



Office of the Mayor

One JFK Memorial Drive
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Joseph C. Sullivan
Mayor

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To: Citizen's Group - *Advancing Community inclusion & Equality on the South Shore*

CC: Meredith Lincoln, Chair of the Braintree Commission on Disabilities
Joseph Reynolds, Chief of staff, Town of Braintree
Marybeth McGrath, Director of Licensing and Inspections, Town of Braintree
James Arsenault, Director of Public Works, Town of Braintree

From: Mayor Joseph C. Sullivan

Date: Monday, April 30, 2018

RE: Change.org petition regarding South Braintree Square Pedestrian Safety

Since being sworn in as Mayor in January of 2008, it has been a priority of mine to not only ensure our Town is a community of inclusion, but also to improve access to our public ways and our public services. Since the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was passed, cities and towns all across the Commonwealth, and throughout the country, have been challenged with achieving ADA compliance in buildings and public spaces that are hundreds of years old. Making all town services, events and communications effective and inclusive of all people is a critical part of the spirit of the ADA and my vision for Braintree.

I would first like to clarify that although South Braintree Square has opportunities to improve access along its public ways, it is not however in a state of *non-compliance*. The ADA's regulations must be met when specific alterations take place above and beyond normal maintenance. Modifications such as new construction or complete rehabilitation/reconstruction of the area would trigger such requirements to reach the ADA's current standard. South Braintree Square is not currently being altered; therefore no ADA regulations have been triggered. With that being said, I am aware of current opportunities and am continuously working with our team to align our operational and capital needs to improve access to such areas as South Braintree Square and across the entire town.

Before specifically responding to each of the petition's requests, I would like to update you on some initiatives we have recently put into place.

In 2015, the Braintree Commission on Disabilities advocated for hiring an ADA Coordinator in the town. My office initiated the effort, and Braintree Town Council sponsored it, allowing the

Town's first ADA Coordinator, Kristen Zechello, to be hired in January of 2016. Kristen's office is at Braintree Town Hall, and she works under the direction of the Department of Municipal Licenses and Inspection. Kristen has since been an integral part of advancing accessibility and inclusion throughout our Town's public buildings, schools, public ways and community events.

In January of 2017, the MBTA announced a plan to rehabilitate the Braintree MBTA station and parking garage. The project's \$30 Million in funding will be used for many improvements, a large part of which will be accessibility oriented; improvements such as establishing universal paths of travel, redundant elevators, covered walkways, raised pedestrian connections to the station and more.

In May of 2017, the Town launched *Commonwealth Connect*, a citizen request management (CRM) system powered by *SeeClickFix* dedicated to managing citizen request. This system was part of a program coordinated by the State's Information Technology office and was championed by Braintree's Mayors Office and Town Council to develop and implement. To date, within the CRM we have received 1,108 requests, of which 877 have been closed, and 231 remain open or in-progress. Within the CRM we also have a request type, *ADA Compliance*, to document any concerns relating to ADA compliance or for opportunities to improve access. (*The Town of Braintree is the only municipality on the Commonwealth Connect system to have this specific request type.*) Out of all the requests we have received to date, 161 of them were explicitly *ADA Compliance* requests, of which 49 requests have been closed so far. Out of the total 161 requests, 82% or 132 requests were submitted by a single user account, and 35% or 56 of the 161 requests were specific to the South Braintree Square surrounding area.

In October of 2017, the Town launched two additional programs to improve accessibility centered on civic engagement. First is the launch of Braintree Alerts; a new emergency notification system that allows the Town to more simply collect and maintain critical citizen data and meets the need to implement a system that addresses the highly mobile lifestyle of our residents. This system also better communicates with TTY/TDD standards and support for multiple languages. Additionally, we launched internally within the Town a new social media policy which focuses on ensuring our posts and updates on social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter are as equally accessible to anyone viewing them. The policy and program have been developed around Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 standards.

In 2018 we hope to advance accessibility even further. Our Commission on Disabilities has recently added three new members and will be working to further education related to and for the betterment of access and inclusion for Braintree residents. Initially, they have purchased educational DVD's and curriculum to be used in the community to promote disability awareness.

To further make our *digital front-door* more accessible, our digital team has been working the past year on upgrading our Town's website. I am happy to announce the recent launch of the new website, and I hope you will be equally impressed with all of its new capabilities. The new website platform has numerous new features, most of which allow us to better communicate with the public and do so in compliance with WCAG 2.0 standards.

Our Department of Public Works (DPW) team has been instrumental over these past ten years in investing in infrastructure and pavement preservation that has to lead to miles of ADA-compliant sidewalks. In March, the DPW team had launched its "Complete Streets" initiative which also embraces accessibility as part of improving a multi-modal use of our roadway rights-of-way.

Currently, the team is also finalizing to contract with “Street Scan,” a service that will allow the Town to document all of our public sidewalk conditions around the Town by using their scanning technology. The data collected will significantly help us prioritize improvements to sidewalks. We hope to have this project completed by the end of the summer. This process will conclude our ADA Self-Assessment, and Transition planning and prioritizing to reach full compliance will continue. A current draft of this plan is available on our Town website at <http://www.braintree.ma.gov/adatransitionplan>. This evaluation and plan have been prepared to partially fulfill the requirements outlined in Title II of the ADA, “non-discrimination on the basis of disability in state and local government services.”

I would like to reiterate that we care about accessibility for all and we are working persistently to improve access not only in South Braintree Square but around our entire Town. In the spirit of inclusivity and access, I ask that you also join us this May for two events: On **Wednesday, May 16th at 1:30 PM** we will be celebrating “**Global Accessibility Awareness Day**,” at Town Hall and will be raising the ADA flag to celebrate our recent digital accessibility advancements. Additionally, on **May 24th at 6:30 PM** at Town Hall we will be hosting our **10th annual “Community Inclusion Awards**,” honoring those who have made significant efforts of inclusion in our community.

Below is a response to each of the concerns noted in the petition:

1. Adding active crosswalk alerts for drivers:

- a. Requests: Adding LED 'no turn on red' or 'yield to pedestrian' signs / difficult crossing from Braintree Rug towards Rite Aid
 - i. Response: These requests were documented in our CRM as #3471744. After reviewing it was noted that the proposed "LED signs" did not meet current standards set by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation. However, we approved the installation of metal warning signs that say "turning traffic must yield to pedestrians" at these specific South Braintree Square crosswalks and they were installed this past winter.
- b. Requests: Vehicles parked before the crosswalk by "nails & spa" obstruct turning vehicles view of pedestrians
 - i. Response: This request was documented in our CRM as #3471663. After our traffic and safety advisory committee reviewed this request, it has been recommended to install a "no parking here to corner" sign. Our Highway Division has scheduled this to be installed now that the weather is better.
- c. Request: Green utility box in front of "Braintree Rug" obstructing driver views of pedestrians.
 - i. Response: This request was documented in our CRM as #3544520. After our traffic and advisory safety committee reviewed this request, it was recommended that a sign stating "turning traffic must yield to pedestrians" be installed. This sign was installed last fall. The committee also noted that the utility box could not be moved at this time, but as we look to altering the intersection in the future, it will be looked into.

2. Increase safety and accessibility for blind and low-vision residents:

- a. Request: Add accessible pedestrian signals (APS) to the intersection.
 - i. Response: This request relates to CRM request #3544520 in that it concerns pedestrian crossing. South Braintree Square currently does not have APS, and we are not required to do so as we have not triggered any of the required thresholds. We are aware of the benefits of these signals and have and will continue to incorporate them into our rehabilitation projects as they are done. Specifically you can see a recently completed APS project at Braintree's 'Five corners' intersection.

3. Increased Crossing Time:

- a. Request: Increase South Braintree Square crosswalk signal crossing times.
 - i. Response: This request was documented in our CRM as #3509992. After review by our traffic advisory safety committee they had recommended our engineering department repair the signal loops and run traffic analyses. They will be completing this over the next week and be able to adjust the timings as necessary.

4. Safer sidewalks, curb cuts, and crosswalks:

- a. Request: Replacement of sidewalk slabs that are being pushed up by tree roots or are cracked
 - i. Response: We have received multiple requests in our CRM that relate to sidewalk repair. When requests are received for sidewalk repair, our Highway Division inspects the issue and will make repairs as needed. To be more proactive in maintaining sidewalks, we are contracting with a company to collect necessary data as noted above. Once the data is collected, we can more efficiently prioritize needed repairs across town.

- b. Request: Smoother transitions where the curb cut meets the street and add detectable warnings at curb cuts
 - i. Response: This request relates to CRM request #4143762. Our Highway Division is currently working to resolve, and it will remain open until complete.
- c. Request: Improve crosswalk visibility and surfacing
 - i. Response: This request relates to CRM request #3471782. Our Highway Division received the request, and they repainted the crosswalks and also placed signs within the crosswalks to warn drivers. Additionally, as part of the Mayor's 100 roads initiative, this area is marked to be resurfaced. Once completed the crosswalks will be more even and our team will repaint the crosswalks with horizontal banding instead.
- d. Request: Evaluate the utility box placement by 'Braintree rug.'
 - i. Response: This response was noted in part 1-c of this document
- e. Request: Fix uneven surface of crosswalks in the square
 - i. Response: This will be resolved once the street is resurfaced as mentioned in response 4-c above.