



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

December 7, 2020
REPORT OF THE TRAFFIC AND PARKING COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Mark Niedergang	Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Vice Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Niedergang at 6:01pm and adjourned at 8:06pm.

Chair Niedergang explained that there are major sections on the agenda to focus on the most important areas, including a notably dangerous location in Ward 6, for which he will sponsor Councilor Davis to speak.

Others present: Lauren Racaniello - Mayor's Office; Suzanne Rinfret - Parking; Steve MacEachern - Public Works; Eric Weisman - Public Works; Brad Rawson - OSPCD; Lieutenant James Polito - Police; Lance Davis - Ward 6 City Councilor

Approval of the October 14, 2020 Minutes

The minutes were accepted on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Ballantyne, Clingan, Niedergang) and 0 opposed.

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Mobility Improvements

210895: That the Director of Capital Projects revise the College Avenue reconstruction plan to include additional safety measures for pedestrians at both perpendicular and parallel crossings.

Chair Niedergang sponsored Councilor Davis to participate in this discussion, as this area falls in his ward. He also noted that there is a community meeting on this issue on Wednesday evening. Councilor Davis shared that his intent was to introduce this prior to Wednesday's meeting, which as he understands, will present a final design. Based on those materials, the safety measures that will impact the turns off of the main streets are unclear. Some of the proposed changes do not seem like they would have a material impact, and Councilor Davis would like to incorporate more tools into the plan before it is too late to do so. Mr. Rawson elaborated that the staff are open to exploring alternative ways to keep people safe, including increasing visibility, providing center refuge islands, and side-street raised crossings (which require civil engineering intervention).

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

210901: That the Director of Parking make sure a DO NOT ENTER sign prohibiting left turns from College Avenue onto Kidder Avenue is visible to drivers on College Avenue who might be considering such a turn. (3rd request)

Ms. Rinfret clarified that there are three signs: two "Do Not Enter" signs on both sides of Kidder Ave and one on Powderhouse Blvd going toward Davis Square. Going the other way (from Davis Square toward Powderhouse Blvd), there is a flashing crosswalk sign and a tree that would prevent anyone from seeing an additional sign.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

210897: That the Director of SPCD implement a traffic calming plan on Morrison Avenue including alternating parking to create chicanes.

Chair Niedergang shared that there has been a lot of discussion on social media around the Shared Streets plan shifting traffic from Morrison Ave to Kidder Ave but that he does not believe it is the Shared Streets that is shifting the traffic but rather the flex posts on Morrison that narrow the street and force drivers to go much slower. Councilor Davis added that many of the one-way patterns in the neighborhood have led to Kidder Ave becoming overutilized and more dangerous. Morrison Ave is a wide street and is conducive to drivers traveling fast, and a more permanent change, to include swapping parking to the opposite side of the street to create chicanes, would be an important traffic calming measure. Mr. Rawson noted that there have been two consecutive seasons of temporary traffic calming measures on Morrison, and this season, key metrics were successful, which will be used to design next year's project for Morrison. Street sweeping, plowing, deliveries, and bicycle lanes all need to factor into any design. Chair Niedergang agreed that this plan looks like a good one.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

210896: That the Director of SPCD update the Ward 6 Councilor on the overdue new equipment necessary to improve signal timing in Davis Square.

Mr. Rawson explained that staff have been working on this issue, and signal upgrades are planned for Summer 2021, using a grant award that was received by OSPCD. The staff are currently managing an external traffic engineering consultant to create plans, the team will communicate with stakeholders in Winter and Spring, and be on track for updates in Summer.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

207488: That the Director of SPCD update the Ward 6 Councilor on requests for improved vehicle and pedestrian signal timing and design in and around Davis Square.

See 210896.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

207487: That the Director of Traffic and Parking update the Ward 6 Councilor on requests for crosswalk safety improvements at the locations specified within.

Chair Niedergang explained that the locations referenced are: College Ave at the West Branch Library and College Ave at Hall St or Chapel St. Mr. Rawson explained that for the location on Morrison Ave at College Ave (Library), with the antiquated light, the administration plans to upgrade that signal equipment in coordination with other safety measures called for in the College Ave reconstruction process. Hall and Chapel have modest improvements, and will be included in the upcoming community meeting. Councilor Davis asked for confirmation that crosswalks will be added at Francesca, which will address the area between Kidder and Morrison. Mr. Rawson noted that there will be a new (second) crosswalk on College Ave at Kidder and Summit. (Note from the Chair: The “Proposed Final Design” posted on the City website for the December 9 community meeting shows two new crosswalks to be installed on College Ave at Francesca). Councilor Davis elaborated that there is a gap between Morrison and Kidder that requires attention. Mr. Rawson confirmed that there can be no action at Hall, due to the vertical and horizontal curves affecting sight lines.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207486: That the Director of Engineering and the Director of Traffic and Parking update the Ward 6 Councilor on requests for crosswalks at locations specified within.

See 207487.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207893: That the Director of Traffic and Parking replace the NO TURN ON RED sign at the intersection of Day and Elm Streets with a sign allowing RIGHT TURN ON RED AFTER STOP – YIELD TO PEDESTRIANS, or similar wording.

Chair Niedergang noted that the Chair of the Pedestrian Advisory Committee opposed this due to it being one of the highest pedestrian traffic areas. Councilor Davis responded that the intent was to make the concurrent crossing safer, and that the way to fix it is with a new engineering study and signalization equipment improvements and changes. Mr. Rawson stated that he expects signalization changes to be installed next summer (see 210896).

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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203446: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install additional pedestrian safety measures at the intersection of Holland Street and Cameron Avenue.

Chair Niedergang commented that this is one of his nightmare locations in the City. Councilor Ballantyne added that in the initial design for the repaving of Holland St, bump-outs were proposed, and this proposal is insufficient. The City needs to invest in more significant infrastructure. Mr. Rawson noted that OSPCD is working with IAM on target capital investments throughout the City, consistent with the VisionZero goals. Chair Niedergang emphasized that he has urged the Mayor to invest more resources into this work.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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205795: That the Director of SPCD improve the Teele Square traffic signal wait time by reducing the 2 to 3 cycle wait time to on demand or one cycle wait time during morning and evening rush hours.

Councilor Ballantyne noted that this was an old order, adding that pedestrians are discouraged from crossing in Teele Square due to the length of time it takes. The City has proposed changes in this area to focus on the traffic queues, but not focused on the pedestrians. Mr. Rawson noted that the Holland Street changes are somewhat dependent on the Teele Square intersection, and a more comprehensive solution including re-claiming publicly owned land can be considered. Mr. Rawson added that the signal timing has been adjusted here in response to COVID, and the signal button no longer needs to be pressed, which shifts the priority toward pedestrians. Mr. Rawson clarified that West Broadway from Route 16 to the Teele Square intersection is not planned for 2021 investments. Councilor Ballantyne asked how investment in projects is prioritized and Mr. Rawson shared that there are a series of conditions assessments that help establish a multi-year prioritization for sidewalk and pavement management plans and ADA upgrades.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Dangerous Intersections/Roadways

210900: That the Director of SPCD update the Ward 6 Councilor on previously discussed plans to reconfigure the Powder House Traffic Circle.

Mr. Rawson shared that the proposal to turn Powderhouse Circle into a smaller, more traditional roundabout has been well-received. The project is in the final design process, which should be published by the engineering consultant in the next few months. This is targeted as an early-2021 project. The designer has also been working on a solution to provide a dedicated bicycle lane around the entire intersection.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206390: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Traffic and Parking report to this Board on plans to improve traffic signalization and flow at problem intersections such as Powderhouse Circle, Magoun Square, and others.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210898: That the Director of SPCD update the Ward 6 Councilor on any plans to further improve pedestrian safety at the intersection of Willow Avenue, Elm Street and Beech Street, possibly with a center island and bump outs.

Chair Niedergang noted that this has been extensively discussed in previous meetings, and Councilor Davis added that he appreciated steps that have been taken, though the pedestrian flashing lights have stopped working. Mr. Rawson commented that the design process has been advanced for the Elm Street corridor and this intersection. The city of Cambridge has also been involved in conversations about short and long-term tactical tools. Chair Niedergang emphasized that something short-term to protect people is needed, while a longer-term plan is created. Mr. Rawson shared that pavement markings are still taking place, and flex posts have been installed in various locations despite heading into plowing season. The division is determined to change as many streets as fast as possible.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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202108: That the Administration work with the City of Cambridge to improve pedestrian safety at the intersections of Elm Street with Beech Street and Willow Avenue, including

consideration of a Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon.

See 210898.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208844: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council on actions, communications and collaboration with State agencies to improve pedestrian safety in the Mystic Avenue area by I-93, following the death of two pedestrians hit by motor vehicles there.

Mr. Rawson shared that the City is coordinating with DOT, who installed traffic calming pavement markings, which are not a substitute for longer-term capital construction but have been helpful. Grant financing has also been secured for bus treatments, which will have co-benefits for pedestrian safety. This work is advancing toward implementation. The City is also partnering with DOT to design a constructed refuge island, and will hopefully be ready for capital construction in 2021. The Kensington Connector work will also result in upgrades anticipated for 2023. Councilor Clingan noted that the signal timing has been a positive change and he anticipates even more.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207918: That the Director of Traffic and Parking urgently prioritize pedestrian safety at the intersection of Walnut Street and Highland Avenue, which was identified as one of the most unsafe intersections in the city.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Potential Solutions to Traffic Dangers

210893: That the Mayor submit a supplemental budget request to immediately add staff and funding to the Mobility Division for traffic calming, and increase its staff and funding by at least 50% in FY22.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207499: That the Administration respond to the requests outlined in the attached resident petition, organized by the Pedestrian and Transit Advocacy Group, to accelerate traffic calming investments and improve coordination and oversight.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207996: 8 residents submitting comments re: #207499, a proposal to accelerate traffic calming investments.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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206691: That the Director of SPCD prioritize for this Board the traffic calming projects in the City, and the process to determine those priorities.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

210965: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council in writing by December 4, and discuss with the Traffic and Parking Committee at its next meeting on December 7, what the plan is for replacing flex posts when they are knocked over or displaced.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

210894: That the Administration expand and maintain the use of bollards and other pedestrian safety measures citywide so they are replaced immediately as needed.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

210966: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council why there are still so few speed bumps in the city, especially since the ones deployed on Powder House Boulevard seem to be making a dangerous area safer for pedestrians.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

210967: That the Director of SPCD explain to this Council in writing the Administration's opposition to deploying speed bumps, with less than a half-dozen installed citywide.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

210975: That the Administration and the Commissioner of Public Works discuss the vehicle training process for all DPW employees and contractors whose job requires them to drive city vehicles.

Mr. MacEachern thanked the Committee for raising this issue, and noted that the Department of Public Works is always looking for and wants to expand safety protocols. All employees are given training, required by the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT), and DPW is working with the City's Human Resources department to implement additional training. The process when an unsafe driver is reported involves identifying the vehicle, reaching out to that employee, and conducting an investigation of the incident. Some small changes to aid in this will include re-badging the vehicles to make the identification larger and on all sides of the vehicle in order to be more clear. Mr. Weisman added that the Bicycle Committee collaborated with DPW to share a video on bicycle safety for all employees, which will be conducted again, and additional videos are being explored for further training opportunities.

Councilor Ballantyne asked for more detail about the training, and whether staff were rushing around the City because of a heavy workload. She also wondered if drivers were instructed to drive at the speed limit, or if other norms are implemented. Mr. MacEachern elaborated that employees are instructed to follow all traffic laws and stay within the flow of traffic, and there is no pressure to rush to the next job. The mandatory training for Hoisting and CDL licenses takes place once a year, but the department is looking to do more, possibly monthly. Councilor Ballantyne added that any employee, regardless of the department, using City vehicles should be required to attend training.

Councilor Clingan confirmed that the City knows who is in each vehicle, and Mr. MacEachern verified that is usually the case, though the route they take is not determined in advance. Councilor Clingan also asked whether "How am I driving?" bumper stickers are required. Mr. MacEachern said they are not, but DPW is looking into that option.

Chair Niedergang asked if similar steps were being taken by other departments such as Sewer and Water and Inspectional Services that have staff driving around the City. Mr. Rawson noted that the Personnel Department and SomerStat are tasked with managing these efforts, so all protocols are transferable among departments. The Chair responded that it is not clear which department and who is responsible for conducting safe driving training for departments other than DPW and he wants a clear response to that question, and a description of what training will be provided to other departments.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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210624: That the Director of Finance, the Director of Parking and the Director of SPCD discuss scaling parking permit fees with automobile size and efficiency.

Chair Niedergang shared the background that the shifting vehicle mix nationwide, to more SUVs and larger vehicles, has led to more pedestrian deaths. Mr. MacEachern noted that there are some steps taken within DPW to reduce the size of the vehicles purchased, for example, changing pickup trucks from F350s to F150s, which are more fuel efficient and better for visibility as well. Ms. Rinfret added that there is no data that she has found on a municipality enacting a process like this, and it would be administratively difficult, but the Parking Department has considered creating smaller parking spaces to disincentivize parking of large vehicles in certain areas. Councilor Ballantyne clarified that some of the administrative issues would involve training and software for Parking staff to delineate every possible vehicle type. Mr. Rawson elaborated that the Mobility Division is working with subject matter experts and exploring what peer cities are doing. Councilor Ballantyne asked whether a "bull bar" could be banned and Mr. Rawson noted that he is unsure of the MA General Laws around that and the Police Department and Law Office could help determine.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Powderhouse Boulevard Bicycle Lanes

Mr. Rawson thanked the Mobility Division team, and shared that planning for the east side of Powderhouse Blvd in particular will begin soon, which will be a natural fit with the Powderhouse Circle improvements. Chair Niedergang added that there are lessons that can be learned from the experience with the Broadway bicycle lanes. The objections and concerns about parking do not reflect the views of a vast majority of the community and the City needs to prioritize the safety and lives of its residents over parking. Councilor Ballantyne added that the messaging that parking will be re-assigned rather than taken away is an important part of the discussion about Powderhouse Blvd. bicycle lanes.

207997: 10 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208110: 6 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208227: 3 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208313: 3 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208448: 2 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209045: Rachel Turek submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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209442: That the Director of SPCD add more bike racks to the West Somerville Neighborhood School.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Housekeeping

201663: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install a NO PARKING – FOR FIRE EMERGENCY VEHICLES ONLY sign at the dead end of Fairmount Avenue.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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201782: That the Director of Traffic and Parking slow traffic on Franklin Street at the Prospect Hill Academy, including installing new crosswalks, fixing the broken SLOW driving light, installing blinking SLOW signs, and providing a crossing guard during the school year.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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202792: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install a flashing cross walk sign on Broadway at the East Branch Library.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

204369: That the Director of Parks and Recreation and the Director of Traffic and Parking evaluate the crosswalk area from Joseph Street to Lincoln Parkway and make necessary accommodations to allow the sidewalk to be used for children walking to the Argenziano School.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

204672: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Traffic and Parking accelerate the timeline for the new walkway along the former Powderhouse School.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

205919: That the Director of SPCD promote bicycle-safe infrastructures on all future Assembly Square development.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

205920: That the Commissioner of Public Works install a street light on the corner of Grand Union Boulevard and Artisan Way.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

206267: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion discuss with this Board's Committee on Traffic and Parking, the city's policies regarding flashing street signs and their effects on residents with certain neurological conditions.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

206942: That the Administration work with the Ward 3 Alderman to ensure that the snow emergency parking options are sufficient in Ward 3, given recent changes to the school lot policy.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

207161: That the Director of Traffic and Parking address the cut-through traffic in Ten Hills caused by online traffic apps like Waze.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

207659: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install NO PARKING signs near 48

Bradley Street, to prevent parking along the short curb at the row housing complex.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208111: That the Director of SPCD paint the newer red markings at the corner of Pearl and James Streets to ensure ample clearance at 225 Pearl Street for vehicles turning onto Pearl Street.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208475: That the Traffic Commission consider making Mt. Pleasant Street a 2 or 4-hour parking zone during work hours to discourage motorists from parking there to take the Orange Line.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208698: That the Traffic Commission approve the installation of a stop light at the intersection of Grand Union Boulevard and Canal Street.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208813: That the Director of SPCD regularly update the Ward 3 City Councilor on efforts to reduce speeding and congestion on Hamlet Street, including opposite-side parking, street trees, a new Stop Line on the southern end of the street, and planters at the northeast corner by Highland Avenue.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209208: That the Commissioner of Public Works repaint the STOP HERE line on Central Street on the northern side of the intersection with Somerville Avenue.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209209: That the Commissioner of Public Works replace the damaged curb ramp mats at the intersection of Highland Avenue and Central Street.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209659: That the Director of Parking report to this Council how the City addresses residents who do not pay automobile excise taxes because they maintain out-of-state license plates on their vehicles.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210333: That this Council consider the joint recommendations of the Bicycle Advisory Committee and the Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee with respect to a

transportation response to COVID-19.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210554: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Parking work with the Ward 3 City Councilor, Riverside Community Care, and residents on mitigating the parking and traffic issues associated with the new Riverside facility at 117 Summer Street.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210729: That the Director of Parking place NO PARKING signs on the corner of Cross St and Chester Ave.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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210744: That the Director of Parking address this Council regarding enforcement policies on Resident Permit Parking and other regulations during the Covid-19 pandemic.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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