

To Roads Committee

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SELECTMEN'S OFFICE

October 27, 2008

Mr. Ron Di Orio, Chairman  
Oak Bluffs Board of Selectmen  
P.O Box 1327  
Oak Bluffs, MA 02557

Dear Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of concerned residents of East Chop, we are writing to request consideration by the Oak Bluffs Board of Selectmen of a proposal to address safety concerns for pedestrians and bicyclists on East Chop Drive. The essence of the proposal is to reduce the speed and volume of traffic on this scenic road by making the segment from East Chop Beach Club to Munroe Avenue one way. The enclosed report East Chop One-Way presents the options considered and the recommended one-way solution. Also enclosed are two maps of East Chop Drive, one showing the extent of the one-way and the second identifying the most impacted residences.

We are proposing to address the contention between motor vehicles and people before we have any serious accidents or injuries. While we do not have extensive recorded traffic data, we do walk the Drive nearly every day both winter and summer. We have experienced first-hand the need to climb onto the roadside to avoid speeding drivers or make room for vehicles simultaneously passing in both directions.

We have requested input on this proposal by reaching out to an email distribution list of East Chop residents both seasonal and year round. Out of approximately 219 people on the list, we received 59 responses: 33 in favor and 26 opposed. Their thoughtful comments are included in the enclosed *Summary of the Responses to an Email Survey*.

We respectfully request that the Board of Selectmen review seriously this citizen recommendation and hold public hearings, if appropriate. We also request that the Police and Highway departments consider corrective measures such as increased speed limit signs, lowering the speed limit, and speed traps (especially during commuter hours).

Sincerely,

*Terry Appenzellar*  
Terry Appenzellar

*Lyn Herrick*

*for*  
Dolores Goode  
Lyn Herrick

Enclosures:  
*East Chop One-Way FINAL*  
*East Chop Dr One-way and detail (pdf maps)*  
*Summary of the Responses to an Email Survey*

Summary of the Responses to an Email Survey of East Chop Association Members on  
"Proposal regarding traffic on East Chop Drive."

In response to a suggestion that an effort be made to determine the perspective of East Chop residents to the proposal to make a segment of East Chop one-way only, we requested and received permission to use the existing email distribution lists for the East Chop Association. There are 600+ homes in East Chop. The current email list has 219 entries, seasonal and year round residents of East Chop. Following is the text of the message that was sent out, including a note that indicated this was NOT an East Chop Association sponsored project.

"At the August meeting of the East Chop Association, the issue was raised of pedestrian and bicyclist safety on East Chop Drive.

This email is to request your input on whether or not to proceed to request traffic-reducing changes to the Drive. The proposal and rationale are presented in the attached file *East Chop One-Way rev4.doc* Maps in pdf format are available but these are large files.

Please reply to this email:

**Yes** – I agree that changes are needed and that the proposed one-way plan is a practical and equitable compromise that balances the needs of drivers, walkers and bikers without unduly impacting residents.

or

**No** – I do not agree that these changes are needed.

or

**No** – I do not agree with the proposed solution.

**Please also provide any comments:"**

There was no overwhelming preference by respondents to the email for or against the proposal. Of the 59 responses (25% response rate), 33 replied Yes, several with comments about a preference of direction for the one-way segment, and 26 replied No. Of respondents who live on side roads likely to gain traffic from the proposal, most replied against the proposal.

The 16 comments from No responses follow:

"I am not sure if anything will fix the issue. I think people just need to continue to watch out for bikers and walkers (as they do on the rest of the island). Speed bumps, I believe, would not be approved by the town due to fire safety issues. The fire trucks cannot get over the bumps. Speed bumps are only authorized on private roads, not public."

"While I understand the concerns of everyone, and as one who walks, bikes, drives the road daily and has for decades (year round), I do not think that the drive should be one way. I think that petitioning the various police departments for an enforced 20 mile an hour speed limit would be in order. When the road was closed for a year or so after the storms of 91, the traffic on the side roads of the Chop - Monroe, Brewster, Green etc. was insane, and a one way road would simply re-direct the traffic to these smaller windy roads. Munroe is a speedway now, which is why 6 years ago I requested the 4 way stop at the Brewster intersection. Just out of curiosity, are you going to please the sunrise drivers or the sunset drivers in your plan? I happen to enjoy both directions.

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I'd like to talk with people about this as well. There are lots of things to consider in the unintended tone of changing something (no matter how sensible and meritorious) that seems to be designed to cater to the wants of a few, who have always been perceived as the elite summer people."

"A one way proposal will significantly reduce enjoyment of the Chop for residents and will not solve the problem principally related to speeding on narrow roads where people are walking (often with children or dogs), jogging or bicycling."

"I am curious of how many incidents (actual accidents and close-calls) which has brought this proposal to a vote?"

East Chop is a peninsula, therefore I believe over 95% of the vehicles which travel East Chop Drive seek a destination within the Chop, or for sightseeing.

Sightseers may not be paying strict attention to the road, however I believe in most cases they have a disincentive for speeding, as they would miss the sights & views of the homes along the Chop.

That leaves either Residents of the Chop, guests of the Residents, or construction workers/delivery drivers to the Chop. These folks will follow whatever rules are established, but will not necessarily reduce their speed on a one-way route. I believe enforcement of the posted speed limit is the remedy required, with perhaps more/better signage & enforcement. In my home state of Virginia, within a neighborhood, a community may choose a designation that allows for double fines for exceeding the speed limit.

The one-way will mostly be an imposition upon the residents of East Chop who are the ones who use the road the most, reducing their enjoyment of choosing which route in traveling to and from the beach club & tennis club. I feel that imposing the one-way rule would increase traffic on Massachusetts Avenue and the other interior roads of the Chop, which would be much more hazardous to children on bikes, dog walkers, and pedestrians because of poorer visibility among the tree-lined interior streets."

"Drivers are friendly and safe to walkers and bicyclists. It is enjoyable to see everyone coming home from the beach at 5:00."

"at the present time we would rather see set speed limits that are posted with caution that there are bikers and walkers on the road. i cannot see speed bumps or the need for a one way street. caution is the name of the game."

"I do understand the concerns raised. And I am always amazed at how careless all of us are when we are sharing a road.

However, from my experience two of the areas where I am concerned about the conflict between auto traffic and safety of walkers and bicyclist are not addressed. One is East Chop Drive as it approaches the major intersection at Our Market, where there are often large groups of pedestrians and bicyclists and many cars. The second is Brewster Avenue where you have a lethal combination of cars parked on both sides of the road, pedestrians, kids playing in the street, and tennis players going to and from the Tennis Club by all means. And the action on Munroe is going to be substantially increased.

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Summary of the Responses to an Email Survey of East Chop Association Members on  
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I do find speed bumps commonly used, but I hate them. They are dangerous for pedestrians and bicycles. Slowing the traffic would help--I have seen that done in roads through public parks.

But the truth is that the whole Island is inundated with traffic of all kinds during the season--10 times the normal population! "

"It is my experience that drivers give all persons full rights to the use of the road."

"I think a much better solution is to teach people at a very young age to be careful, share the road, walk facing traffic etc. After all that's what they'll have to do in America! "

"As someone who was born and raised in East Chop, I feel that I have an intimate knowledge of the issues highlighted in this email. As one who walks regularly around these neighborhoods, including along East Chop Drive, I am unconvinced that changing to limited one way vehicle traffic is merited or wise. What traffic accident statistics are the basis of the conclusion that one-way traffic is required for safety reasons? If one way traffic is to be discussed for East Chop Drive, the ONLY proposal worthy of consideration is one that changes the ENTIRE length of East Chop Drive to one way (from the entrance on New York Ave near the State Police Station - all the way to Our Market). And while this proposal, on its face, would (possibly) be traffic neutral for the rest of East Chop (would not increase or decrease vehicular traffic volume anywhere else in East Chop) - even then, traffic effects must be closely analyzed.

The possible impact of traffic being diverted into the heart of the East Chop neighborhoods I will vehemently oppose. My wife, 2 year old son, my brother and his family, as well as my neighbors would be vocal about any such proposal that would have the effect of increasing traffic in our neighborhood. These proposals require THOROUGH and COMPLETE traffic analyses of how traffic will be affected and where the increased burden of traffic may fall."

"Due to the location of our house, on the very busy four corners, we are opposed to the plan. To be honest, it is a good one and it would be neat to have a walking path on the road next to the Bluff, but we know that there would be a serious increase of traffic past our house and at the four corners."

"We prefer to have bike paths added. This is the safest and easiest way to proceed. We need to check to determine what "authority" has this responsibility. "

"The shifting of traffic will inevitably overload many of the side roads which are much smaller than East Chop Drive as drivers seek to avoid the one way solution. The smaller side roads are even less prepared to handle additional traffic volume, not as wide and likely to cause an even bigger safety concern.

On another note, a significant concern in the community appears to be the small "lake" that appears on East Chop Drive near the Beach club every-time it rains - pedestrians and cars trying to avoid that particular area are something that warrants action as soon as possible if there is not already a plan to fix it."

"I am a little shocked at how little thought was given to the impact of this "one-way" plan. Isn't it pretty obvious that this plan would turn Monroe into a thorough street from New York to East Chop Drive. Having grown up in a house on Brewster, I am greatly more concerned about increased traffic through

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the interior streets of East Chop. As you are aware, East Chop is mostly a quiet summer community, I would hate to see more traffic on any of the streets. I recall a few years back when due to erosion, East Chop Drive was "closed". We saw significant more traffic on Brewster that summer.

I don't see speed bumps as impactful to bikers or walkers at all. In fact, if these were an issue they could divert more walkers and bikers to the interior streets which would make more sense and is a better solution to them sharing East Chop Drive with vehicles. If vehicles are not driving at excessive speeds, then speed bumps are not an issue at all. It is possible that speed bumps would solve the traffic volume issue, however knowing that speed bumps are in place many vehicles might choose to travel via New York Avenue to and from Vineyard Haven rather than be inconvenienced by the speed bumps."

"Changing the proposed stretch of road to one-way would greatly increase traffic on both Monroe and Brewster Avenue. The increased traffic on these side streets would impact two of our family homes. These side streets are currently pleasant and safe places for children to ride bicycles without the threat of many motorists.

Changing the traffic pattern simply shifts the problem to a new location without resolving the issue. This is NO solution! The root of the problem is too many cars and trucks on the road. An affective solution will address how to properly manage and perhaps limit the volume of vehicles."

- "1. I would put in speed bumps.
- 2. I would consider closing the road to all traffic from 6-9 AM (except residents who need to get to their houses on East Chop Drive)
- 3. Sidewalk is a good idea but I don't think there is enough room --
- 4. I definitely would not allow trucks or buses which I is not allowed now.
- 5. If the decision was to make it one way I would make it one way all the way from Our Market to the end of East Chop Drive -- that way the interior of the chop would not be as disturbed.

I feel that by making East Chop Drive one way as proposed and having the traffic go down Monroe Aveue puts too much traffic on East Chop roads -- and also is a risk to children riding bikes, walking,"

"The beauty of being an East Chopper, from where I am, is that incredibly beautiful drive/walk/run/cycle up and down East Chop Drive. Plus, it would mean Green Avenue and all the internal roads would be loaded up with traffic - which I think is much more dangerous.

My next reaction is a question - What is the accident rate? If it were high, I would be concerned, but I can't even think of *one* accident since we have been summer residents, and that has been 13 years (I know, I'm still new!!!).

And you know, people do love to see the bluffs and Telegraph Hill - and why shouldn't they? We are lucky to see it every day. Why make it more difficult for tourists? Is the volume really that bad? I personally don't think so.

I wouldn't be opposed to a few tasteful wooden speed limit signs, and an occasional visit from some cops to enforce them.

That all said, *the whole island should ban mopeds. That is what we should be working on."*

East Chop One-Way FINAL.Doc  
27 October 2008

Problem:

On East Chop Drive walkers, bicyclists and vehicles compete for space on a narrow two-lane, two-direction road at the edge of the East Chop Bluffs (Bluffs). There are also structural and stability concerns with the Bluffs from continuing erosion.

The following conditions exacerbate the safety risk:

- There is no sidewalk.
- There is only one speed limit sign.
- Vehicles frequently travel at excessive speed, in particular along curved sections that are "blind" to oncoming pedestrians.
- Pedestrians do not consistently walk facing the traffic.
- Bicyclists ride with as well as against the traffic.
- Much of the vehicular traffic drives the road for the view, not to reach destinations on East Chop Drive.

Options:

The following options may resolve the safety concern to various degrees.

Option	Pro	Con
Speed bumps – reduce speed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Could be implemented seasonally</li> <li>— May deter traffic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Annoying to drivers, buggies and bicyclists</li> <li>— Do not limit vehicle volume</li> </ul>
Speed limit signs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Increase awareness and support enforcement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Visual clutter</li> <li>— Do not limit vehicles</li> </ul>
Widen the road to make a sidewalk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Allow coexistence of vehicles and people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Bluff side is protected and cannot be encroached for widening</li> <li>— Homeowner property would be "taken"</li> <li>— Not enough room for bicycle path and sidewalk</li> </ul>
Limit vehicle traffic by type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Eliminating trucks would reduce traffic volume and remove large vehicles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Requires Mass Highway approval</li> <li>— Impacts on businesses, services and deliveries to homeowners</li> </ul>
Police speed traps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Increase attention to speed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Does not address traffic volume</li> </ul>

East Chop One-Way FINAL.Doc  
27 October 2008

Option	Pro	Con
Change East Chop Drive to one-way	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Reduces traffic volume</li> <li>— Segregates road space to pedestrians, bicyclists</li> <li>— Offsets vehicle weight from the Bluff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— Resident access limitations</li> <li>— Impact on side streets from traffic re-routing</li> <li>— Impact on business service/delivery</li> <li>— Access limits to public spaces (beach club, beach, yacht club, emergency boat dock)</li> </ul>

Recommendation

Change a limited segment of East Chop Drive to one-way: Munroe to the intersection at the East Chop Beach Club. When Oak Bluffs repaves East Chop Drive (scheduled for 2010), the Highway Department could mark one lane of traffic heading West to East (Vineyard Haven toward Oak Bluffs) on the inside for vehicles, and the outer lane for pedestrians and bicyclists. Post notices along East Chop Drive (old Commercial Avenue) from Massachusetts Avenue to the East Chop Beach Club as "No thru street". This recommendation accommodates the following issues/concerns:

- No State Road is intersected and one-way starts and ends at intersections (eliminates Mass. Highway jurisdiction)
- Access limitations impact approximately four (4) residences
- Traffic impacts on alternative roads is minimized: Munroe – cars from 2 residences; Atlantic – cars from 2 residences; Brewster – cars from 1 residence; Arlington – cars from 1 residence
- No access impacts on: East Chop Beach Club, East Chop Yacht Club, Oak Bluffs Emergency Boat launch; East Chop Lighthouse

In addition it is recommended that additional speed limit signs be posted along East Chop Drive; at present there is only one near the East Chop Yacht Club. Since East Chop Drive is a strictly residential area and more of a byway than a direct thoroughfare, serious consideration should be given to reducing the speed limit altogether. Periodic speed traps by the Police Department, especially during commuter hour would deter many speeders.

Approval Process for Roadway Changes

If not affecting a road that intersects with a State Road, the Oak Bluffs Board of Selectmen, with input from Police and Highway Departments and advisory input from Planning Board, can make a determination to change a road to one-way. A public hearing or hearings, preferably with seasonal as well as year round resident input, is required.

The following table identifies potential benefits and detriments by stakeholder group:

Impact	Water	Residential	Commercial	Deer	Residential	Town	Emergency	Police	East Chop Dr.	Intersecting Street (Main Ave Kingston Green Kiln Main)	Memorial Traffic Road Main Ave Main	Utility	Storage	Construction	Landscape
Traffic Change															
Re-route to town															
Delivery/service complication															
Construction project															
School bus pickup															
Trash pickup															





# Map 2

