



## Cummington Walk Audit Report

December 16, 2021

### About this Project

The Hilltown CDC, together with Healthy Hampshire and WalkBoston, are leading a 5-year grant project to promote Age-Friendly Walkability in the Hilltown Village Centers. In partnership with community residents and leaders, the team will be conducting a series of walk audits in partnering Hilltown villages. The goal of these walk audits is to identify infrastructure improvements and policy changes to make village-center walking safe and enjoyable for people of all ages in the Hilltowns. The Town of Cummington is one of the partnering communities in this grant project.

### Background

Cummington has a strong sense of community, with the Cummington Fairground and Pettingill Memorial Field serving as important community gathering spaces for residents and many surrounding communities. Cummington has no shortage of community members invested in making Cummington more walkable and, in turn, a healthier and more age-friendly community. With important community assets like the former Berkshire Elementary School, which will undergo a feasibility study to assess future uses of the existing building on Main Street, the Kingman Tavern Museum, the Cummington Community House, and more, the Town has many attractions bringing neighbors from Cummington and neighboring communities together.

The Town of Cummington faces challenges to safe walking that are typical of many small rural towns in Massachusetts: fast-moving traffic along Route 9, heavy trucking, and an incomplete sidewalk network. Cummington residents succeeded in preserving their historic town center by advocating for Route 9 to be realigned and widened south of the center. This important move has kept the majority of vehicular traffic off of Main Street, except for the section between the Plainfield Street and Route 9 intersections. This same section of Main Street does not have a sidewalk.

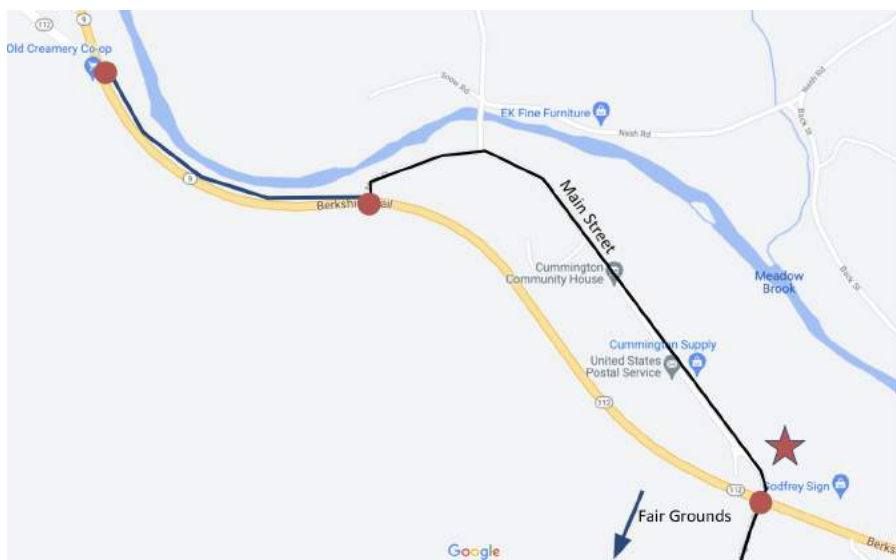
Route 9 does act as a barrier for Cummington residents wishing to cross and access the Creamery Co-op, the town library, the Fairground, and natural assets on the south and west side of Route 9. There are currently no marked crosswalks across Route 9, but residents cross in several dangerous locations with compromised sight lines and fast-moving traffic. Despite the less than ideal walking conditions on Route 9, many residents still make the walk to the Creamery and the library; exploring and implementing various pedestrian safety measures, then, becomes critical.



*Images of walk audit participants observing walking conditions along the walking route.*

### Walk Audit Process

WalkBoston led an in-person walk audit on Friday, October 15, 2021, from 1 pm to 3:00 pm under some gray skies, with some rain and humidity intermittently, and temperatures in the 60s. Ten participants gathered at the former elementary school and walked the route. A list of participants for both activities can be found in *Appendix A*. Residents represented various groups including: the Cultural District Planning Commission, the Creamery, the Planning Board, the Historical Commission, the Council on Aging, and more.



*Walk Audit Route*

## MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE

walkboston.org | 617.367.9255 | info@walkboston.org | facebook.com/walkboston | twitter.com/walkboston

Prior to the in-person portion of the walk audit, WalkBoston led participants through a presentation of walkability concepts and the walk audit process via Zoom on Wednesday, October 13, 2021, at 6 pm. Participants in both the Zoom session and in-person walk included a range of residents representing the Council on Aging, the Planning Board, Creamery Board, and local businesses and town staff with a range of knowledge on traffic calming techniques and experience with traffic and pedestrian issues in Cummington.

### **Key Concerns and Recommendations**

#### Complete the pedestrian crossing(s) and curb cuts at the Church/Community House

There is a pedestrian crossing sign on Main Street near the Church and Community House, however there was only a curb cut on one end of the crossing and no painted crosswalk.

- Paint a crosswalk with a continental stripe pattern to enhance visibility and build ADA-compliant curb cuts on both sides of the crossing



*View of the pedestrian crossing signage near the Church on Main Street*

#### Tighten curb radii at the intersection of Main Street and Plainfield Road to help reduce speeds and increase pedestrian safety

Plainfield Road serves as a connector from neighboring towns to Route 9 and many drivers speed down Plainfield Road on their way to Cummington. The large turning radius at the Plainfield/Main Street intersection allows drivers to make higher speed turns and also increases the crossing distance for pedestrians.

- Tighten the curb radii through one of the following strategies:
  - *Short term*: paint curb lines that narrow the travel lanes to 10' wide.
  - *Short term*: paint curb bump outs and a crosswalk to promote slower travel speeds and provide people walking with marked crossings.

## **MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE**

- *Long term*: reduce width of the intersection by redesigning the street with narrower travel lanes and less asphalt.



(Left) Wide curb radii currently at the intersection (Right): Reduced curb radii example from Safe Routes to School

Explore options for making walking safer on Main Street between the intersection of Plainfield Road and Route 9.

Between Plainfield Road and Route 9, there is no sidewalk on Main Street forcing pedestrians to walk in the street which is very narrow. Vehicles coming from Route 9 or heading towards Route 9 are often traveling at high speeds. The narrow right-of-way makes extending the sidewalk difficult.

- Determine the legal right-of-way dimensions along this stretch of road to clarify ownership and actual road widths.
- Consider posting additional advisory signage indicating pedestrians are sharing the roadway.
- Consider using paint to alert drivers that people are walking/rolling along this stretch.
- Evaluate traffic patterns to determine if this section of roadway could be changed to one way - this would have implications on the historic district since more traffic would be diverted to Main Street. May not be advisable given truck traffic to Cummington Supply. If converted to one-way traffic, there would be enough width to paint a walking lane or construct a sidewalk (long-term).

## **MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE**



*Walk audit participants finishing the walk from Main Street towards Route 9 where there is no sidewalk*

**Evaluate and explore options to improve pedestrian access and safety along and across Route 9 to reach the Fairgrounds, the Creamery, and the Library.**

Given the high traffic speeds and volumes along Route 9, there are no easy solutions to providing safe pedestrian access to several destinations across Route 9 from the Cummington town center. Simply painting crosswalks across Route 9 is not enough to make crossing safer, and it may give people walking a false sense of security. Route 9 is a state-owned road and any safety improvements will require coordination with MassDOT.

- Engage with MassDOT District 1 traffic engineers to determine options for improving pedestrian safety along Route 9 including:
  - Enhanced crosswalk treatments with pedestrian-activated Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs), curb ramps and landings, highly reflective crosswalk markings, and advance pedestrian warning signs.



*Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB) in Westborough, MA*

- Flex-post protected walkways along Route 9

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*Flex-post protected walkway in Natick, MA*

- Warrants for traffic signals at key crossing locations.
- Explore collaboration opportunities with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in evaluating various options and assisting with MassDOT conversations.



*Walk audit participants navigate to the Creamery (left) and the Library (right) via Route 9*

### **Policy Considerations**

In addition to the infrastructure improvements listed above, the Town of Cummington can enact and review town policies to promote walkability. We recommend the following policy considerations.

- Enact and adopt a Complete Street Policy to become eligible for MassDOT state funding to implement walking and biking improvements on locally-owned roads. <https://www.mass.gov/complete-streets-funding-program>
- Consider an application to the Shared Streets and Spaces Grant Program for various improvements like pedestrian crossings, reduced curb radii, and updated infrastructure for Pettingill Memorial Field, such as benches or picnic tables.

## **MAKING MASSACHUSETTS MORE WALKABLE**

## Appendix A. Ped 101 and Walk Audit Participants

Elliot	Ring	Resident; Council on Aging Chairman
Ilse	Godfrey	Resident; Business Owner
Bob	Godfrey	Resident; Business Owner
Chrisoula	Roumeliotis	Resident; COA
Katy	Eiseman	Resident; Chair of Planning & Creamery Board
Laura	Sheridan	Resident
Pat	Keith	Resident
Jeff	McCollough	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Andrew	McCaul	Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Michael	Perkins	Police Chief
Kristen	Whitmore	Healthy Hampshire
Joan	Griswold	Hilltown CDC
Kate	Bavelock	Hilltown CDC
Dave	Christopolis	Hilltown CDC
Stacey	Beuttell	WalkBoston
Miranda	Briseño	WalkBoston

## Appendix B. Resources

Walkable Hilltowns: Funding Opportunities

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DPVIHE3MejslkhW99DD\\_cLI39VkvTKtuUgMoHyjDb0/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1DPVIHE3MejslkhW99DD_cLI39VkvTKtuUgMoHyjDb0/edit?usp=sharing)

WalkBoston Rural Walking Guide:

<https://walkboston.org/sites/default/files/WalkBoston%20Rural%20Walking.%20Tool%20Kit%202013.pdf>

Urban, Rural and Suburban Complete Streets Design Manual:

[https://www.northamptonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6668/Hampshire-County-Complete-Streets-Design-Manual\\_1-4-2017-FINAL?bidId=](https://www.northamptonma.gov/DocumentCenter/View/6668/Hampshire-County-Complete-Streets-Design-Manual_1-4-2017-FINAL?bidId=)

Speed Management: A Manual for Local Rural Road Owners p. 15-22

[https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local\\_rural/training/fhwas010413spmgmt/speedmanagementguide.pdf](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/local_rural/training/fhwas010413spmgmt/speedmanagementguide.pdf)