

CITY OF WATERTOWN, NEW YORK
WORK SESSION AGENDA
Tuesday, November 12, 2024
7:00 p.m.

This shall serve as notice that a work session of the City Council will be held on **Tuesday, November 12, 2024 at 7:00 p.m.** in the City Court Room, 245 Washington Street, Watertown, New York.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Thompson Boulevard Traffic Calming

Presenters from the Complete Streets Committee

- Thomas Compo, City Engineer
- Brian MacCue, Superintendent of Public Works
- Geoff Urda, Senior Planner

2. Results from WOTS Sewer Scoping Project

Presenter:

- Thomas Compo, City Engineer

3. City Manager's Update

Staff Report

November 6, 2024

To: The Honorable Mayor and City Council

From: The Complete Streets Committee (Geoffrey Urda, Senior Planner; Brian McCue, Superintendent of Public Works; Thomas Compo, City Engineer; Kyle Meehan, Transit Director; Charles Donoghue, Police Chief)

Subject: **Thompson Boulevard Traffic Calming**

The City recently received a request to evaluate speeding, visibility and drainage issues on the 300 and 400-blocks of Thompson Boulevard. Specific concerns raised include persistent speeding, the effects that legal parking in the margin has on sight triangles at driveways, motorists' tendency to use Thompson Boulevard as a through-street from Washington Street to State Street and vice versa, and finally, poor drainage related to the lack of curbs.

The petitioner also noted that the City installed curbs on the northern (500-block) segment of Thompson Boulevard a few years ago, with an approximate roadway width of 25 feet, and having observed anecdotal success of traffic calming on that segment, asked that the City consider a similar treatment on the 300-block.

This segment of Thompson Boulevard exhibits several characteristics that encourage speeding; it is straight, long and flat. The straightaway from Gotham Street to Franklin Street is approximately 1,800 linear feet, all uncontrolled. Additionally, while the average roadway width in this area is 22 feet, it widens to approximately 32 feet from the fog line on the Thompson Park side to the sidewalk on the residential side when you include the 10-foot paved margin to the measurement. During the day when cars are unlikely to be parked in the margin, this 32-foot width creates the feeling of a wider roadway, which also encourages speeding.

When vehicles are parked in the margin, they create sight distance issues with adjacent driveways. This creates a situation where a vehicle exiting a driveway is less likely to see another vehicle driving in the travel lane on Thompson Boulevard and vice versa, thus increasing the chances of a crash. Off-street parking in the margin has been legal on this block since 2011. Eliminating the legal margin parking would enable the City to install curbs and plant grass in the margin. Every property on the affected segment has a driveway and parking in the rear, side, a garage, or some combination thereof.

Thompson Boulevard serves as a through street and lends itself to nonresident traffic traveling from points south to points east and seeking to avoid Public Square. In such cases, a motorist's behavior is more likely to regard the street as a transportation artery rather than consider the surrounding residential land use. It is not their street, so they feel less inhibition about speeding. This characteristic of Thompson Boulevard will not change, but installing curbs to reduce the visual width of the street would encourage lower speeds, as it has to the north.

Finally, installing curbs would also improve drainage on the street, directing stormwater into catch basins and reducing ponding, which was one of the issues raised. Eliminating the paved margin will also increase space for snow storage. For these and for all the reasons detailed above, the Complete Streets Committee recommends installing curbs at a 24-or-25-foot width, which will require the City Council to repeal the legal margin parking exception.

If the City Council adopts this change and directs Staff to prepare an Ordinance to this effect, the Council would need to set a public hearing, as the recommended course of action involves formally amending City Code. The Council may also wish to notify affected residents of Thompson Boulevard to solicit their input prior to making a final decision.

Thompson Boulevard (Existing)



Thompson Boulevard (Proposed)

