalk | Low | Low |
| 2 | Rotate the walking light | Low | Low |
| 3 | Fix the walking light | Low | Low |
| 4 | Implement a crosswalk | Low | Low |
| 5 | Move the crosswalk to east side of Waltham Street | Low | High |
| 6 | Construct a ramp to Commuter Rail platform | High | High |
| 7 | Make the alleyway more appealing to pedestrians | Low | High |
| 8 | Repair sidewalks | Low | Low |

| Location on Fig. X | Recommendation | Cost | Impact |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Replace sidewalks | High | Low |
| 9 | Implement full bus shelters | High | High |
| 10 | Retime traffic signals | High | High |