



SOMERVILLE BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE October 2021 MEETING MINUTES

Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone

Community Representatives

Tom Lamar, Chair
Lena Webb, Vice Chair
Ted Lester, Secretary
Ken Carlson
Gregory Ely

Ted Feldman
Alex Frieden
Mark Vollinger
Ian Woloschin

Ex Officio

Katjana Ballantyne, City Council
Viola Augustin, OSPCD Mobility
Adam Polinski, OSPCD Mobility
Eric Weisman, DPW

Thursday, Oct 7th, 2021, 6:30-8:00PM

GoToMeeting link for computers, tablets, and smartphones: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/713916029>

GoToMeeting dial-in number: +1 (408) 650-3123, Access Code: 713-916-029

Procedural, General Business & Updates (25 minutes)

- Meeting started @ 6:32pm 10/7/21
- Guest introductions and meeting logistics
 - Kate White (CoS Mobility)
 - Zachary Rosenberg
 - Jack Connolly
 - Sam Christy
 - Gavin Lund
 - Petru Sofio
 - Erwin Figueroa
 - Arah Schuur
- Acting Secretary: Ian
- Approval of September meeting minutes
 - **Approved**
- Upcoming events
 - Greg Ely: Family Bike Ride Sunday October 24th, end of the community path at 9am, biking to the Spy Pond Playground, wear costumes! <https://www.facebook.com/events/368598861612062>
 - Ken Carlson: Marathon Midnight Ride – Sunday 10/10
 - Ian Woloschin: Last Bike Breakfast of 2021 is October 29th
 - Ken Carlson: October 13th 4:30pm-6:30pm – MassBike Bike Bash at Assembly Square https://www.baystatebikemonth.org/bike_bash_assembly?utm_campaign=october_1_2021&utm_medium=email&utm_source=massbike
- Recruiting new members
 - Tom Lamar: We know we have fewer members than the Committee would like, looking for new members from frequent guests. Looking at putting out a more formal call for new members like PTAC has done.
 - Attending members are fine with both informal and formal recruiting.

Focus 1: Bike Count observations (15 minutes)

- Anecdota from Bike Count observations – all

- Tom Lamar: For the past two weeks Somerville has run the Annual Bike & Pedestrian Counts
- Tom Lamar: Counted at Medford St @ South St, relatively new flex post protected bike lane and wide right turn, traffic calming has recently been installed. Majority of cars are staying off the traffic calming, but some turn right very quickly across a bicycle/pedestrian route, could use additional tightening/calming.
- Ken Carlson: Counted on Medford St @ Perl Ave, Ken wants a sense of if we're back to pre-pandemic car traffic, feels that bicycle commuting is more spread out, but still counted 80-100 bikes. Concerned about biking up Medford St from Cambridge that there is a major right turn conflict between bicycles & cars, recently received an email about a community member who was right hooked here. Ken observed many conflicts in one hour, no actual crashes, but definitely an area of high concern. Lots of people biking with kids, extra danger.
 - Petru Sofio: narrow that section of Medford to 1 lane. then 90 out the conflict
- Mark Vollinger: Fellsway @ Shore Drive, just put in flexposts at Shore Drive, bike lane is nicer, more people using facilities, cars coming from Medford are driving down the bike lane though. Also did Assembly Square @ Great River Road, much more foot traffic than last year.
- Ted Feldman: Counted on Tuesday at School St @ Medford St, grey morning, most pedestrians were students going to school. Bike traffic is low, but unsurprising because there are no bicycle facilities here. Many of the counted cyclists included parents with young children on their bikes or riding along side, even riding up School St even though it is very steep. Feels this may indicate that people will brave the hill if it is a low stress route.
 - Mark Vollinger: I feel that school street was surprisingly popular before the closures too. its the most direct from winterhill area to highland and beyond. medford, when open, was a second popular route as it was slightly less steep, but it does send you up to a terrible intersection. I have spoken to several parents that got e-assist to overcome the school street hill.
- Arah Schuur: Counted two mornings and two afternoons at Powderhouse Circle. Haven't tallied everything up yet, but lots of people on bicycles, lots of concerning conflicts across Broadway & north side of College Ave. Hopes that as motorists learn the new configuration they will yield more frequently. Lots of cyclists still confused and taking the lane instead of the bike facilities.
- Erwin Figueroa: Did this morning, Holland Ave St @ Cameron Ave, new to Somerville so no reference to pre-pandemic. Felt there were a lot of cyclists (75+) even though there are no bicycle facilities. Lots of parents with children.
 - Ian Woloschin: There is a preschool right at this intersection
 - Ted Feldman: Interesting behavior when people try to cross this intersection.
- Tom Lamar: Saw more e-scooters/micromobility, should they be counted separately?
 - Mark Vollinger: Thinks they should be counted as "other".
 - Adam Polinski: Agrees
- Tom Lamar: Question, about a dozen counts left to do, are counts being extended until next week?
 - Adam Polinski: Yes, still a few counts open, put out another call for help, will try to get it done next week, more help from the community would be helpful
 - <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/17DyA281PKx0wrczbZezL41z97G8TrGJ3-9nnOu2qdTA/edit#gid=0>

Focus 2: Engineering team design feedback (20 minutes) – Ted F

- Powder House Boulevard at Alewife Brook Parkway
 - Ted Feldman: Also known as Clarendon Hill Intersection Improvements. SBAC was asked to review plans. Project reduces the width of the lanes and prevents cut-through traffic on the new side street created by the project.
 - Issues with signalling, pedestrian phases should be on recall, no separate phases for bicycles even though there are bicycle crossings in the plans, intention might be for bicycles to use pedestrian phasing but not clear from plans.
 - Chicanes were indicated in the new residential access road, would like more details.

- Questions about the placement of the sidewalk on the north side of the new residential road and whether or not parking would be included, this might help reduce cut-through traffic.
 - Lane widths look great, but why is it 11' north of Powderhouse Blvd? Can it be narrower?
 - Can the sidewalk be aligned better for desire lines?
 - No designated space for bike queuing, is this ok?
 - Can lane width reduction be extended as far as possible?
 - How does bicycle flow work for a cyclists going west on North Street and turning right onto Powderhouse Blvd?
 - Tom Lamar: Details appear to be coming together nicely, very excited.
 - Lena Webb: Anecdotally, was on Alewife @ Broadway, talked to a pedestrian who was frustrated by the current lane design, felt the lanes should be reduced to one in each direction, very excited to hear about the project.
 - Ken Carlson: SASS is focusing on Alewife Brook Parkway, looking for a major road diet for the entire length, using precedence of this project to extend road diets further.
 - Ted Feldman: If we put in an awesome facility here it could be a missed opportunity to not extend it further.
 - Ken Carlson: This is an environmental/economic justice area.
 - Lena Webb: Greenway connects to the Minuteman/Alewife MBTA Station.
 - Adam Polinski: Planning for fully protected raised cycletracks on Powderhouse Blvd to North St, not a long stretch, but is uphill.
 - Ted Feldman: This is the 65% plan, will there be another review?
 - Adam Polinski: This is likely the last time to weigh in as a community, City Staff will take this to DCR afterwards, need input from residents in project area. Will move to 100% over the winter and plan to start construction in the spring.
 - Ken Carlson: Is North St on the resurfacing plan?
 - Adam Polinski: No, not for at least a couple of seasons. Not really using the 5 year plan anymore, mostly focusing on a 2-3 year plan, easier to manage.
 - Ted Feldman: Is the new resurfacing plan available?
 - Adam Polinski: No, not right now, working on it.
 - **ACTION: City Staff will present update on resurfacing plan over the winter**
- Narrow section of South St
 - Ted Feldman
 - Push by developers to redo street, would change direction of traffic on South St, could open options for bicycle facilities
 - SBAC favors a unidirectional bike lane for the narrow portion of South St, but depends on volume/speeds of vehicles
 - Might be a good place to use minimal protection, such as armadillos
 - Tom Lamar: Likes overall idea

City Update (30 minutes)

- Update on construction projects and remaining planned construction this season
 - Powderhouse Circle
 - Construction Update
 - Last application of tan surface treatment scheduled for tomorrow morning
 - Remaining flexposts and traffic signs scheduled for installation next week
 - Signals will be bagged soon as well, then project will be complete
 - Comments?
 - Sam Christy: Prior to construction Powderhouse Circle was a bit of a “wild west”, but seemed to work out ok. Have not used the bike lanes, just take the lane and that seems to work out fine. Suggests putting sharrows in the main lanes.
 - Adam Polinski: No promises yet, but sharrows are part of a bigger picture strategy and don't always make sense, but this may be an exception?

- Ted Feldman: Asked Sam if Sharrows feel helpful?
- Sam Christy: Yes, family hasn't owned a car in 15 years and feel that Sharrows are helpful. Curious about why bike lane around Powderhouse Circle seems so convoluted.
- Ted Feldman: Oddly shaped intersection, safest option is to try and keep bike lanes parallel to crosswalks and for bike lanes & crosswalks to be perpendicular to motor vehicle conflict points.
- Adam Polinski: Consultant came back with this design and this meets best practice for all ages/all abilities bicycle facilities. A bigger capital project would change curbs/geometry that would allow for a less convoluted path, this was the best inexpensive option.
- Sam Christy: Roundabout feels much clearer about where you should be. Feels that the roundabout makes it feel like bicycles are not allowed in the lane and must be in the bike lane.
- Tom Lamar: Feels design is working as intended, speed is much less than before. Some concerns about motor vehicles not yielding on exits. Feels that sharrows could make sense to make it more obvious that bicycles can use the regular lanes.
- Ted Feldman: What about a Bikes May Use Full Lane sign? Less expensive than sharrows?
- Ian Woloschin: Somerville has sort of already established precedent on Beacon St, many cyclists refuse to use the cycle track, no sharrows to indicate that cyclists can use the street.
- Ted Feldman: Could SPD place a Variable Message Board?
- Ian Woloschin: VMBs go into hibernation for winter soon.
- Tom Lamar: Encourages attendees to bike through the roundabout to check it out
- Ted Feldman: Have the no turn conditions been followed?
- Adam Polinski: Not entirely, need to put up flexposts
- Somerville Ave (SAUSI)
 - Wrapping up now, but not entirely complete just yet.
 - Two way traffic restored on Oct 18th
 - Signal timing optimization continuing
 - Comments
 - Ken Carlson: Cycle track ends by Target, what's the transition look like?
 - Adam Polinski: Don't know right now, more construction is planned for next spring though.
 - Tom Lamar: Will the cycletrack at D2 be open when the street is reopened? If not, would it be better to restrict the street to bus-only until the cycletrack can open?
 - Adam Polinski: No, D2 work will extend beyond this fall. Can ask about restricting the street, but there are logistics issues getting construction access to D2.
 - Mark Vollinger: that is a big gap in equity for level of service
- College Ave
 - Sidewalk reconstruction continues
 - Traffic Board Hearing is being scheduled
 - Milling & Paving has been pushed to next spring
- GLX Adjacent Items
 - Washington St Floating Bus Stops still TBD
 - Broadway @ Boston Ave Slip Lane Removal construction will begin later this month
 - School St Bridge open to pedestrians & emergency vehicles
- Wellington Bridge
 - Outstanding construction deferred to spring
 - MassDOT flexpost approval was seasonal, will be restored in spring

- Comments
 - Mark Vollinger: Why only seasonal? What's the difference between Longfellow Bridge & Wellington Bridge?
 - Adam Polinski: Operational realities around snow plowing.
 - Ian Woloschin: Can we get a hard date for flex posts to be reinstalled? Can Somerville provide plowing logistics as needed?
 - Adam Polinski: Yes, we are working on these details and hope to have better level of service for next winter.
 - Broadway – Winchester to Cedar
 - Striping for a protected bike lane scheduled for later tonight
 - Highland Ave
 - Part of the Spring Hill Sewer Separation Project Highland Ave will be fully reconstructed
 - Business surveys and customer intercept surveys underway
 - Targeting a mid-November community meeting
 - Comments
 - Tom Lamar: Do we know what the topics for the meeting will be?
 - Kate White: Scope of project, results from surveys, gathering constructive feedback, no proposed designs yet
 - Tom Lamar: But the plan is still for protected bike lanes?
 - Kate White: Yes.
 - Vision Zero Mailer
 - Mobility & Communications have been working on a Vision Zero mailer that will be distributed to all city residents
 - Targeting a mid-November distribution
- Update on Bike Network Plan process
 - Existing conditions data collection in Fall 2021
 - Community engagement
 - Handlebar Surveys – Fall 2021
 - Community Feedback – Fall 2021 to Spring 2022
 - Network Plan
 - Draft in Early Summer 2022
 - Final in Winter 2023
 - Handlebar Survey
 - Being run by Street Plans, looking for 6 participants who can lead followup rides
 - Lena Webb: Leaders can pick times for rides, should they be morning & afternoon?
 - Kate White: Depends on ride leader's availability.