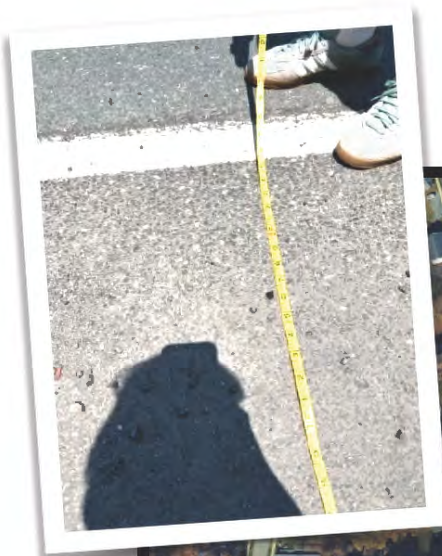


Walk Audit Report

Dalton Avenue, Pittsfield, MA

November 2025



Pittsfield Community Design Center

Introduction

A city's gateways are places to welcome travelers into a neighborhood—transitional zones from one type of environment to another. The corridor of Dalton Avenue in Pittsfield serves as a major gateway between the Morningside and Allendale neighborhoods. There are two distinct segments of Dalton Ave; we will think of them as the “outer” section that has four lanes on a divided highway, and a “lower” section that generally has two travel lanes and a lower speed limit. This quarter-mile stretch of road is a neighborhood in its own right, home to local businesses, multifamily residences, and nearby recreational amenities.

This report shares details about the lower Dalton Ave corridor in the context of a fatal vehicle-pedestrian crash that occurred here in the summer of 2025. Recommendations are provided based on observations made during the walk audit that will help prevent having more lives lost in the future.

Background

In the past five years since January 2020, there have been over ninety reported crashes along the lower section of Dalton Ave (MassDOT IMPACT). Of these, nineteen have been reported as causing injury. The corridor's first fatal crash occurred on June 20th, 2025, and will be the focus of this report.

On the afternoon of June 20th, Luis Chin, 87, began crossing Dalton Ave on foot near the corner of Dartmouth Street, but did not make it to the other side. He was struck by a driver traveling westbound toward Tyler Street and hospitalized with serious injuries. He later succumbed to those injuries.

What is it like to walk and bike along this corridor? What circumstances may have contributed to the crash that killed Luis Chin? How can this street be improved to benefit the neighborhood and make it safer for people traveling to and through it? A group of concerned residents visited and walked the corridor in the summer of 2025 to find answers and learn more about their community.

This Walk Audit was performed with the guidance of the AARP Walk Audit Toolkit, a resource available to anyone concerned about making their community more livable, whether they are a professional or not. The toolkit guides users through different topic areas such as street safety & appeal, sidewalks, streets & crossings, and building a better block. Volunteers at the walk audit took ownership of the different topic sheets and collected observations and feedback during the audit.

Observations

Road Geometry: Community members at the walk audit took both quantitative and qualitative observations of the Dalton Ave corridor during the audit. One of the most basic data points for the road was the width of the traveled lanes, especially in the area of the fatal crash. This area is a transition zone, where westbound traffic is leaving a signalized intersection, and a parking lane and bike lane form at the end of the first block. In the eastbound direction, two travel lanes form to transition traffic to the divided highway and higher speed limit heading toward the Allendale neighborhood.

At this three-lane section of Dalton Ave, the lane measurements were observed as follows:

- EB lane: 10 feet
- WB inner lane: 11.5 feet
- WB outer lane: 10 feet
- Shoulder: 2.5 feet

While these lane measurements are not unusual for an arterial road, the westbound travel lane on the block just prior to this (where the fatal collision occurred) is anywhere from 15 to 18 feet wide, which is prone to inviting excessive speeds.



ABOVE: TRAFFIC SPILLED BACK FROM THE DUNKIN' DONUTS DRIVE-THRU.

Drive-thru traffic: The Dunkin' Donuts franchise at 84 Dalton Ave is a major traffic generator along the corridor. Drive-thru traffic frequently spills back from the parking lot onto the sidewalk and traveled way. Indeed, at the start of the audit, traffic was backed up beyond the property; blocking the sidewalk and spilling into the rightmost travel lane. This situation interferes with pedestrian travel along the sidewalk, and causes vehicles to change lanes suddenly in the area of the driveway.

Crosswalks: According to the Uniform Vehicle Code, any roadway intersection where a walkway continues from one side to either, marked with paint or inferred from a straight line of travel across, is a crosswalk. These marked and unmarked crosswalks may have the same status legally, but public perception likely varies greatly. Without crosswalk markings on the pavement, pedestrians may not realize that an intersection is still a legal place to cross unless otherwise noted, and motorists likely would not think to be watching for pedestrians as intently as with marked crosswalks.

Crosswalk:

(a) That part of a roadway at an intersection included within the connections of the lateral lines of the sidewalks on opposite sides of the highway measured from the curbs or, in the absence of curbs, from the edges of the traversable roadway; and in the absence of a sidewalk on one side of the roadway, that part of a roadway included within the extension of the lateral lines of the existing sidewalk at right angles to the centerline.

(b) Any portion of a roadway at an intersection or elsewhere distinctly indicated for pedestrian crossing by lines or other markings on the surface

Uniform Vehicle Code Millennium Edition, p. 3

It is unknown for certain whether Luis Chin was crossing Dalton Ave directly within an unmarked crosswalk or crossing "midblock", without further details from the crash investigation. What is known is that there are only three marked crossings on Dalton Ave, two of which are on either end of the corridor: at the roundabout with Woodlawn Ave, and the

signalized intersection with Dalton Ave. The only other marked crossing is a signalized midblock crossing near the Dunkin' Donuts property. All other crossings at the intersections along Dalton Ave are unmarked.

Parking: There are varying zones of on-street parking along Dalton Ave. In the westbound direction of travel (the northern side of the street), 1-hour curbside parking is allowed by signage from the roundabout up to the intersection of Harvard Street. Beyond Harvard Street toward Benedict Road, there is no signage allowing or prohibiting parking (this factor will be addressed below). On the eastbound (south side) of the street, two-hour curbside parking is allowed by signage placed in two locations. Curbside parking ends at the intersection with Harvard Street, where a bus pull-out is located. Moving toward Benedict Road, the traveled way opens to two lanes for the eastbound direction.

During walk audit observations, it was noted that vehicles are parked along the northerly curb of Dalton Ave immediately east of Dartmouth Street (see right). This created an obscured "sight triangle" where someone walking would need to traverse about twelve feet into the roadway to see around the parked vehicle in order to check for oncoming traffic.



ABOVE: THE TRUCK PARKED ALONG THE OPPOSITE CURB CREATED AN OBSCURED SIGHT LINE FOR PEOPLE CROSSING FROM THAT CORNER.

BELOW: THE BUS STOP BENCH ENCOUNTERED DURING THE WALK AUDIT IN POOR STRUCTURAL CONDITION.

Speed limits: The corridor of Dalton Ave from Benedict Road to Woodlawn Ave does not have a posted speed limit. While this indicates that the citywide statutory speed limit applies, in practice this provides no clear guidance to motorists for consistent or predictable travel, especially on a gateway where travelers from outside the city are likely passing through. The nearest speed guidance is on the divided highway to the east, where posted speeds reduce to 35 mph, and a warning sign indicates that motorists should reduce speeds. It is presumed that the 35 mph limit carries through the "lower" Dalton Ave corridor until reaching the roundabout with Woodlawn Ave.

Bus stop: Community members noted that there is a bench installed at the corner of Harvard Street in the outbound direction for BRTA bus routes along Dalton Ave. The bench is cracking and is at risk of breaking or causing injury if someone were to sit on it. There is no shade from trees, buildings, or otherwise in the vicinity, and likewise no cover from rain or snow. There was no evidence of a bus stop on the other side of the street, but it is presumed that passengers could flag a bus for pick up or drop off.



Recommendations

Disclaimer: The recommendations made in this report are not the result of any engineering judgement or study. Additional consideration and consensus should be reached between city policymakers and highway officials before implementing any recommendations shared herein.




ABOVE: SPEED REDUCTION WARNING SIGN APPROACHING BENEDICT ROAD ON THE OUTER DALTON AVE CORRIDOR.

1. **Formalize and enforce speed limits.**
The city can formalize the speed limits on this corridor in one of two ways:

- Establish a special speed regulation to allow for regulatory speed limit signs to be posted along the corridor. This special speed regulation would need to be drafted and approved by the Pittsfield City Council.
- Post 25 mph statutory speed limits pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 90 §17C. According to MassDOT records, the city of Pittsfield adopted this section of Chapter 90 that allows for reduction of the citywide statutory speed limit to 25 mph in 2017. The city has not installed any signage to indicate that this statutory speed limit is in place. **It is recommended that the city Highway department work to install the standard signage (see below) at conspicuous locations around gateway areas** into the city, as well as periodically in strategic locations in neighborhoods as reminders.

Thickly Settled or Business Districts, City- or Town-Wide



Cities or towns that opt-in to MGL c. 90 § 17C may do so on a municipal-wide basis, thus setting the reasonable and proper speed on all city- and town-owned streets within thickly settled or business districts at 25 mph that do not have existing special speed regulations. If opting in, it is recommended that MA-R2-9A or MA-R2-9B signage be posted at all jurisdictional boundaries to make drivers aware of this statutory regulation. Please note that these signs cannot be placed on State Highway without prior approval from MassDOT.

MA-R2-9A and MA-R2-9B Sign Face Drawings

ABOVE: RECOMMENDED IMPLEMENTATION GUIDANCE FOR §17C.

2. Convert all crosswalks to marked crossings along the corridor. Given the denser, urbanized land use context along lower Dalton Ave, and given the implied 25 mph speed limit due to the city’s adoption of M.G.L. Chapter 90 §17C, all **crosswalks at intersections along the corridor should be marked to allow for more conspicuity** and for more predictable behavior from pedestrians and motorists alike. The figure below shows the intersections along Dalton Ave circled in red that would benefit from full marked crosswalks. “Yield to pedestrians in crosswalk” stanchion signs are also recommended to be used to help with traffic calming.

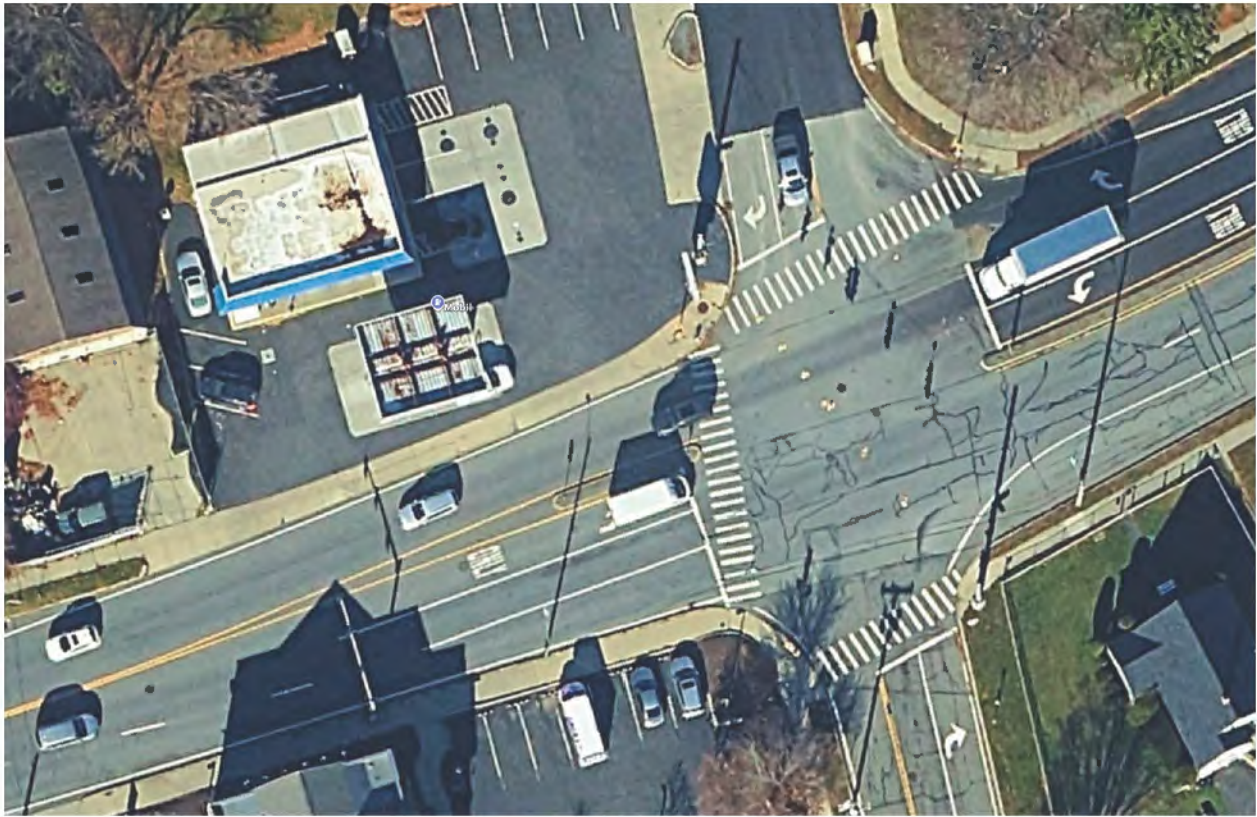


ABOVE: LOCATIONS WHERE MARKED CROSSWALKS ARE RECOMMENDED.

3. Establish “daylighting” at corners with on-street parking regulations. As noted in the walk audit observations, vehicles parked close to a street corner obscure the view of people trying to cross the street and turn out of the side street while driving, as well. **One car-length of clear space (also known as “daylighting”)** should be established at the corners of each intersection, where parking is prohibited. A parking regulation that establishes “No Parking Here to Corner” controls can be approved through the Traffic Commission put to the City Council through petition.

While signage would be the first step to restricting parking nearby the street corners, a long-term solution would be to install curb extensions or other barriers to prevent parking too close to the street corner. These should be considered at the next opportunity for street maintenance or reconstruction along this corridor. In the interim, epoxy gravel paint can be applied to the affected areas to create a contrasting surface that communicates that parking is not permitted within 20 feet of the street corner. Planters or flex posts could also be used as a light, quick, cheap solution in the interim.

4. Right-size travel lanes. The wide “transitional” nature of the westbound travel lane beyond Benedict Road invites speeding through this corridor, especially if the traffic light is green for



ABOVE: THE MEDIAN ISLAND SHOWN ON THE WESTERLY LEG OF THE INTERSECTION COULD BE WIDENED TO NARROW THE “RECEIVING” LANE OF TRAFFIC PASSING THROUGH THE INTERSECTION. THE WHITE SHOULDER STRIPE CAN ALSO BE MOVED FURTHER AWAY FROM THE NORTHERLY CURB. “NO PARKING” SIGNS WOULD NEED TO BE INSTALLED.

through traffic. Painting a white shoulder stripe and widening the median island on the western leg of the Dalton Ave/Benedict Road intersection would signal that reducing speed to the citywide 25 mph statutory limit is imperative. Making a pinch point creates “edge friction” for drivers that cues them to slow down naturally, beyond the need for signs.

5. Improve the bus stop for transit riders. It is recommended that BRTA pursue installation of a new bus shelter and signage at this stop to encourage more transit use and to protect passengers from the elements while waiting for a bus.

Conclusion

The crash that killed Luis Chin in the summer of 2025 was the first known fatality to have occurred on that corridor. It is imperative that we take lessons learned from why this crash took place and take steps to prevent another from happening. This is to both honor the life of Luis and to make sure that no further lives are lost unnecessarily.

After an inquiry to the Pittsfield Police Department, the crash is still under investigation at the time of writing in November 2025, and more granular details about the incident are not yet available. This report documents the findings that were made out in the field on the community Walk Audit as well as the reporting provided by the Berkshire Eagle newspaper after the crash occurred. The Berkshire District Attorney’s Office will be the custodian of the final investigation, and any updates learned from the release of that investigation and report may be incorporated into these recommendations.