



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Traffic and Parking Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, June 24, 2024

6:00 PM

The meeting took place virtually via Zoom and was called to order at 6:01 PM by Chair Sait and adjourned at 6:59 PM.

Others present:

Brad Rawson – Director of Mobility, Suzanne Rinfret – Director of Parking, Brian Postlewaite – Director of Engineering, Peter Forcellese – Legislative Clerk.

Roll Call

Present: Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait, Ward Seven City Councilor Judy Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson

- 1. Committee Minutes (ID # [24-0645](#)) Approval of the Minutes of the Traffic and Parking Committee Meeting of April 29, 2024.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: Ward Five City Councilor Sait, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson

- 2. Order (ID # [24-0925](#)) By Councilor McLaughlin That the Director of Parking discuss the policy around restricted parking signs during construction and how to limit negative impacts in the community.

Director Rinfret explained that residents and contractors may post their own signs as long as they adhere to the Parking Departments guidelines. Contractors may use the signs to provide access or for deliveries but they may not be used for convenience. Contractors are provided with parking permits for their employees by the Parking Department. Director Rinfret also noted that other city departments, e.g., DPW and Engineering, also post restricted parking signs.

Councilor Wilson commented that the problems aren't coming from the residential side, but private and municipal contractors are abusing the privilege. In some cases, residents are being asked not to park for weeks at a time only to find that no work is being done. Director Rinfret said that there should be no overwriting of signs and if that is observed, the Parking Department should be informed. Abuses reported to 311 or the Parking Department will be addressed. With respect to the problems on Macarthur Street, the contractor involved has been told to adhere to the regulations.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about the removal of signs and Director Rinfrett said it's the contractor's responsibility to do so, and if they don't remove them, the Parking Department will. Councilor Pineda Neufeld asked about coordination and the Director explained that a weekly right-of-way list is used to avoid conflicts.

Chair Sait asked if councilors are informed about lengthy construction times and the Director said that the information is available on the right-of-way on website, adding that she isn't aware of a way to know the start and end times of large projects, but that the Engineering Department should have that information. Councilor Wilson asked what latitude the Parking Department has to deny request by repeat offender and Director Rinfrett said that she has denied signs in the past when she has been made aware of problems.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

3. Order
(ID # [24-0922](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Director of Parking place SLOW CHILDREN and NOT A THROUGH STREET signs on Alston Street by the corner of Cross Street.

Director Rinfrett explained that the SLOW CHILDREN signs have been replaced by CHILDREN AT PLAY signs. She also pointed out that Alston Street is a through street, so a NOT A THROUGH STREET sign would be inaccurate. She said that if there is an issue, there are other tools that can be used in conjunction with the Mobility Department. Chair Sait asked if Alston Street would be getting any traffic calming measures and Director Rawson replied that it is not on the prioritization list, so staff will interact with Councilor McLaughlin to discuss options and solutions.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

4. Order
(ID # [24-0901](#))

By Councilor Clingan and Councilor Wilson

That the Director of Mobility daylight the corner of Maple Avenue and School Street.

Director Rawson stated that there is a universal regulation prohibiting parking within 20 feet of a corner and if a violation is observed, it should be reported to 311. He explained that the city is using a corridor based approach to reinforce the prohibition. The first big project was completed last year and the next one will be Washington Street during the summer and fall of this year and will utilize concrete sidewalk extensions. The project for 2025 hasn't been decided upon yet, but it's unlikely to be School Street. Director Rinfrett told the committee that this corner is on the Parking Department's complaint list and violations are occurring mostly on Sundays, so Parking Control Officers have been working on Sundays to enforce the

regulation.

Councilor Wilson asked how recent the data being referenced is and Director Rawson said that crash data is updated and published in 5-year increments and that the most recent data runs through 2022. Councilor Wilson asked about reopening a street that has been closed for a lengthy period of time and Director Rawson indicated that it could be given a closer look.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

5. Order
(ID # [24-0791](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen

That the Director of Mobility begin a public process to determine how to manage traffic issues on Benton Road in light of the upcoming change of Central Street to a one-way from Summer Street to Highland Avenue.

Director Rawson said that a technical memorandum was sent a couple of weeks ago and that staff has heard from residents and stakeholders about concerns on Benton Road. The key takeaway is that the Mobility Department wants residents to read the memo and give feedback. The Director commented that changes in directional patterns can solve some problems and also create new ones, so careful consideration is critical, as is consultation with other departments, especially those having to do with first responders and public safety. Mobility staff will be scheduling pop up events in neighborhoods as well as community meetings, etc..

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Public
Communication
(ID # [24-0701](#))

Green Cab Company, Inc. requesting an increase in the taxicab meter rate to \$3.80 for the first 1/8 of a mile, \$0.50 for each additional 1/8 of a mile and \$32 per hour waiting time.

Cheryl Horan from Green Cab Company told the committee that the last increase was in 2012 and that the rates in Boston and Cambridge have gone up since. She explained that taxi meters calculate time or distance. The cost of parts and fuel have gone up and the size of the fleet decreased because of Uber/Lyft. The company doesn't want to lose drivers to Cambridge. Ms. Horan assured the committee that a rate increase would not affect its contracts with the city.

The company also wants to increase its senior discount from 20% to 25%, and Ms. Horan was informed that would be solely a company decision. Ms. Horan mentioned that the company would like to be able to travel in marked bus lanes and Chair Sait informed her that would require additional action and could be discussed with the City Council's Legislative and Policy

Analyst.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED

AYE: Ward Five City Councilor Sait, Ward Seven City Councilor Pineda Neufeld and City Councilor At Large Wilson

- 7. Order (ID # [24-0662](#))

By Councilor Clingan

That the Director of Engineering assess the timing of the traffic light at Main Street and Broadway and consider lengthening the cycle time.

Director Postlewaite told the committee that the department has been working worked with the traffic engineer and the Mobility Department on this matter and that he has contacted Councilor Clingan, who informed him that the request was to lengthen the time for pedestrians to cross Broadway. Director Postlewaite said that the city has been working with the MBTA over the past year to upgrade traffic signals and this particular light is one of them. New signal equipment will be installed which will allow for better timing modification and monitoring. Presently, traffic, bus traffic, and pedestrian travel is being monitored to gather info and as of today, there are no plans to change anything until that assessment is done. The timeframe for assessing is usually 3-6 months because a long view is necessary since circumstances/conditions vary at different times of the year. Director Rawson noted that this assessment just began this month.

Councilor Wilson asked about having a yellow signal arrow at Broadway and Main Street, noting that when driving westbound on Broadway and turning onto Main Street, the signal light turns from green to red, skipping the yellow signal. Director Postlewaite Brian said this should not be the case and that it can be corrected.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED