

**Lopez, Donna**

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**From:** C. Shipley [mc.shipley@verizon.net]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 09, 2012 11:57 PM  
**To:** City Council  
**Cc:** minkavb@comcast.net; leland@electleland.org; Toomey, Tim (home); Craig Kelley; Henrietta Davis; Lopez, Donna  
**Subject:** City Manager Report #6, ~~4~~9-12  
**Attachments:** P1010469.JPG

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Regarding the statement in the above report that the LPI (leading pedestrian interval) was changed to 5 seconds, from 3 seconds, in 2010, I have to beg to differ. I have been counting the seconds at the light 5 mornings a week as I cross the street to reach the Red Line to Alewife. It has been 3 seconds up through last week. But that is neither here nor there. I won't argue that silly point.

In fact, whether the LPI is 3 seconds or 5 seconds is not even worthy of discussion. Neither 3 seconds nor 5 seconds is enough time for an able-bodied person to cross the street, let alone a handicapped or elderly person. >>Two more seconds doesn't improve what is a very dangerous situation. I guess I find it incredulous that anyone could think that 2 more seconds would solve the problem!

Now, I was told by Ms. Clippinger a few years back that the 3-second LPI was federal standard and that it is used in major cities across the USA with no problems and that the 3-second interval was staying, like it or not. (So, like all the other stressed pedestrians, I've had to like it or lump it. It was disheartening. However, even requests to TP&T for improvements going back 30 years have been ignored. Was I wrong to hope that things had changed?)

Now, all of a sudden, the federal standard is out the window and Cambridge pedestrians are supposed to satisfied with 2 more seconds! >>On what science was the increase of 2 seconds based? Has the federal standard changed?

The current situation only pits pedestrians against drivers and only serves to anger impatient drivers who can't wait for slow pedestrians. This has caused many near misses that I have witnessed, and one can only guess how many other near misses occur the rest of the day.

>>Drivers can see the seconds counting down and see that they have only a few seconds to get through the intersection before the light turns red and that causes them to push between pedestrians or drive so close to them that their car's left front fender rubs the shoes of the pedestrian in the crosswalk. >>>This situation only encourages drivers to think that it is permissible for a car to be in a pedestrian crosswalk at the same time that a pedestrian or pedestrians are in the crosswalk. **It is not legal in Massachusetts.** I encourage you to review the regulations about pedestrian crossings. I did a few months ago. I believe the law says that any vehicle must be 10 feet from any pedestrian in a crosswalk. It also says that vehicles must stop when there is a pedestrian in a crosswalk. This extremely short LPI has changed the way drivers in Central Square think about crosswalks. It has made them think that they only have to wait 3 or 5 seconds and then they may enter the crosswalk area.

The outcome of this extremely short LPI is that it has created a driver behavior modification that is most undesirable and illegal. It is indeed, Councillors, an unintended consequence of what some traffic engineer sitting in some federal office somewhere thought was a great idea, but did not foresee its ramifications or consider that not all situations are cut and dry.

All of this discussion about seconds is irrelevant. This should be a dedicated pedestrian crossing light. Period. Let's stop talking about LPIs. What I have heard from everyone regarding this intersection is that a dedicated pedestrian light is preferred.

ILLEGAL LEFT TURNS: In my message sent on 4/8/12, I mentioned the problem with illegal left turns at the Mass. Ave./Prospect/Western/River intersection. Well, as I was walking down the Mass. Ave. toward Prospect St. after leaving City Hall,

>> **a car made a sudden illegal left turn out of River Street onto Mass. Ave.** in the direction of Harvard Square. >> It just so happened that there **was a mother wheeling her baby in a stroller in the crosswalk** ...and, ...luckily, **...the driver stopped just 3 feet from them.** Lucky, because it was almost a fatal accident. He was in a rush, because he could see that he had only 6 seconds to make that turn. **Drivers observe the pedestrian signal countdown, too!**

>> There was no sign of a traffic control officer anywhere, of course. The driver did not know that the left turn was illegal because the sign is so small and so far away from the point at which a driver makes the decision to turn. The no-left-turn sign should be much, much larger.

>>Also, it would be nice if there were a policeman present at this intersection during rush hours or, specifically, say, the hours from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 7 p.m.

I have another suggestion which I mentioned in my message of 4/8/12, and that is: take down the signs that point to Magazine Street, River Street and Western Avenue because drivers traveling in a W-NW direction toward Harvard Square can see those signs with their arrows pointing to the left and could and do naturally assume that a left turn to one of those streets is allowed, if not encouraged by the signs.

The next step, of course, is a petition asking for a dedicated pedestrian light.

Thank you,

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Information from ESET NOD32 Antivirus, version of virus signature database 7040 (20120409)

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