



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

January 24, 2022
REPORT OF THE TRAFFIC AND PARKING COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Beatriz Gomez Mouakad	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Jake Wilson	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	

Others present: Brad Rawson-OSPCD

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairperson Gomez Mouakad and adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Approval of the October 20, 2021 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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212867: That the Director of Mobility update this Council on efforts to establish a 20 MPH speed limit for all neighborhood residential streets.

Mr. Rawson provided a brief summary with this multi-year initiative which has been going on since 2016. He reported that the City is in the home stretch to change sections of neighborhoods, street by street to make sure the streets are evaluated appropriately. The Traffic & Parking team have been out reviewing the streets. The sign crew which is a two person crew has been out installing the signs. Project projected completion sometime in 2022

Councilor-at-Large Wilson stating there has been a shift in the approach and asked to talk about how the shift happened in the city. Mr. Rawson stated there was some debate in the industry about the intent and the land uses. The original regulations used very specific public facilities, playgrounds and housing. The city made the argument about density and foot traffic to take a broad interpretation.

Councilor-at-Large Wilson also asked about how the change in Speed Limit would impact cut through traffic. Mr. Rawson stated that most of the experience in collecting data has been influenced by the COVID-19 period. He referenced the city of Boston prioritized specific territories before the pandemic started and they appear to have positive results.

Councilor Ewen-Campen had a number of questions. He asked why the process has taken so long. Director Rawson explained there Mr. Rawson has to be a quality assurance process to

make sure street regulations match signage to facilitate enforcement. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked what would be the process to change state-controlled streets in the city to 20 mph. Director Rawson described the process to have the 20-mph changed on the state roads. With state-controlled road ways, there is a different process and can result in existing conditions and existing driver behavior. He also stated that federal standards can create consequences and must have a traffic study. The city has great state agency participation on these matters. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked if in areas where there are many accidents, can lowering the speed limit be considered on a state road. He also asked what happens behind the scene and why can't the city take down a sign and put up another one. Mr. Rawson stated the city of Somerville establishes power through the Traffic Commission.

Councilor-at-Large Wilson talked about MassDot moving away from the guidelines requiring the local jurisdiction relating to the 85 percentile which is typical speed.

Chair Gómez Mouakad asked if there is an updated map of where the changes are taking place in the city. Mr. Rawson stated the staff is working on the map right now to help track their progress. Chair Gómez Mouakad asked if there is a final map indicating which roads will not follow the 20 mph. Mr. Rawson will coordinate with the traffic sign crew and expect the signs to be completed by the spring time.

Chair Gómez Mouakad asked if there should be a campaign to remind people of the speed limit, especially since this will be a cultural change for many and others driving through Somerville. She also asked about the buses changing from 25 to 20mph and also suggested a little media in the press about the reduced speed limit. This campaign should also include city workers. The Chair would like to a campaign to start educating those looking to cut through our streets. Mr. Rawson will reach out to the police dept to deploy resources to cover neighborhoods relating to the reduced speed limit, but noted that this type of enforcement has an effect for a limited time.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212870: That the Director of Mobility and the Director of Parking collaborate with the Fire Department to address problematic parking within 20 feet of intersections.

Mr. Rawson talked about daylighting. There is one conflict with cars parking too close to the corner and low visibility for people biking, driving and walking. The city has a series of regulations in place. The standard traffic regulations prohibit parking within 20 ft from a crosswalk/curb. Mr. Rawson and T&P have been meeting weekly and will have more information for the traffic and parking committee in the coming months. Mr. Rawson stated they work regularly with the fire dept re: street corners and they have a seat along with the police dept on the traffic commission.

Chair Gómez Mouakad asked about the curb-side study and its implementation of a daylighting strategy and when the city will be able to report this strategy to the community and the council. Mr. Rawson stated the city parking study is well underway with great participation. They anticipate moving into a draft framework in the spring time. He would like to communicate to the public about these safety concerns with high quality graphics.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212800: That the Director of Mobility and the Commissioner of Public Works install permanent speed bumps on Sycamore Street between Medford Street and Evergreen Avenue.

Mr. Rawson updated the committee on this matter and will make sure the other councilors are aware of the updates. They learned a lot more about the technical process re: speed humps for trash haulers and others. They continue to deploy asphalt speed humps and will continue to work with engineering about possibilities and time line. His team is currently evaluating and looking at the 15 speed humps deployed in 2021.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked what changed that allowed the city to install more speed humps. Mr. Rawson stated with more staff and the support of the Engineering Department, they have been able to get projects completed. There were some concerns with asphalt speed humps regarding access for larger vehicles and getting the right specifications for the speed humps. Additionally, there is a contractual mechanism used to deliver the street packages on ways to construct the traffic calming measures. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked what the process is to get speed humps in their neighborhoods. Mr. Rawson stated residents can contact 311 or use the traffic calming petition process.

Chair Gómez Mouakad asked about Sycamore Street and if it's worthwhile to look at the entire street for speed humps. Mr. Rawson will work with the team if contractually can add this to the scope.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212802: That the Director of Mobility and the Commissioner of Public Works install speed bumps on Jacques Street, between Temple Street and Edgar Avenue.

Councilor-at-Large Wilson stated his neighbors have been waiting for speed humps on this street. Mr. Rawson stated that Jacques street had quick traffic calming efforts. The city deployed movable traffic calming saw horses on the street. The team is currently evaluating Jacques street and he believes they have capacity for this street. This street has been on the watch list for some time. Mr. Rawson stated that an isolated speed humps may not be helpful and may need two to three humps.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212803: That the Director of Mobility daylight the intersections noted within.

Mr. Rawson stated they have enough specifics to evaluate the locations for signage. The team will reach out to the ward councilors, if there are questions.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212868: That the Director of Mobility employ quick-build daylighting and traffic calming measures to improve visibility and compliance with the STOP sign on Jacques Street at its intersection with Edgar Avenue.

Councilor-at-Large Wilson stated after the tragedy at West Somerville School, there is a need to make the boulevard much safer. Mr. Rawson stated he looks forward to deploying resources. At

present, they do not have active engineering work. The project could be part of the 2022 work plan. He will be happy to add to the discussion for daylighting opportunities and to seek traffic commission approval.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212869: That the Director of Mobility explore a School Streets Pilot Program at the Healey School.

Councilor-at-Large Wilson seeks to reduce the number of cars that drive in front of schools during key times. The pilot would be designed to keep students, teachers, staff and families safe. Mr. Rawson stated that during the pandemic, the schools had to think very differently about activities. He will look into this matter and discuss with the school team and parking department, and will get back to the committee.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked about pedestrian safety and if there has been a study done about the mobility issues around the schools. Mr. Rawson talked about VisionZero and will have a discussion with this committee as it relates to the schools.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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