



SOMERVILLE BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
JANUARY 2011
MINUTES
Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone

Community Representatives

Brian Postlewaite, Chairman
Charles Denison, Vice Chairman
Enid Kumin
Alex Epstein
Jim Gallagher
Alan Moore
Ron Newman
Ken Carlson
Tim Talun

Ex-Officio

Janice Delory, Office of the Mayor
Bob Trane, Board of Aldermen
Commissioner Stanley Koty, Department of Public Works
Terry Smith, Traffic & Parking
Kathleen Ziegenfuss, Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development
Chief Michael Cabral, Police Department

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 18, 7:00 pm, City Hall

Community Representatives in attendance: Brian Postlewaite (chair), Charlie Denison (vice chair), Enid Kumin, Ron Newman, Alex Epstein, Alan Moore, Ken Carlson, Tim Talun

Ex-Officio members in attendance: Andrew Amey (for Kathleen Ziegenfuss)

Guests in attendance: Lauren Clayton, Jeremy Mendelson, Melissa Kelly, Eric Schwinder,

Procedural Business:

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm. Quorum was met.

1. **Secretary:** Alex Epstein volunteered to serve as secretary.
2. **Membership:**
 - Ken Carlson and Tim Talun have been approved as members, while Steve Dasilva is officially no longer a member, bringing the SBC membership to 9 persons.
 - OSPCD Intern Andrew Amey introduced himself and said he will be filling in for Kathleen during the next few months.
3. **Approve Minutes:**
 - No action was taken.

Infrastructure:

1. **On-street bike parking**
 - Information is available on the City website, but so far no businesses have expressed interest. It was remarked that waiting for businesses to initiate rack installations in the spring without city or SBC outreach could slow the program.
 - No one has yet contacted the businesses they previously volunteered to reach out to.

- It was asked whether the on-street bike racks (“bike corrals”) will be year-round or seasonal. They will be seasonal, probably April through November.

2. **MAPC bike parking program**

- Kathleen is in the process of ordering 3 corrals and 75 Powderhouse U-racks for 2011. As these are from the same vendor, there will be a bulk discount.
- 25 of the Powderhouse racks will be installed as they arrive, but the remaining 50 will be made available upon request in 2011, especially by businesses; 25 of these to be set aside for purchases by developers.
- \$1300 shipping fee yet to be funded by city, but not expected to be a roadblock
- April or May anticipated delivery
- Ron asked whether unsecure existing racks will be remedied at the same time; Brian recommended that all SBC members use 311 to report these problems

3. **Bike parking at Market Basket on Somerville Avenue:** No reply yet to Alex’s letter on suggested solutions, which was sent last year to Kathleen. Brian will follow up with Kathleen as well as check with Dick Bauer on whether the Historical Preservation Commission has yet reached a solution for the fence-parking issue at Milk Row Cemetery.

4. **Signs on Somerville Avenue:** “Bike lane begins/ends” signs on Somerville Avenue at Beacon Street should be removed and stored away, as the bike lanes continue to the city line at Porter Square. Alex earlier submitted a 311 request for their removal.

- UPDATE: Andrew and Alex confirmed that the signs have been removed.

Education and Outreach:

1. **Bicycle-Pedestrian Safety Campaign**

- A multi-department safety committee, including aldermen, will be formed by the city. A liaison from SBC is needed. Alex previously volunteered.

2. **League of American Bicyclists (LAB) bike-friendly community**

- Andrew has led the effort to gather information and prepare Somerville’s application for this distinguished award. No MA municipality has yet received it. About 90% of the application is complete.
- Six big questions particularly need the input of SBC members. Andrew will distribute the LAB application draft to the email list for suggestions.
- Plan is to submit to mayor in early February. LAB deadline is February 18.
- Discussed what documents may be said to comprise our “bike plan.” Brian said the Annual Report, particularly its long-range vision component, can be used to address this point.
- Ken and Andrew noted that feedback from LAB after reviewing our application will be useful since, like a consultant report, it will highlight areas for improvement and give third-party perspective to motivate the city to implement improvements.

3. **Maps:** No update. It was mentioned that the 11 in ’11 Campaign would be well served by developing maps that highlight the progress.

Initiatives:

1. **Signal-free intersection trial in Davis Square (Charlie)**

- Members reviewed the diagrams and a memo by Charlie distributed prior to the meeting.
- The initiative proposes to cover up the signals in Davis Square as a pilot experiment to demonstrate increased pedestrian/bicyclist safety and reduced congestion for all users. It would need to be implemented for at least 2 weeks to let behavior adapt and to evaluate results, and a media and signage program would be deployed for education. Currently, rush hour vehicles back

up to Powderhouse Circle, which also blocks bikes, and bikes/pedestrians have to wait up to 3 minutes for the crosswalk signals to let them cross. All legs of Davis Square have similar traffic volumes, and the high bike-ped traffic in Davis makes it a suitable pilot intersection.

- A “fall-back” plan would change the signals to flashing yellow, except on College Ave, MBTA busway, and on Day St, where they would be flashing red.
- Enid suggested only implementing the pilot on weekends, outside of rush hour. Charlie replied that the concept has the most potential benefit during rush hours and should be tried 7 days/week.
- Members agreed that studies would be needed to quantify before-and-after effects, for example, queue lengths, level of service for all users, etc.
- The question of liability was raised. The city could prove hesitant to implement because of uncertainty in case of any injuries that occur during the pilot.
- More than any other Initiative, this would require large time commitments from members. Brian estimated 4-8 hours per month per person for at least several months.
- Consensus was that it is helpful that we suggest and introduce the concept to the City through the Annual Report and Interdepartmental Meeting, to plant this seed and establish ourselves as a reference source for whenever the City considers implementation.

2. 11 in '11 Campaign

- The Mayor, in his State of the City midterm address, promised more miles of bike facilities to be added this year than last year
- City needs list of recommended routes from SBC by March, to narrow the list by spring thaw.
- Would be beneficial to coordinate with the map project, as mentioned above.
- This initiative was assumed to be moving forward and thus no vote was taken.

3. Beacon Street cycletrack proposal

- Alan, Alex, and Ken distributed proposal prior to meeting, and most members reviewed it.
- Ken remarked that this proposal, if implemented, would place Somerville on the cutting edge of U.S. bike infrastructure, along with Cambridge, Boulder, Portland, NYC, etc.
- Purpose is to show that a dual cycletrack (one in each direction) is a feasible solution for the 2013-15 full reconstruction of Beacon Street; and to ensure that this alternative be included in the upcoming process for the project.
- Members voiced general support for proposal and approved of the written description and detailed cross-section/plan view diagrams.
- Recommended that the term “cycletrack” be explicitly defined in the proposal.
- Main issue to address is narrowing of sidewalks, which is necessary to accommodate cycletracks. Currently sidewalks on Beacon Street are up to 11’ wide, but they would need to be narrowed to 6.5-7.5’ to accommodate 5’ cycletracks and a 3-4’ door zone buffer. Charlie pointed out that WalkBoston advocates for minimum 8’ sidewalks. However, Beacon Street has less pedestrian traffic than some other streets in Somerville that at the same time have narrower sidewalks.
- Jeremy pointed out that the relevant metric for sidewalk accommodation is clear width. In our proposal, utility poles, signposts, and meters are relocated off the sidewalk to the buffer zone. As a result, the clear width of sidewalks may not be significantly reduced.
 - This point should be clearly explained in the proposal.
- Jeremy suggested that SBC decide in advance what are the acceptable limits to reducing cycletrack/buffer/sidewalk widths before the proposal no longer improves on standard bike lanes.
- Andrew recommended that SBC start working through the community process that the city will reopen to advance to 75% design. A high level of detail in the proposal is not critical right now.
- SBC members were polled and said they were comfortable presenting the proposal to the city.

4. Wayfinding

- Last year, Traffic and Parking summarily ruled out contraflow bike facilities on Gilman Street.
- Brian has identified the pedestrian bridge over McGrath Hwy as an acceptable alternative to avoid contraflow and will accordingly update the proposal.

- Ron asked whether contraflow bike lanes would still be possible, as in Cambridge. However, Brian stated that it would not be, given T&P's recent position against any contraflow lanes.

5. **“See and Be Seen” safety program**

- Revised, “non-punitive” proposal is to intercept riders at night not using the legally required headlights/reflectors, educate them with a verbal or written warning, and hand out low-cost lights/reflectors for immediate use.
- Members suggested that not only volunteer SPD officers but also bike ambassadors could perform this job.
- Money will need to be found to buy lights and reflectors
- Andrew saw this as becoming part of the wider safety campaign the city is planning

A vote was taken of members' top two priorities among the five initiatives. Any initiative scoring under two votes was to be tabled. Vote tally:

7	Beacon Street cycletrack
3	Davis Square signal-free pilot
2	Wayfinding
2	See and Be Seen

New Business:

1. **Snow removal:** Problems for bike travel were discussed. Specifically, bike lanes are not being plowed because snowplows are only clearing snow up to the fog lines rather than the right line of the bike lane. Bumpouts such as on those Somerville Ave are not the problem, since they end short of the bike lane. Brian recommended that all members complain to 311. Charlie and Jeremy said that they have called, but the 311 operators said nothing could be done. Charlie volunteered to draft a short letter to DPW asking to address uncleared bike lanes; Jeremy volunteered to contribute photos.

VOTE: members voted unanimously in favor of pre-approving and submitting this letter before the next meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 9:07 pm.

The next meeting will be Tuesday, February 15, 2011, at City Hall.

Respectfully submitted,
Alex Epstein, Acting Secretary