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TOWN OF CHILMARK

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DATE: December 18, 2023

TO: Chilmark Select Board

FROM: Chilmark Planning Board

RE: Traffic Calming in Menemsha

At the Chilmark Select Board meeting of September 5, 2023, the Select Board asked the Planning Board Master Plan Subcommittee to explore traffic calming options. The Select Board particularly mentioned the portion of Basin Road from North Road to the S-curve (just past the Menemsha Deli and The Bite) as being a stretch of road where people tend to pick up speed when they should be slowing down in advance of the S-curve. This is particularly concerning because people tend to walk in the road.

The Select Board expressed a desire to have a temporary design in place by the 2024 summer season. The objective of this memo is to present consideration of conditions, options for traffic calming, potential costs and timing implications for evaluation. The summary offers conclusions which identify options with potential for introduction in Spring 2024.

The Planning Board asked Chief Sean Slavin and Dan Doyle, Special Projects Planner for the Martha's Vineyard Commission, to attend a Planning Board meeting on October 23rd, to talk about possible traffic calming solutions with their pros and cons.

Challenging traffic conditions in Menemsha that should be considered include:

- Mixed traffic, including pedestrians and vehicles.
- People of all ages walking in the middle of the road, not using the delineated walkways (the wooden walkway on the dune side of the parking lot or the gravel path on the S-curve.)
- Bicycles, mopeds and motorcycles.
- Buses – both Vineyard Transit Authority and tourist vans.
- Traffic related to restaurants, fish stores, the gas station and other businesses, including delivery trucks and employee parking.

It was determined that the road is a municipal road in a conversation with Tim Carroll on October 10. Dan Doyle said in a memo, dated October 13, 2023, "We have Basin (sic) flagged as town owned in the MassGIS dataset on Roads."

After discussion of the traffic and speeding concerns by Chief Slavin, Mr. Doyle presented options for consideration.

Four options offer variations of white paint and/or markings on the road - arrows, chevrons, white squares and transverse markings - and are discussed as a group. Four other options are speed tables, speed bumps, electronic signs and bollards; pros and cons of each are discussed individually.

SUMMARY OF IDEAS AND THEIR PROS AND CONS

Options involving white paint and/or markings on the road have been used on longer, wider roads successfully.

A) Painting: Painting a curved arrow shape in the road and “slow” as one approaches the curve near the Deli/The Bite.

B) Chevrons: A series of chevron shaped markers that are arranged to come closer and give the impression that maybe the driver is going too fast. A visual cue.

C) White squares: A series of white squares by the sides of the road that are arranged to come closer and give the impression that maybe the driver is going too fast. A visual cue.

D) Transverse Markings: Similar approach to the chevrons; a visual cue. Found to be effective when combined with the flashing speed sign.

All have similar pros and cons, as summarized here:

Pros

- Probably not a huge investment.
- Not permanent; ideal for a temporary trial.
- Textural paint offers options for additional cues, such as sound.
- Less likely to be considered excessive, as some might consider more signage to be.
- Paint could be combined with other solutions, such as speed tables, speed bumps, electronic signs, bollards.

Cons:

- Chevrons, squares and transverse markings are solutions that work better for drivers traveling at faster speeds with a greater distance in which to slow down (e.g., approaching a toll booth on a highway). Since Menemsha drivers are traveling at relatively low speeds, these solutions may not provide adequate space and time for drivers to slow down.
- Some maintenance would likely be required to keep the paint fresh.
- It’s uncertain how effective these solutions would be.

E) Flexible Bollards: can be used to separate lanes and delineate space. If put in the middle of the lane (such as on the yellow or white lines), it narrows the road and forces drivers to slow down.

Pros:

- Probably not a huge investment.
- Not permanent; ideal for a temporary trial.

Cons:

- May narrow the lanes too much for larger vehicles and buses.
- Potential for people to walk, bike or drive into these.

F) Temporary Speedbumps: One or two between the intersection of North Road and Basin Road, and the S-curve.

Pros:

- Could be placed seasonally and removed in the off-season.
- Location could be readjusted as needed.

Cons:

- Accommodation of bicycles, buses and larger vehicles may be difficult.

G) Speed Table: A mild change in elevation and a change in surface alerts the driver to slow down without the jolt of a speed bump.

Pros:

- Could be moved or removed easily.
- Easier for vehicles such as buses or trucks to navigate.
- Not obnoxious in appearance.
- Might double as a crosswalk.

Cons:

- Possible impact on snow plowing in the winter (if installed permanently).

H) Illuminated Speed Signs: This is the type of signage we have on the hill going down to Menemsha near the Mayhew house; also have used this on Basin Road in some summer seasons.

Pros:

- Signs can be re-located as needed.
- These signs stand out and have provided some success.

Cons:

- Likely higher cost than other signage or road marking.
- People are tired of signage and don't really "see" it at some point.

- Power sources need to be provided – electric, batteries, solar.

Summary:

Of the four options related to paint or other markings on the road, the first option (A), which is simply painting words and shapes, shows promise for Basin Road. The other three options (B through D) seem more appropriate to a longer stretch of road and higher speeds.

Of the remaining options, speed bumps, speed tables and illuminated signage seem like they might be a solution for Menemsha.

It also might be possible to combine a couple of options, such as painting of words and shapes with the illuminated signage.

Next Steps:

- Decide on the traffic calming method to pursue, as a one-season experiment. Effectiveness will be determined at the end of the season by comparing traffic citations listed and qualitative comments.
- Of key concern is to retain the historic and visual character of the road and harbor.
- Costs have not been estimated, and so need further research.
- It is beyond the scope of this memo to consider legal implications; it is suggested Town Counsel be consulted.