



SOMERVILLE BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE JANUARY 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone

Community Representatives: (X=in attendance)

X Tom Lamar, Chair	X Lena Webb
Katie Pierce, Vice Chair	X Ian Woloschin
X Ted Lester, Secretary	
X Ken Carlson	
Gregory Ely	
X Ted Feldman	
X Alex Frieden	
X Kevin McGrath	
X Mark Vollinger	

Ex Officio:

X Katjana Ballantyne, City Council
X Adam Polinski, OSPCD Mobility
X Deputy Chief Steve Carrabino, Police Department

Thursday, January 7th, 2021, 6:30-8:15PM

GoToMeeting link for computers, tablets, and smartphones: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/481422341>

GoToMeeting dial-in number: +1 (408) 650-3123, Access Code: 481-422-341

Procedural, General Business & Updates (15 Minutes)

- Guest introductions and meeting logistics
 - Guests: Viola Augustin, Emily Balkam, George Schneeloch, Martin Pavlinic, Brent Woo, Rob Vandenebeele (Portico Brewery – opening soon in Somerville), Nate Kaufman, Stephen Mackey, Mark Chase
- Acting Secretary: Ted L
- Approval of November and December minutes
 - Motion Ken, 2nd Alex. Motion passes unanimously
- Kudos given to Steve Carrabino for his dedication to the committee on his retirement. Ken spoke to Steve's passion for bicycle safety, electronic message board messages, best wishes for his future careers. Steve will miss his opportunity to provide education to other officers, motorists, and cyclists.
- Planning Safe Streets summit for Feb 28 – Ken
 - Planning group formed "Alliance for Safe Streets" organization to organize summit, but will continue afterwards and be open to all to join. Writing a progressive, powerful Declaration and Call to Action for City which will be finalized based on public input at the summit.
- Any other upcoming events?
 - Bike Talk Wednesday – on operating a bike shop during a pandemic
- Other committee business – Tom
 - Start thinking about priorities for 2021. Will discuss in February.
 - Annual report in 2020 took a while. Trying to get completed in March.

Focus 1: Snow Clearance (15 minutes)

- SBAC request for ex-officio representative from DPW
 - Adam: City identified Eric Weisman to be ex officio member from DPW. Avid cyclist. May not attend every meeting but will be good liaison.
- High-level snow response plan – Adam
 - Last storm was not normal, nor acceptable to city. City has higher expectations for DPW. There were extenuating circumstances related to staffing at DPW. Jill now acting commissioner of DPW, and started day before storm. Not a new standard for city.
 - Adam trying to organize snow summit meeting with DPW and few interested members of the committee to discuss priorities and expectations.
 - Ian: Do contractors have equipment for bike facilities? Adam: City hired contractors who can clear bike lanes and sidewalks.

- Ian: Snow blower and construction equipment used to remove and truck snow. Is this something new? Adam: Don't know – ask at snow summit. Katjana: City bought the snow blower a few years ago. Her understanding is it is used for major thoroughfares. There are issues related to where to push snow to. Ian: If snow is cleared on one side, it should also be cleared on both sides. Mark: Also applies to street sweeping schedule
- SBAC snow clearance letter – Ted F
 - Draft letter presented. Tom: suggests changes to CC line to include Eric and Katjana
 - Q: Should we reconsider the priority given lack of commuters? General consensus: No, rather get city used to plowing the lanes for when commuters come back. Kevin: people still commuting on Beacon.
 - Discussion of Broadway segments—Mark: lower priority when there is a 24h bus lane adjacent. Completely separated with no bus lanes should be higher.
 - Adam: Shore Drive and Grand Union will not have bollards until after the winter

Focus 2: Powder House Boulevard at Alewife Brook Parkway (15 minutes)

- Discussion/vote on design alternatives
 - Tom: Dangerous intersection, entire intersection being redesigned. Two options presented: signalized intersection and multi-lane roundabout. Strong preference at public meeting for signalized option. Propose SBAC writing to support signalized intersection and ask for road diet on Alewife.
 - Lena: What about the abutters whose driveways exit on roundabout? They would probably prefer the signalized intersection plan (Ian agrees via chat). Adam: They've been part of outreach.
 - Katjana: Been working on this for 5 years. She and the community support the signalized intersection. 200 to 600 housing units in the redevelopment. Lots of calls to slow the traffic down on Alewife. Unclear why the rotary design was added. New signal will be networked to help reduce back ups. 4 years and 11 community meetings all point to signalized intersection.
 - Greg: Way more parkland reclaimed with a signalized intersection.
 - Alex: Any desire from DCR to reduce to 1 lane each direction? Katjana – would need to talk to Allie. Adam: Allie is meeting with DCR next week.
<https://somervoice.somervillema.gov/intersection-redesign>
 - Greg: For the slip lane how does one prevent through traffic from using the the slip lane? As a motorist it seems like it would be great cut through to avoid the light for a right turn.
 - Katjana: Original design it was supposed to dead end. Adam: My understanding as well
 - Lena: Crossing at the beg button High St intersection is difficult since cars don't stop. Need either more enforcement or a road diet.
- Tom: Here's a proposed resolution for SBAC to vote to endorse:
 - We're excited to see this move forward overall, and we appreciate the proposed PBLs in general, and will follow up with specific comments as needed.
 - Of the proposed designs, we prefer the signalized intersection. (We are very skeptical of multi-lane)
 - We support a road diet of Alewife Brook Parkway
 - Dead end the driveway access road

Focus 3: Bike Network Plan (15 minutes)

- Suggested goals for Bike Network Plan – Ted L
 - Ted L: Original memo from 2019. Calls for a Bike Network Plan. Do we want to change it to be more of a mobility plan that include transit and pedestrian? Also tied to parking study of city. Was funded, but due to COVID, was eliminated from budget. Also, SBAC can do more in advance of a funded plan.
 - Ian: When started, PTAC wasn't there. Should we include other groups?
 - Greg: There needs to be a bike plan that says how to get from A-B in the city safely.
 - Ken: There is strengths to talking with one voice. However, also unique needs of each constituency. We need a bike network plan.
 - Arah: Focus on safety first, before convenience ease of use.
 - Ted F: Vision Zero action plan should help put them together.
 - Greg: City has lots of lofty goals. Need more concrete plans. Parking task force too. Bike Network plan would be more specific. Reason for addressing Bike Network plan is Highland and Spring Hill – parking issues were brought up as impediment to progressive street reform.
 - Lena: “Take away parking” language is bad. Need to be better prepared to offset and justify. Contentious feelings and public meetings.

- Alex F: Committee is bike committee. Already have VZ initiative, Somerstreets, etc.
- Alex E: Yes, the Complete Streets ordinance was passed back when I was chair. Definitely stale and not best-in-class anymore, and ripe for an update. The ordinance could require a bike plan or mobility plan be developed within X months and be a vehicle for accomplishing this goal.
- Ted's resolution for SBAC approval:
 - Re-iterate Memo on bike network plan
 - Support city's parking study
 - Support city revising Complete Streets ordinance and willing to work with them.
- Ian: Parking study is key, need to consider changing parking permit program
- Adam: Parking study group will restart soon, but unsure of funding. There will be community working group.

- Tom proposes vote on 3 resolutions, Ian seconds. All 3 Passed unanimously.
 - Endorse snow memo proposed by Ted F
 - Endorse intersection recommendations proposed by Tom L
 - Endorse bike network recommendations proposed by Ted L

Focus 4: Spring Hill / Highland (30 Minutes)

- Update on Spring Hill planning. - Adam
 - Tom via chat: Some discussion points / questions: Discussion points:
 - What should overall priorities be for Spring Hill / Highland Ave?
 - A major assumption of the previously plan presented is that Highland will not be safe for biking, and people accessing the many destinations on Highland would have to instead use the Community Path or neighborway and ride on a busy arterial to get back to Highland. Is it possible to adequately connect these destinations without PBLs on Highland, and if so, what would be necessary to make the Community Path / neighborway sufficiently connected to these destinations?
 - The plan includes PBLs on part of Central St, but not yet any continuous north-south corridors. What are good candidates/criteria for north-south corridors?
 - also: Highland Ave is super important but also a heavy ask in terms of parking removal. Acknowledging that, do we agree that it's a priority?
 - Lena: Unacceptable city didn't even have options with bike infrastructure on Highland
 - Kevin: Key access route to spring hill, high school, library. Bus corridor. Needs to evolve to meet needs of future – more bikes and transit.
 - Adam: city is still in feedback and revision phase. No decisions made. City heard about lack of comprehensive spring hill plan. Contracted Neighborways to do a plan – see if any parts of Highland necessary for connections. Also need more data on parking need – High School removed lots of parking on campus, but study assumed parking available on nearby streets. Most important is Central to Hamlet which is part of Area 1. Tough as planner – focus is subsurface engineering project with strict timeline, directive from Mayor to mitigate parking issues, especially on this scale.
 - Greg: Was public land for parking valued in study? Parking demand management – relatively cheap for staff to get resident permit. Nothing done for people who don't drive. Good article in Globe about demand management.
 - Ian: Sent an email to city and council. Daughter will be able to bike on Washington St, but high school students can't. Decisions on Highland will affect them. Understand it is a hard problem. Comes down to elected officials making hard decisions.
 - Kevin via chat: I think a reality we have to reconcile with is that Highland is the safest option for cyclists to offload from the Community Path. We can't assume that growing volumes of bicyclists will be able to safely use the Community Path. Moreover, it's still a critical transit corridor for both 88 and 90 - very important considering the Clarendon hill expansion. I think many of the residences on Highland have off-street parking, and there's lots of parking adjacent to Highland. Most of the businesses are walk-in businesses and I rarely see people driving to those businesses. I think parking demand is low on highland. I think it'd be good for the city to look into how off-street parking is made available to renters/residents.
 - Alex: #1 question he gets. Rush hour bike lanes?
 - Adam: Unique road – businesses, destinations. Design goal was to make it a destination – thus really focus on pedestrians and given them more space. Slow down traffic to make it

pedestrian friendly. Second priority was bus – cross town routes. Fewer high-quality bus stops – benches, shelters. More trees and storm water. Can't do those things with bus lanes. Then looked at bike lanes. Community path is alternative. Elm street part of project and could be part of a viable E/W corridor.

- Tom: These should goals should be compatible with bike lanes. Want to see more of the tradeoffs
 - Adam: Does change geometries – lots of curb changes. Would require some scaling back
 - Lena: Shocked at how much parking is being retained if pedestrians and bikes are priorities. Community path is not alternative to reach businesses
 - Ken via chat: The Mayor made a hugely poor decision by nixing the inclusion of a parking garage underneath the high school. A huge mistake. Having a parking garage on Webster had a large impact on our argument for removing all parking on Webster Ave. Very analogous to the situation on Highland. Need to consider parking garages – lesson learned for future. Highland means safe routes for schools.
 - Greg: Undervalued public property. Davis square is \$1M/acre. May not need it for whole length – just to ensure good connections. Cohesive plan would help.
 - Mark C: And shouldn't we charge market rate for parking before building a garage? [lots of agreement]
 - Katjana: Field is not part of this phase. Capital plans are changing. May be possibility in future.
 - Tom: All in favor of parking management, but not agreement on parking garages
- Tom Proposed resolution Highland: Alex 2nd. Passed with no one opposed
 - We believe there are opportunities to better manage the parking to justify parking
 - We acknowledge that it is a heavy ask, but given the number of destinations on Highland, believe it will be difficult or impossible to access those destinations without high-quality bike lanes on Highland. We are open to the idea of a comprehensive bike network plan instead, but so far it seems extremely difficult to accomplish those goals without bike lanes on Highland
 - We are open to either PBLs or bus-bike lanes, but either would be strongly preferable to sharrows.
 - We believe that bike lanes are not significantly in conflict with pedestrian safety, transit, or green stormwater infrastructure - it is just in conflict with parking. We would like to see a design that removes parking from one side of Highland.
 - Greg: Property tax on an off street spot is about \$240/year. Need to consider the value.
 - Mark C: Market rate for off street is \$125/month on craigslist.
 - Ted F: Need some parts of Highland for access to community path.

City Update – Adam (15 minutes) - Deferred

- Project status summary
- Other SBAC requests:
 - Request to update Vision Zero dashboard
 - Request to plan connect Community Path discontinuity in Davis