

Creedon, Paul

From: Nita Sembrowich <sembro@verizon.net>
Sent: Sunday, August 09, 2015 5:49 PM
To: City Council
Cc: Lopez, Donna; Victoria Kent; Irene Hartford; Carla Nolin; Sarah Smith
Subject: In support of policy orders 3 and 14 on tour buses

To the Council,

I'm writing in support of policy orders 3 and 14 to be introduced at the Council meeting on Monday, August 9, 2015 regarding the large numbers of tour buses parking in Harvard Square on Mount Auburn Street.

As one of several Putnam Avenue residents who have recently complained about this issue to the Council, I would like to thank Councilors Kelley, McGovern, Simmons, Cheung, and Toomey for these orders. Especially, I would like to thank Councilor Kelley and his aide Wil Durbin for meeting with some of us last Thursday, and for the additional supportive emails we received from Councilors Simmons, McGovern, Cheung, and Vice Mayor Benzan in response to the emails we sent at the end of July .

I am concerned about the buses taking up so much parking on Mt. Auburn Street and about the numbers of tourists discharged by the buses into Harvard Square. But as we discussed at our meeting with Councilor Kelley, the problem goes beyond the parking issue in Harvard Square. My neighbors and I are also bothered by the ever-increasing numbers of buses (usually charter tour buses) that travel up and down Putnam Avenue past our homes in defiance of a ban on truck and bus traffic that has supposedly been in place for years on our residential street.

Many of the charter buses are really huge. They are also noisy, especially when idling at the traffic light right outside our windows, and they travel at a rapid pace. They are active all day, from early in the morning until late at night, seven days a week. We worry about what could happen when the King School reopens and these giant buses are trying to make their way down the narrow street at rush hour when children are walking to and from school and parents are attempting to drop off and pick up their children, along with the usual crowds of drivers, cyclists, and pedestrians commuting to and from work or the universities.

We've been told that the city's hands are somewhat tied and that power to regulate the numbers of charter tour buses operating in Cambridge rests with the state. If Cambridge cannot directly regulate the number of charter buses, then we respectfully request that the city find a way, working with the Cambridge police and traffic departments, to enforce the ban on bus and truck traffic that according to our understanding has existed for a number of years now on Putnam Avenue. As far as we can tell, this ban is never actively enforced, at least as far as the tour buses go. Since these tours are here primarily to visit Harvard (and MIT), maybe the city could reach out to the universities and ask them to work with the city on finding more appropriate parking and driving routes so that the tours don't make life miserable for Cambridge residents attempting to conduct business or enjoy an occasional outing in Harvard Square, not to mention Cambridge families attempting to take their children to school. Under the circumstances, it doesn't seem fair for the city and the residents of the city to bear the full burden and expense of managing and living with the effects of these tours, including losing ever more precious parking spaces to them. Perhaps Harvard and MIT could also place some restrictions on the number of tour groups entering their campuses, though we understand that this may not be feasible. I do wonder if Harvard is receiving some financial compensation from the tour companies. If they are, then perhaps they could share some of it with the city to defray the expense to the city of enforcing the ban on Putnam Avenue.

Although trucks and buses traveling on Putnam Avenue have been an issue for ten years or more, according to our observations the number of chartered tour buses has exploded in the past 2-3 years. We are afraid the

problem will continue to worsen if it isn't addressed. We hope a solution can be found, short of abandoning Harvard Square, Mount Auburn Street, and Putnam Avenue to out-of-state tour operators and their buses.

Sincerely,

Nita Sembrowich
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