



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Traffic and Parking Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, September 18, 2023

6:00 PM

The meeting took place virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:09 PM by Chair Gomez Mouakad and adjourned at 8:04 PM on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Ewen-Campen, Wilson and Gomez Mouakad), none against and none absent.

Others present:

Brad Rawson - Director of Mobility, Justin Schreiber – Mobility, Kate White - Mobility, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

Roll Call

Present: Chairperson Beatriz Gomez Mouakad , Vice Chair Jake Wilson and Ben Ewen-Campen

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-0516](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Traffic & Parking Committee Meeting of March 27, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Chairperson Gomez Mouakad, Vice Chair Wilson and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

2. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-0962](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Traffic and Parking Committee Meeting of May 31, 2023.

RESULT: ACCEPTED

AYE: Chairperson Gomez Mouakad, Vice Chair Wilson and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

Studies and Policies

3. Mayor's Request (ID # [23-0585](#)) Requesting approval of the Citywide Bicycle Network Plan.

Chair Gomez Mouakad noted that a public comment period was held on May 31, 2023 regarding this item. Director Rawson explained that this is a strategic, long term implementation plan to build out safe streets for all users. Community engagement has been ongoing for 18 months and will continue as the plan is implemented and every street proposed for change will have its own community meeting to get public feedback. Chair Gomez Mouakad noted that Victoria Street has become a traffic cut-through and that residents are requesting that traffic calming measures be installed to limit the

traffic flow. She then inquired about the process of informing residents who have concerns about their streets how their concerns will be dealt with. Director Rawson explained that any issues not addressed in the plan could be addressed through 311, the traffic calming process, or various other ways.

Speaking about raised bike lanes, Mr. Schreiber explained that the widths of particular streets are looked at, but not everything about the streets is incorporated, so the team would look at any conflicts to find solutions that would meet the design's intent. Director Rawson stated that rather than using a universal standard for barriers, appropriate options would be identified as needed.

Councilor Ewen-Campen has received many questions from constituents and has forwarded them to Director Rawson. Although most of the comments he received have been favorable towards the plan, many fall into the categories of "I don't like bikes" or "I don't like cars" and he thinks those are irrelevant to tonight's conversation. He went on to ask several questions and received responses which essentially assured him that there would be a neighborhood process for each proposed bike lane, that the plan does not include any unprotected bike lanes, that all streets on the priority list are scheduled for completion by the end of 2030, that neighbor ways are being provided as alternatives for north/south streets, and that it's better to leave Summer Street as a two way street for the time being. Councilor Ewen-Campen noted that the Bicycle Committee wanted to connect and protect the last stretch of Beacon Street as it is a highly used route that isn't a completed linear path. Director Rawson explained that this stretch is not identified in the priority plan and Mr. Schreiber commented that the policy plans are intended to be refreshed every 5 years. Chair Gomez Mouakad spoke about the importance of having continuity to interconnect Somerville with its neighboring cities.

Director Rawson stated that community engagement is always helpful in designing the best streets possible, but he noted that the plan's vision may include some hard choices, e.g., replacing parking in some areas, while prioritizing ADA, commercial and business parking. Not every street in the vision is an arterial street and each will have its own set of needs. Ms. White added that the aim was to increase safety overall and to understand the nuances of streets in order to meet the goals of the plan. Director Rawson stated that the city will continue to manage truck traffic through neighborhoods wherever possible, adding that there may be some instances when exceptions are warranted, e.g., deliveries of home appliances.

Councilor Wilson asked if the plan obligates the city to do anything and Director Rawson stated that policy plans mean something and are most effective when backed up by regulation and investment. During the years between revisions, the City Council, 311 and community engagement would represent check points for the plan and opportunities will be sought to keep

the plan ever green. Mr. Schreiber commented that changes could occur due to opportunities that come up, e.g., DOT, development plans, Engineering's resurfacing plans, etc.. Chair Gomez Mouakad commented that streets have evolved for decades and this plan is another adaptation. City policy is about the common good and the plan is trying to strike a balance. She said that too many cars destroys cities and that, eventually, the city needs to work on bike parking.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Chairperson Gomez Mouakad, Vice Chair Wilson and Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

Traffic Calming

4. Order
(ID # [23-0289](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Ewen-Campen

That the Commissioner of Public Works install high visibility flexible bollards at all entrances to the Community Path from a vehicular road, to prevent the entry of non-authorized vehicles into the path.

Director Rawson stated that the primary locations of concern are Willow Avenue and Cedar Street and that signage is needed and that these locations are on the city's watch list. He said that both the Department of Public Works and the Fire Department need more time to remove the bollards and he believes it best to get through a winter before making any changes. Once an advocate for bollards, Councilor Ewen-Campen now thinks that they make it more difficult to travers the bike path.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [23-0900](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad

That the Director of Mobility and the Director of Engineering integrate traffic calming measures on Hudson and Summer Streets and plan for the work to be implemented prior to the start of the Highland Avenue improvement construction.

Chair Gomez Mouakad was asked by constituents for traffic calming on Hudson Street and she would like to move this item forward. Director Rawson pointed out that Hudson Street is planned as a neighbor way and he believes that it will be a traffic calming street in the future, although he doesn't know when that may be.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

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6. Order
(ID # [23-0901](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Mobility develop a strategy for the implementation of speed radar detectors on north-south cut-through streets throughout the city, including but not limited to Central Street and Cedar Street.
- Chair Gomez Mouakad spoke about the speed of traffic on these streets. Director Rawson said staff is identifying methods for implementing this and that as the end of the construction season approaches, staff will have more time to work on these types of radar feedback signs.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
7. Order
(ID # [23-0902](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Pineda Neufeld
That the Director of Mobility, Director of Engineering, Director of Parking, and Commissioner of Public Works establish criteria and guidelines for Council orders to be submitted for traffic calming and mobility related issues and items that should be submitted to 311 to ensure the City Council is addressing larger mobility strategic planning issues.
- Chair Gomez Mouakad commented that the City Council needs to be aware of the purpose of this committee and that an order is not an effective way to track efficiencies. Councilor Ewen-Campen said it's hard to know the best way to get things done and try to amplify constituents' concerns and he believes that there's still value in putting orders in instead of just submitting a request to 311, for example. Issues need to be data driven and open to critical public feedback. Councilor Wilson said that the current approach is shrouded in mystery and leads to extra work for city staff. Director Rawson said he wonders about relationships between 311 and City Council orders, noting that 311 is critical for tracking purposes of various items.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
8. Order
(ID # [23-1281](#))
- By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Kelly
That the Director of Mobility design traffic calming infrastructure for Laurel Street, which sees large volumes of high speed, one-way traffic down a steep hill.
- Councilor Ewen-Campen asked about having speed studies performed on Laurel Street. Director Rawson explained that the first step taken when concerns are made know is to collect data. Residents on Laurel Street have engaged with Mobility staff and staff will follow up with them at some point. The city will prioritize collecting data as part of the normal workflow and should reasonably have it completed by this fall. Chair Gomez Mouakad instructed Director Rawson to report, at the next committee meeting, when the speed study data will be collected.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Other

- 9. Order (ID # [23-1312](#))

By Councilor Wilson, Councilor Davis and Councilor Ewen-Campen
 That the Director of Mobility update this Council on plans to expand bicycle parking in the city, with a focus on Davis Square and Union Square including potentially using intersection daylighting spaces for bike racks.

That the Director of Mobility update this Council on plans to expand bicycle parking in the city, with a focus on Davis Square, Union Square, and Ball Square including potentially using intersection daylighting spaces for bike racks.

Councilor Wilson spoke about daylighting solutions that might be used as bike corrals. Director Rawson reported that the city completed installation of 30 bike racks at schools with 20 more scheduled for the fall and said that this is an area that needs to be expanded.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

- 10. Order (ID # [23-1297](#))

By Councilor Wilson
 That the Director of Mobility work with relevant departments and divisions to install wayfinding signage on the Community Path, including freeway exit-style signage on the Community Path Extension, given that segment's limited access.

Councilor Wilson commented that wayfinding signage would be tremendously useful in the east end of the city and he would like to discuss how to make this happen. Director Rawson noted that provisions were written into the agreement with the MBTA to permit the city to add signage. He realizes the importance and expects it to be a winter project with some wayfinding signage implemented in 2024. Director Rawson stated that public interaction with the city's state delegation or state agencies should never be discouraged.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED