



Appointed by Joseph A Curtatone, Mayor

Date: Thursday, October 21, 2021

Time: 6:30-8:00pm

Location: Virtual Meeting using GoToMeeting: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/539724445>

Community Representatives:

*Ted Alexander

*Ginny Alverson – Vice Chair

*Laura Evans

*Paola Massoli

*Audrey Orenstein – Secretary

*Vitor Pamplona

*Zach Rosenberg – Chair

*Julia Toof

*Emily Vides

Ex-Officio:

Katjana Ballantyne, *City Council*

*Alexandra Kleyman, *Mobility Division, OSPCD*

*Justin Schreiber, *Mobility Division, OSPCD*

*=present

Guests:

Kate White – Mobility Division, OSPCD

Andrew Krivak

Karen Molloy

Tom Lamar – Somerville Bicycle Committee

Acting Secretary: Ted Alexander

Call to order: 6:31 PM

1. Procedural Business
 - a. Zach R. took attendance and welcomed guests
 - b. Meeting minutes for September will be reviewed and approved at the next meeting
2. Subcommittee Updates
 - a. Engineering (Paola M.). The Engineering subcommittee met last week and discussed Powder House Boulevard, the Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan, and dangerous intersections.
 - i. Powder House Boulevard / Alewife Brook Parkway plans. The subcommittee agreed with the comments Zach sent to Ali and Justin by email in September and did not have any additional comments to add on the design.
 - ii. Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan. The subcommittee's initial thoughts on the plan:

1. The city should work with developers and MassDOT to address safety at the different access points to Assembly, including the Kensington underpass and other points of high danger. The pedestrian experience trying to walk to Assembly is difficult.
 2. Additional building at Assembly will bring more residents and more commercial activity, which will contribute to the increasing footprint of e-commerce and deliveries. We want to know how the city and developers are thinking about minimizing the footprint of deliveries. Many cities are replacing delivery trucks and vans with cargo bikes, and also using parcel lockers. Somerville should be looking at these possibilities.
- iii. Regarding Assembly, Alexandra (Ali) K. said that MassDOT and the state delegation have exchanged emails about the Kensington raised crosswalks. Those crosswalks should be built in the next several weeks. The city received a grant from the Gaming Commission to address the Mystic and Middlesex intersection. The Mobility Division will also develop a conceptual design for Fellsway West and Middlesex. Part of that work will include a freight analysis and traffic data in that area. There is a lot of planned lab development, along with a new fire station, both of which will involve large truck traffic. Mobility is trying to improve the design there and plans to talk to the fire department about smaller trucks.
 - iv. In response to a question from Zach R. about Mobility's involvement with the neighborhood planning process, Ali said the planning and zoning group runs this process. For Assembly, Rebecca Cooper is leading the project. Mobility reviews her work and provides feedback on draft chapters for the neighborhood plans.
 - v. The subcommittee wanted to know whether the intersection at Cross Street and Gilman Street was part of the Pearl Street project. It is a dangerous intersection that needs a crosswalk. Justin S. said that it is part of the project and referred to slides that Mobility presented to PTAC at a previous meeting.
 - vi. Emily V. requested a list of streets that are under consideration for improvements, and Justin S. said he would send the committee a list.
- b. Policy (Ted A.). The subcommittee did not meet this month, but worked on two issues: sidewalk snow clearance and automated traffic enforcement.
 - i. Snow clearance. In response to questions from Ted, Justin S. provided the following updates on items related to sidewalk snow clearance from the 2020 Vision Zero Action Plan:
 1. Somerville's Department of Public Works (DPW) will be running a pilot program for sidewalk snow clearance this winter, which will cover the full lengths of School Street and Broadway. The goal of the pilot is to work out operational issues including what kind of equipment to use. A contractor will perform the snow clearance work for the pilot. Clearance would start when enforcement can start under the current ordinance, that is, 6 daylight hours after snowfall stops.
 2. The MBTA does not clear snow from bus stops, except on designated key routes. There are no key routes in Somerville. DPW does clear some bus stops in Somerville, but not all.

3. There is no plan to develop a list of streets prioritized for sidewalk snow removal. However, there is a list of places, including schools and bridges over railroads, that are prioritized for snow removal. DPW is already responsible for clearing sidewalks in those designated places.
- ii. Automated enforcement. Ted described bills that have been introduced at the state level, in both the House and Senate, to provide for automated enforcement of certain traffic laws, and a Home Rule Petition under consideration in the Somerville City Council that would provide for automated enforcement in school zones. One of the House bills would allow for automated enforcement of bus lanes. Ted drafted letters to Somerville's state delegation (Sen. Jehlen and Reps. Uytterhoeven, Connolly, and Barber) in support of the state legislation. The drafts were sent around to committee members for review before the meeting.
 1. Ali K. suggested that in the Home Rule Petition, it might be better to refer to safety zones instead of school zones to define the areas where automated enforcement would be allowed.
 2. Emily V. stated that bus lane enforcement is needed in the pilot bus lanes on Mystic Avenue, which is a state road. Legislation should allow for enforcement on state roads, because the State Police are not enforcing this bus lane. Emily has called the State Police multiple times to request enforcement of the bus lane. The State Police told her that they don't have the resources to do this and recommended that she contact legislators to ask for additional funding for the State Police.
 3. The committee discussed adding a statement of support for the Home Rule Petition to the letters or sending an additional letter to the state legislators in support of the petition after the City approves it.
 4. Ted made a motion to approve sending the letters to the state delegation with edits as needed to respond to committee members' comments. The motion was seconded, and all members present voted in favor. Ted will aim to have the letter ready to send by October 29.
- c. Officers' update (Audrey). Audrey, Zach, and Ginny, along with Ali and Justin, have been interviewing potential new PTAC members. They have conducted 10 interviews and have not yet made a selection, but there are good candidates. Justin stated that it will take a couple of months to appoint new members once they are selected.
3. Powder House Circle Neighborhood Walk
 - a. Zach and Audrey described plans for a second PTAC walk around Powder House Circle, to observe the recent changes to the circle once they are completed. This would most likely take place in November, probably in the morning, since the last walk around the circle was in the evening and some people were not able to attend at that time.
 - b. Emily and Paola shared positive feedback about the changes to the circle.
 - c. Andrew K. (guest) stated that the mixture of traffic lights and stop signs is confusing. Ali K. explained that the project has not been completed, and that all of the traffic lights will be turned off and bagged to convert all entrances to the circle into yields with crosswalks.
4. City Update (Ali K. and Justin S.)

- a. Vision Zero mailer and logo (slide 3). Ali described plans to send out a citywide mailer about vision zero and shared some options for a new Somerville Vision Zero logo. PTAC members commented on the logo options, expressing a variety of opinions about which logo to choose. In general, people liked the idea of including icons representing different types of transportation and making the logo recognizable at a glance.
- b. Green Line Extension (GLX) (slide 4). Various improvements are underway for pedestrians in the areas around future Green Line stations at Union Square, East Somerville, Gilman Square, Magoun Square, and Ball Square, including adding crosswalks and widening sidewalks. The larger project to redesign the Union Square plaza and streetscape is in progress and implementation should begin in 2024.
- c. Somerville Transit Plan update (slides 5-13).
 - i. The first phase of the transit plan effort was to describe existing conditions and establish initial priorities. Existing conditions include who is riding the bus, which are the busiest routes, and how the MBTA is defining its vision, including the concepts of equity and access.
 - ii. Ali said that city staff reviewed the Somerville planning documents and the state's planning documents on bus and transit planning to see what the city has already said is important to us and understand what data MBTA is using and how they are defining their vision and how that should influence our transit priorities and service goals. Documents reviewed included the following:
 - 1. Better Bus Project documents. This is the MBTA's umbrella improvement project. Not only network redesign but also bus transit priority and bus modernization. Redesign focuses on more frequent connections to major destinations.
 - 2. Focus 40. This is the MBTA long-term plan.
 - 3. SomerVision 2040. This plan includes focus areas on Advancing Equity, Preventing Displacement, and Community Collaboration, and transit and transportation equity are called out in the goals. The plan specifically mentions improving bus stops, creating better north-south bus connections, adding wayfinding at stops, and integrating transit planning with zoning. This could include requiring housing and affordable housing around rapid transit and thinking about how we are connecting regional destinations and employment centers.
 - 4. Somerville Vision Zero Action Plan. The Safe Street Design action area in the plan calls for safety improvements within 1/4 mile of rapid transit stations.
 - iii. Existing conditions. As shown on the slides, there are 14 bus routes that run through Somerville, and the bus stops with the highest number of boardings are the Davis Square Busway and Clarendon Hill. The slides include additional data about ridership for each route and the rest of the top 10 bus stops in the city, as well as demographic information about Somerville.
 - iv. The following initial priorities came out of phase 1 of the transit plan effort:
 - 1. Respond to growth. Over 12 million square feet of development is in the pipeline now. This growth is outstripping the regional model created by

the MPO. It is important to do transit planning and consider the volume and location of all this development. The city wants to be able to negotiate with developers to contribute to transit projects that would serve their residents and employees.

2. Quality transit service levels for all residents. This will involve focusing on places lacking transit and with populations that use transit more or need transit more, referred to as transit critical populations. The factors used to define transit critical populations come from the MBTA bus network redesign and include the percentage of people of color, low-income people, people with disabilities, elderly people, and people who do not have access to a car. The city is working on developing thresholds for how to count areas as transit critical.
 3. Plan for more transit priority infrastructure.
 4. Prioritize equity in our planning. This will involve looking more closely at metrics like time to walk or roll to transit in different parts of the city.
 - v. Phase 2 will involve developing a proposed transit network.
 - d. Project updates (slide 15) and public meetings (slides 13 and 16). As described on the slides, the city provided brief updates on ongoing projects and opportunities for public comment. Project updates included Somerville Avenue in the Union Square area, the Powder House Circle improvements, and speed hump installation on Kidder Ave, Lowell St., and Morrison Ave.
 - e. PTAC membership (slide 14). The new PTAC members should be appointed by November or December. The committee discussed how to onboard the new members. Ted suggested a buddy system where a new member is paired with an existing member and also an orientation-type meeting after the new members are officially on board. Audrey said new members can start taking minutes as acting secretary to help learn about the meetings.
5. Public Comment.
- a. Andrew K. asked why Kidder and Morrison Aves. were chosen for speed hump installation, and not Willow Ave. Justin stated that the city is hoping to expand speed hump installation to more streets. Ali explained that this approach is an evolution of how the city does projects. Engineering and Mobility used to focus on resurfacing projects where all the city's funding was focused on one or two streets in a year. But we are now trying to do more dispersed traffic calming. We rank and prioritize corridors and intersections based on the amount of traffic and amount of crashes. But this is a new way of doing things. We hope to do things like this throughout the city but it can't all happen at once.

Meeting ended: 8:00 PM