



Dalton Sidewalks

2024 TOWN MEETING FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025

Motion for Article 1

OVERVIEW

I move that the Town amend current regulations for the Town of Dalton by adding the following sidewalk materials specification into all appropriate sections (for example **§501-19 Curbing and Sidewalks**): "The Town of Dalton, its Highway Department, and all contractors working under the Town's direction, shall utilize cement concrete pavement, **or a material with equivalent service life and appearance**, rather than less durable materials such as bituminous asphalt, as the specified standard building material for all **permanent** public sidewalk repairs, replacements, and new installations, in all zones of the Town. Dalton sidewalk work standards shall conform to the requirements of subsection 701 of the *Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Transportation Standard Specifications for Highways and Bridges, 2022 Edition*, or any amendment thereof, addition thereto, or substitution therefor."

Explanation of Article 1

OVERVIEW

A “yes” vote on Article 1 supports a change to Dalton’s sidewalk regulations to specify cement concrete as the Town’s standard sidewalk material. Currently, Dalton’s regulations do not specify cement concrete as the Town’s standard. A “no” vote maintains the status quo, and allows **proposals made by the Town to use bituminous asphalt** for extended sections of new sidewalk, and to replace sections of existing damaged concrete sidewalk with asphalt.

Objectives of the Town’s proposals include saving the Town money in the short run, and potentially accelerating sidewalk repairs. **However, there are good reasons why establishing a cement concrete sidewalk standard in Dalton will benefit our town....**

Explanation

CEMENT SIDEWALKS WILL HELP PRESERVE DALTON'S CHARACTER AND CHARM

- Nearly **90%** of Dalton's 16 miles of sidewalks are currently cement concrete, while just over **10%** are asphalt.
- Replacing a significant number of damaged cement concrete sidewalks with asphalt will change the existing **classic New England look and feel** of our town.



Crane Inn, Dalton, MA – from a vintage Postcard

Explanation

WHAT DOES MASSDOT RECOMMEND?

- 2018 MassDOT guidelines specify cement concrete as the “**preferred surface material**” for sidewalk construction because it lasts 50-80 years, **over twice as long as asphalt**.
- Per 2021 Executive Order 594, MassDOT also now utilizes lower-carbon concrete, enhancing **greater environmental sustainability** for cement concrete sidewalks, which are **far greener than “recycled” asphalt (RAP)**.

Sidewalks

Sidewalks provide pedestrians with an area to walk that is physically separated from motor vehicles. Typically separated from the roadway with a vertical **6-inch** curb, sidewalks are the safe and accepted standard for providing walking facilities along a roadway.

Concrete is a preferred surface material because of its durability. Asphalt may also be used but may require more frequent repair.

Brick sidewalks create numerous challenges: they are slippery when wet, difficult to clear of snow and ice, and can be difficult to navigate for people with mobility impairments.

massDOT
Massachusetts Department of Transportation

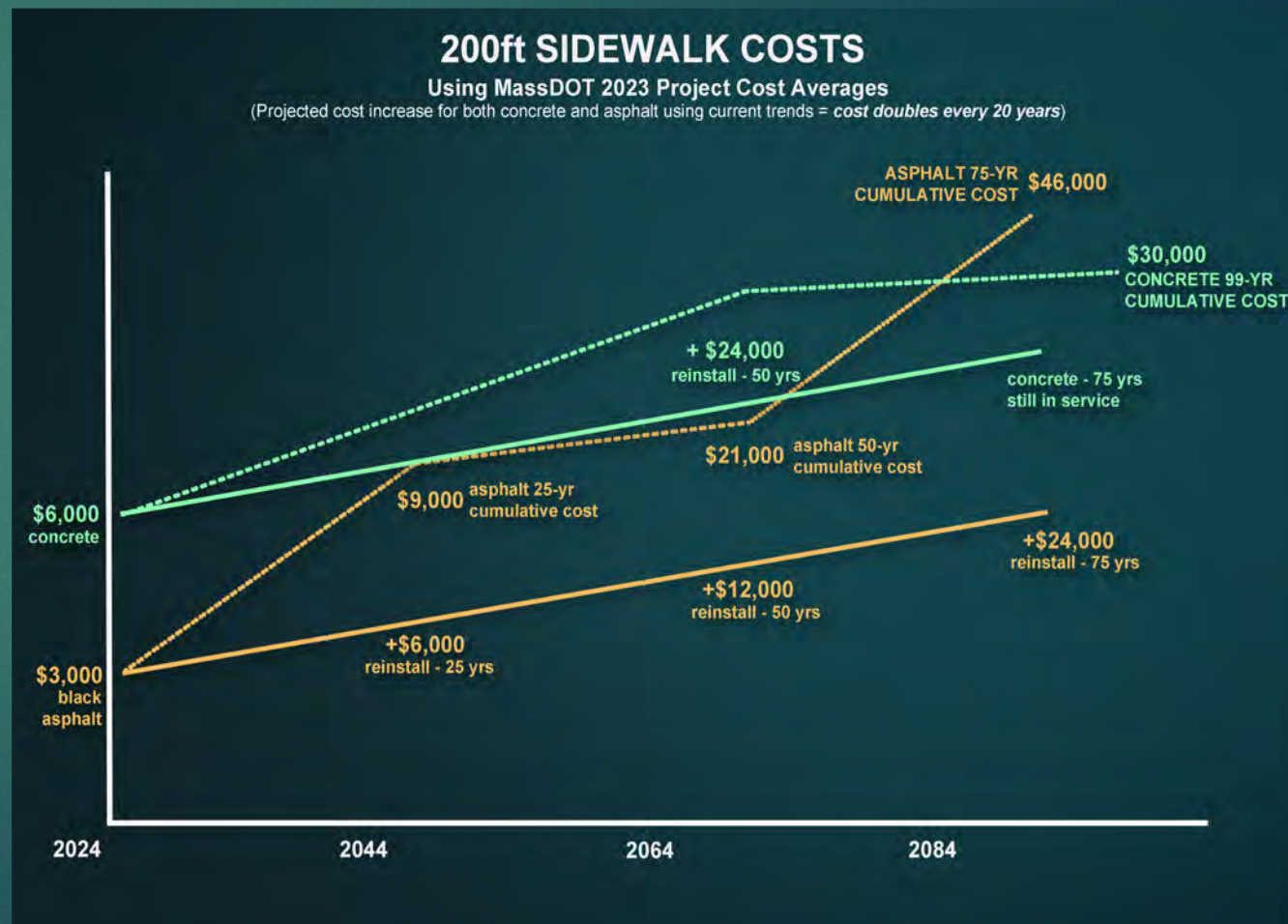
**MUNICIPAL
RESOURCE
GUIDE
FOR WALKABILITY**
JULY 2018



Explanation

WHAT ABOUT COSTS?

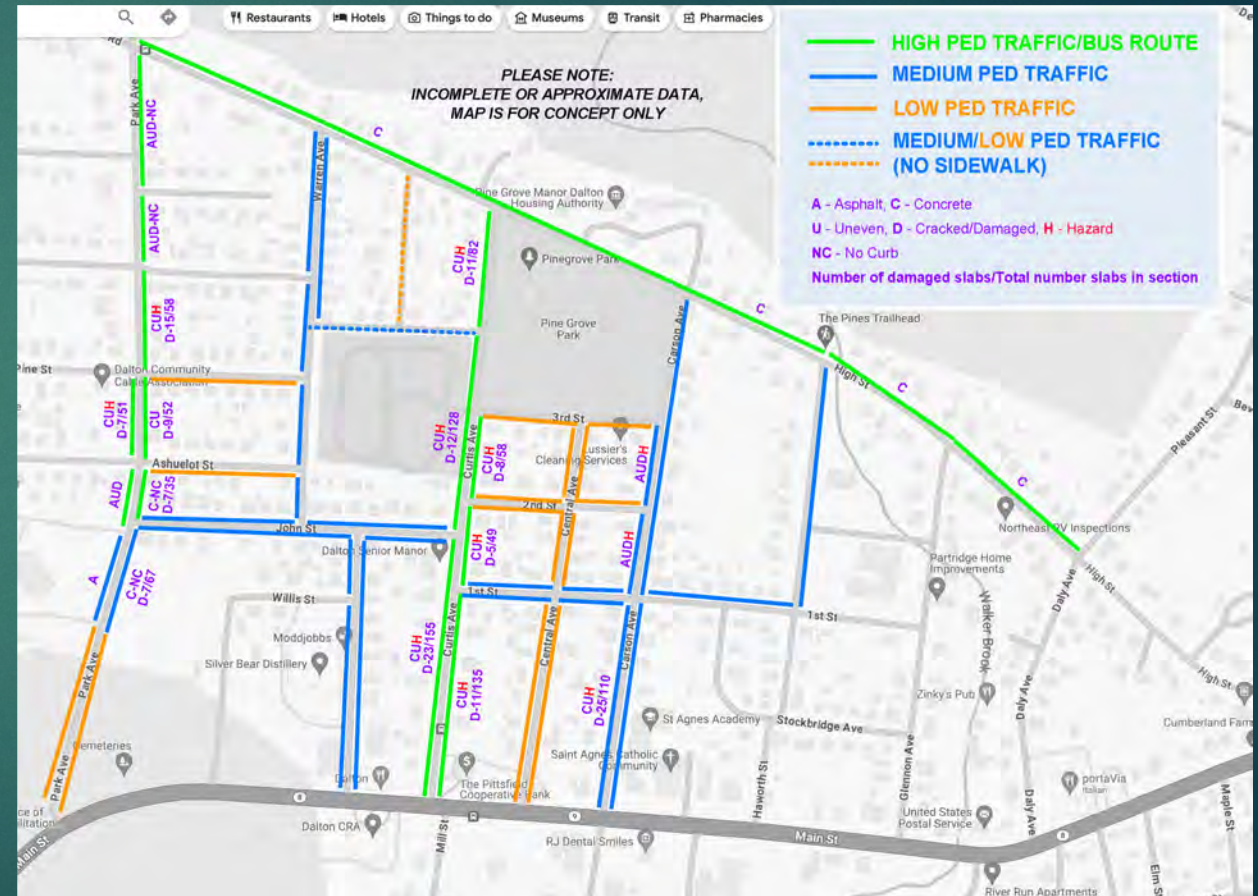
- When long-term costs are considered, cement sidewalks will actually **save the Town money over time – as much as 35% over the next 25 to 50 years.** Because cement's service life is so long.
- Using Dalton's FY 2024 property tax revenues as a guide, an average of just **\$7** per household could fund **1,045 feet** of new cement sidewalk each fiscal year.



Explanation

WHAT'S THE COST AND TIME TO FIX OUR WORST SIDEWALKS?

- We need to **evaluate, plan, and prioritize** to repair Dalton's most hazardous and deteriorated sidewalks first. We could do this using cement for about **\$2.25 Million**.
- Using FY 2024 property tax revenues, just **.01% (\$89,532) per year** could achieve this goal in **25 years**.
- MassDOT also offers **annual grant programs** for sidewalks to assist our efforts. For example, Dalton's FY 2024 "Fair Share" infrastructure grant award was **\$120,797**.



Sample downtown Sidewalk Inventory (condition + traffic).

Explanation

DO SIDEWALKS HAVE AN EFFECT ON PROPERTY VALUES?

- Cement sidewalks add “**curb appeal**” to neighborhoods.
- According to Redfin Real Estate, higher walkability scores correlate with **higher property values**. This means nicer sidewalks could also increase Dalton’s tax revenues, attract small business to our town, and end up **paying for themselves**.



Two sides of the same street in Dalton – one side cement sidewalk, the other side asphalt sidewalk.

Explanation

WHAT ABOUT PLACES WHERE ASPHALT MIGHT BE A BETTER OPTION?

- A concrete sidewalk standard **does not prohibit use of asphalt or other sidewalk materials.**
- If the Highway Department needs an exception for a new sidewalk installation or repair, a variance can be requested that triggers **public discussion** about that project.
- Temporary asphalt sidewalk repairs and installations **do not require a variance.**

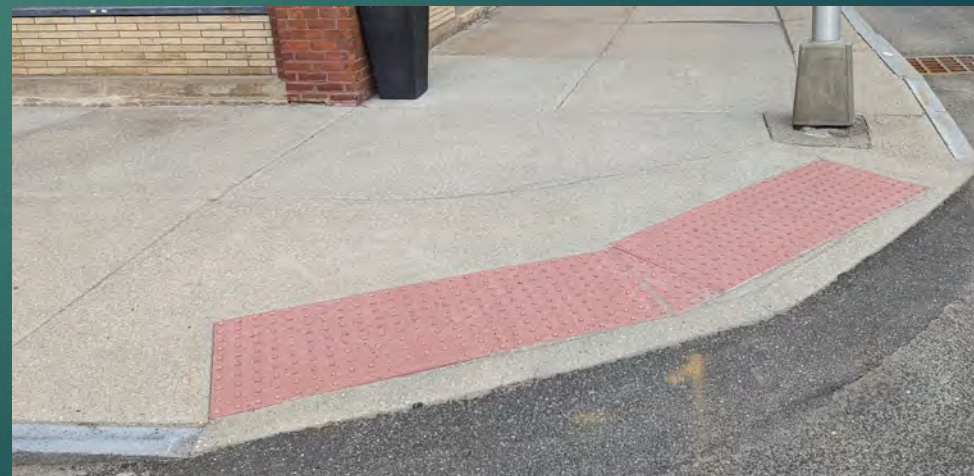


Park Ave in front of Craneville Elementary

Explanation

WHAT IMPACT IS THERE ON HEALTH AND SAFETY?

- Cement sidewalks better support **Americans with Disabilities Act** accessibility standards than asphalt sidewalks.
- According to government research, cement concrete surfaces have **four times the reflective brightness** of darker asphalt – lowering sizzling summer sidewalk temps and “the heat island effect,” as well as decreasing **trip hazard risks** in low-light conditions.



Main Street, Dalton, MA

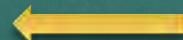
Explanation

WHAT ABOUT CHEAPER, FASTER FIXES NOW, OR BETTER OPTIONS IN THE FUTURE?

- The following language in Article 1 future-proofs Dalton for new innovations: “...**shall utilize cement concrete pavement, or a material with equivalent service life and appearance...**” This means we can use any of the **newer or yet-to-be invented materials** that resemble cement – and last twice as long as petroleum-based asphalt.
- Quick-and-cheap fixes include **spot replacement** of damaged concrete slabs, **grinding down** uneven concrete slabs, or **polyjacking** to level uneven cement sidewalks:



Spot
Replacement



Polyjacking



Explanation

WHAT DO DALTON RESIDENTS THINK?

In the last two months, I have spoken to dozens of people around Dalton about the sidewalk petition. So far, there have been very few skeptics, and most folks think having cement concrete as our sidewalk standard is a good idea. In fact, three of Dalton's committees have offered **unanimous votes of support** for the petition at recent meetings. These include:

- **The Dalton Historical Commission**
- **The Dalton ADA Committee**
- **The Green Dalton Committee**

One member's explanation for why they supported the cement sidewalk petition was:

Explanation

WHAT DO DALTON RESIDENTS THINK?

“It’s a no brainer.”



An **84-year-old** cement concrete sidewalk on Flansburg Ave, Dalton, MA installed in 1940.



Asphalt sidewalk on Springside Ave, Pittsfield, MA.

Explanation

IN SUMMARY, THE CEMENT SIDEWALK ARTICLE 1:

1. Preserves Dalton's character and charm.
2. Better conforms to existing MassDOT standards.
3. Saves the Town money over time – *and is affordable for us now.*
4. Does not restrict the Dalton Highway Department from using asphalt – it just triggers public input for *larger, permanent asphalt projects.*
5. Allows us to do fast-and-cheap fixes – and allows for future innovations.
6. Adds curb appeal and increases property values, expanding Town revenues so that better sidewalks could actually *pay for themselves.*
7. Enhances health and safety for Dalton residents and pets.
8. Offers greater environmental sustainability than recycled asphalt.
9. Is supported by our community.

Thank You.