



SOMERVILLE BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE OCTOBER 2020 MEETING MINUTES

Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone

Community Representatives: X=in attendance

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

Ex Officio:

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

Guests: Viola Augustin (OSPCD), Emmanuel Vincent (Somerville Times), George Schneeloch, Nate Kaufman, Kristiana Lachiusa (Livable Streets), Arah Schuur, Phil Goff (former member, now Arlington ped/bike group), Jane, Alex Epstein

Thursday, October 8th, 2020, 6:30-8:00PM

GoToMeeting link for computers, tablets, and smartphones: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/409343293>

GoToMeeting dial-in number: +1 (312) 757-3121, Access Code: 409-343-293

Procedural, General Business & Updates (15 Minutes)

- Guest introductions and meeting logistics
 - Discussed bike counts and what people observed during them
- Acting Secretary: Ted L
- Review minutes – deferred until more members showed up.
 - No comments
 - Moved to approve both September minutes (Tom), Second (Alex), all in favor – no opposition

Focus 1: Bus/Bike Lanes in General (20 minutes)

- How safe/comfortable is biking in a bus/bike lane?
- When should we prioritize bus lanes vs protected bike lanes?

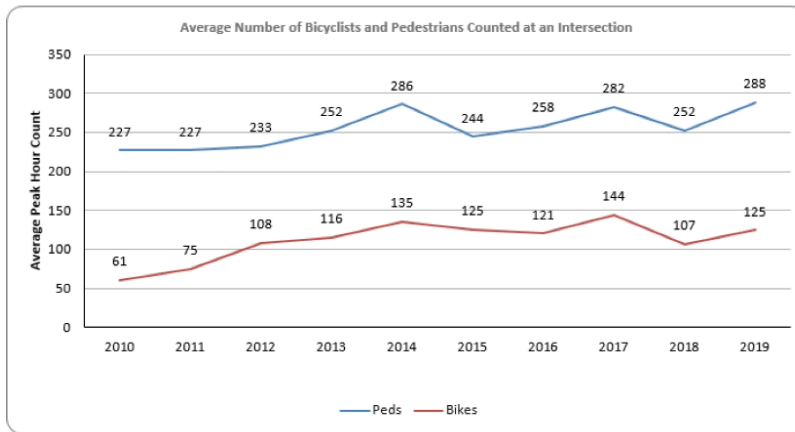
Overview of Livable Streets report (KL)

- https://www.livablestreets.info/bus_bike_lane_report
- Worked on community engagement related to bus/bike lanes in numerous communities
- Part 1 – questions that cities can ask to inform projects. Could also be used by advocates
 - What to do with answers:
 - Fit dedicated protected lanes --great
 - If not – considerations on how to deal
- Part 2 – What's observed in metro Boston
 - Washington Street project – good short-term pilot that will inform full reconstruction later
 - Shared bus/bike lanes are good interim step
- Other findings:
 - Scoping key – what streets are considered. Need to holistically look at area including parallel routes
 - MBTA really cares about bike safety. Working on updated training for bus drivers

- Tom found the following interesting items in report:
 - How people rank facilities
 - What circumstances shared bus/bikes are more/less comfortable for bikes – downhill vs uphill
- Ken: Appreciates report. How many people in survey? (A: in appendix – several hundred total)
 - Frequency of buses should be a consideration – more comfortable with less frequent busses.
 - Would like to see more recommendations or info on the steps leading up to the bus/bike lane. How to engage community.
 - KL – MAPC has report coming out which should have this sort of action plan
- Phil: Headways between busses important. What about width? (A: not in report, 12ft works – want to force lane change – wide 16ft lanes lead to passing too close – MBTA not interested in wider lanes)
 - East Arlington one is 15 ft wide – nice for passing busses when bus is stopped
 - Topology matters – slight downhill helps
- Greg: Comfortable in shared bus/bike. Do take up lots of width – trading off bus travel times vs safe corridor for bikes
- Ian: Concern over aggressive bus drivers. But bus drivers appear to be better in last few years. Want to know who to call with complaints – make sure drivers are held to account and retrained when complaints are filed. More transparency on what happens when complaints occur. Don't want to sling mud – but bus/bike lanes won't be successful without accountability.
 - KL - MBTA instant reporting:
 - MBTA incident reporting info:
 - Phone number: 617-222-3200
 - Website: <https://www.mbta.com/customer-support>
 - Twitter Handle: @MBTA
 - KL - MBTA trainer Ronnie would be happy to talk about internal processes. Can send info for a meeting
- George (via chat):
 - Not going to ask due to time but I'm wondering how curb uses are handled. The Brighton Ave bus lane is often a loading zone https://www.google.com/maps/@42.3531055,-71.1331603,3a,75y,112.95h,73.34t/data=!3m6!1e1!3m4!1sN_oAMamUkyhJQY3rNMjVg!2e0!7i16384!8i8192
- Tom: Likes being able to bus side by side on Broadway, Museum of Science – less comfortable due to more busses overtaking.
- KL: Always happy to talk: kristiana@livablestreets.info

Focus 2: Bike Counts (15 minutes)

- Observations from bike counts - all
- Presentation of 2019 counts – Adam
- Observations covered mostly during introductions
 - Lots of BlueBikes – mostly recreational, some electric scooters. Observed bike counts down, but other modes down even more. Lots of joggers, but fewer school kids
 - Ken: BlueBikes – much more spread out through day – not big peaks
- 2019 Observations (Adam) – see slides for all data



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- Highest peds in 10 years. Rebound on bikes
- Counts are movements (screen lines) – not people. Can contract to get more details if wanted
- Somerville Ave, Porter, Davis, Community Path - highest
- East Somerville, Winter Hill, Clarendon – lower – focus areas for city
- Deltas – big decrease in Union Sq due to construction, but Webster up instead. Beacon up now that project is complete. Biggest changes related to construction
- Variations due to weather, differences in how people count – look for trends over multiple years
- Medford/South – big bike decline in 2019. Tom – Paving? Maybe
- Biggest ped counts near transit stations
- Big drop on Holland – looks big in absolute, but not a big drop percentage wise
- Assembly Sq by Orange line is fastest growing
- Ted: Why was 2018 bad? A: Partially due to contractors doing counts on bad weather days, bad weather overall. Kevin – bad construction season
- Ken: Anything else needed for 2020 counts: A: No. Thanks everyone for stepping up, only a few sites left that OSPCD will do next week. Lots of experienced counters
- Comparison 2020 vs 2019 (Adam)
 - At just two sites looks like big drop in peds, but not as big a drop in bikes
 - Vendor counts during pandemic (Holland/Cameron – same day of year for 12h, but a little rain in 2019)
 - Vehicles down 30%, Peds down 35%, Bikes UP 0.2%
 - More distributed during day – more during middle of the day. In all 3 modes.
 - I-93 counter – back to 90% of peak
 - Arah: NYT reported more female riders during pandemic – worth looking at age/gender numbers
 - <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/07/nyregion/nyc-biking-covid-women.html>

City Update – Adam (40 Minutes)

- Remaining projects before winter: Washington St, Wellington Bridge
- Shore Drive bike lane options
- SBAC requests:
 - Deploy flexposts on Beacon St and buffered on bike lanes throughout the city
 - Information on Somerville Ave near Porter project
 - Properzi Way speed bump
 - Issues with delivery vehicles in bike lanes

Adam's city update:

- Project status slide not updated
- New map with inclusion of transit projects and equity
- New turn lanes at Holland/College painted red – buses bikes can go straight
 - Ted L: will there be signs No Right Turn Except Busses/Bikes? A: Signs enroute
- Oliver St, Highland Road pinch points, Gilman St chicane – last installation for the year

- Mark V: what is maintenance plan? Viola: City has hired Neighborways Design (Mark Chase) to do repairs. Locational – some streets see more damage than others
 - Adam: more aggressive treatments get more damage. Tradeoff
- Ken: Recommend pushing back removal date to December
- Alex F: Where are more robust treatments being used? E.g. concrete posts on Central.
 - Viola – for this year, Covid response – no robust treatments. If repeating next year, city is considering more robust treatments. Street cleaning and emergency access also play a role.
 - Fire department ok with flex posts
- Katie: Shared streets great success. Why not continue next year, despite Covid?
 - Viola – very resource intensive. Would want to rethink before doing again. Some people see them as successful, others saw them as not as successful – not slow enough to make people feel comfortable walking in the street. More planning for next year.
 - Mark V – one page lessons learned will help capture.
 - Neighborways Design and Soloman foundation – may do report
- Western Washington St
 - Meeting earlier this week. Thanks to Alex F for time dedicated to this project
 - Plan is to implement bike lanes in both directions – shared with busses in some stretches
 - Beacon to Dane is tricky – won't be part of initial deployment. Spring 2021
 - Alex F: What issues did MBTA have? A: What happens when bus gets to Beacon St with street narrowing with curb extensions – can't stop at bus stop then go straight. Signaling with bus priority. Bus stop location and width. Option of moving stop to other side of intersection.
 - Ian: Don't block the box signs already there
 - Comments on chat:
 - Ted L: Note: Arlington removed curb extensions for their bus/bike lane pilot.
 - Tom: Are we changing how we plan future curb extensions so they won't preclude eventual bike lanes or bus lanes?
 - Ian: This is the exact same problem as Holland Ave.
 - Ken: Attendance, pro/con? A: ~100 attendees at any time. Hard to tell pro/con, but maybe 1/3 were opposed or had skeptical questions. No strong opposition – less controversy. Webinar helped
 - Mark V – good job answering questions during meeting.
 - Alex F: Good that school is not in session, otherwise parent concerns over pickup/drop off. Councilor JT was there and very supportive.
 - Ian: Councilor Will M. also in attendance and support.
- Gilman Square
 - Katie: Excited about meeting. City thought of it as complete street project. Considered origin/destinations – placed in context of network. Positive feedback at meeting. Thanks to city for hard work.
 - Viola: Medford Bridge – repurposed for open space. Bike/Peds/Emergency vehicles only
 - Slides from meeting will be up on webpage
 - Pink zone – two way separated bike lane
 - https://somervoice.somervillema.gov/gilman-square-plan-implementation?tool=brainstormer#tool_tab
 - Survey also available on-line tomorrow. Bike committee can also give separate feedback.
 - Review at E&E meeting next week
- Wellington Bridge
 - Scheduling removal of old markings and repainting this month
- Shore Drive
 - Mayor interested in improving safety on that corridor
 - Quick build project this fall.
 - City developing new concept – open to feedback, but must be quick build
 - Mark V: Live nearby – depends on where table is placed. People speed up after speed table (and get air!). For bike lane – where is traffic coming and going?
 - Consider widening multiuse path as off-street alternative
 - One other option is to swap parking – would increase parking

- Better sight lines for crossing
 - Adam: Might require community process
- Ted F: Confused about where to go after boat house when biking.
- Adam: Need decision quickly. Ok if no strong opinion.
 - Default is southbound lane as depicted
 - Review at E&E meeting next week
 - Provide comments (not a recommendation since won't have time to vote)
- Floating curb extensions
 - Not enough width on Somerville streets
 - Won't build curb extensions to block future bike improvements, e.g. Holland
 - Ted F: Transition Cameron to Holland difficult to bikes – can markings be made (super sharrows) to better indicate where to position.
 - Won't pursue speed cushions or humps on College/Holland – hinder bus operations
 - Ian: Ringe Ave has raised table – did it impact bus traffic?
 - Alex E links on chat:
 - difference between speed humps and speed cushions with a bus going over it: <https://forestknolls.info/2013/10/21/we-have-speed-humps-and-speed-cushions/>
 - speed cushions would not slow down or buses: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bus_at_speed_cushion.jpg
- No update on flex posts for Beacon
- Porter Sq retaining wall repairs – website link in slides
- Properzi Way speed hump – installed this fall
- Mark V: What is city doing about USPS?
 - Adam: Enforcement to follow up with Dept. Chief
 - Ian: Work with local/state/federal officials – work through local elected officials?
 - Mayor to Senators?
 - Individual members not achieving anything
 - Alex F: Letter to Mayor from SBAC?
 - T&P committee is discussing next week
- Annual Report – Tom is doing last review tomorrow
- Ted F: Bike box at Mossland and Somerville Ave – when is going to be replaced? Jessie has been building relationships. Working with utility. Now an ordinance in place.

Ended 8:38pm