



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

September 18, 2019
REPORT OF THE TRAFFIC AND PARKING COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Mark Niedergang	Chair	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Vice Chair	Present	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six City Councilor	Absent	

The meeting was held in the Committee Room and was called to order by Chairman Niedergang at 7:04pm and adjourned at 8:58pm.

Others present: Brad Rawson - OSPCD; J.T. Scott - Ward 2 City Councilor; Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees

Residents: Arah Schuur; Brooke Kahn; Enid Kumin; Tom Lamar; Jason Miller; Chris Dwan

Chairman Niedergang expressed to the attendees that he wants to use these meetings as a forum for discussion to help make progress on traffic calming and the challenges that face Somerville in terms of safety and use of our streets. Several members of the public shared an interest in the issues concerning bicycling and walking in the City, with one hoping to share the motorist's perspective.

Approval of the July 8, 2019 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Traffic Calming Investments, Policy and Priorities

208688: That the Director of Mobility discuss with advocates and Councilors, options for the selection process for the new Pedestrian/Transit Committee and discuss its possible relationship to the Vision Zero Task Force and the Bicycle Committee.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked how information would travel from the Vision Zero Task Force, Pedestrian/Transit Advisory Cmte (PTAC), and Bicycle Committee (SBAC) to the City Council and the public. Mr. Rawson noted that there is a calendar for activities. He anticipates that these groups will advise the Administration and City Council. The new PTAC would meet monthly as does the SBAC, with Vision Zero TF most likely meeting quarterly for updates once the Vision Zero report has been published. He said the new PTAC would represent geographic, age, and commuter diversity. The goal for the newly created Pedestrian/Transit Committee to convene is December/January, and it will be comprised of 10-15 individuals, as there were a total of 63 applicants, and many quality applicants. Mr. Miller asked if there could be a committee for motorists,

or if they should join the other committees. Chairman Niedergang noted that the current infrastructure and City policy for many decades caters to motorists, and as such, there is no separate committee needed, but they could apply to join any committee on which they would like to share input and visitors are welcome at all meetings.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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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.

The Chair started off the discussion by saying that there is so much interest, concern, and demand in the community for traffic calming. Unfortunately, the resources are not available to accommodate all requests. It would be helpful for communicating with residents if a prioritized list was available. Mr. Rawson shared that the need for a transparent list was included in the Vision Zero plan, and added that many of the traffic calming investments will be included in the extensive construction that is already planned and underway in the City. He shared information about the many traffic-calming projects completed or underway just in the last two years, and said that in addition to high-priority safety intersections and streets, there are less dangerous neighborhood streets that can be improved without spending a lot of money or time, and Mobility wants to do both. Chairman Niedergang added that perhaps there could be separate lists for the dangerous areas that need to be addressed as a matter of public safety, and one for the neighborhood-based quality-of-life concerns.

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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202862: That the Director of Traffic and Parking explain its policy of reporting back to citizens who submit traffic calming petitions.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Dangerous Intersections/Areas - State Roads

Mr. Rawson spoke passionately about his and the Administration's great concern and sadness about the deaths in the Mystic Ave/I-93/Mcgrath Highway area. He stated that the roadways there are a legacy of decades of discriminatory road development policies that have placed the most dangerous and heavily-traveled roadways in areas with residents of lower socio-economic status. He said that unfortunately the many millions of dollars needed to really fix these problems are simply not available to the City. Mr. Dwan wondered if

anything is being done to make an immediate impact, or, for example, to support volunteers who are placing barrels in intersections where pedestrians have been killed. Mr. Rawson shared that MassDOT (Department of Transportation) prioritizes investments based on crash history. The funding that has been allocated to Somerville for dangerous intersections in that area is for the 2022-2023 calendar years. Planning and community engagement on how to spend that money, about \$5 million, will soon begin. However, he cautioned, while this may sound like a lot of money it is barely enough to even begin to address the dangerous roadway conditions there, and not nearly enough to solve them. There will be a community meeting on Tuesday, October 1st, 6 PM at the East Somerville Community School with MassDOT present to discuss the process. He added that he cannot support volunteers making changes in dangerous roadways, as it should be left to trained and experienced professionals.

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.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208694: That the Director of SPCD work with the City of Boston and MA DOT to promote bicycle and pedestrian safety at state highway intersections including Sullivan Square, McGrath Highway at Broadway and at Washington Street, and the Northern Expressway at the Kensington Avenue Underpass.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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201510: That the Director of Traffic and Parking request that MA DOT address traffic hazards at the intersection of McGrath Highway and Mystic Avenue.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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200181: That the Director of Traffic and Parking communicate to MA DOT the need for painted lanes and signs to slow traffic along I-93 and Mystic Avenue along the underpass by Stop and Shop.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207573: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Traffic and Parking install all signage needed to inform motorists exiting Route 16 onto Powder House Blvd. that they are entering a residential and school neighborhood.

Mr. Rawson shared that the state Department of Conservation and Recreation has not prioritized these areas, and they will be looking to the state delegation and the City Council to help with advocacy efforts.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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204965: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install a crosswalk at Woods Avenue and Route 16.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Dangerous Intersections/Areas

Chairman Niedergang asked Mr. Rawson to address “Winter Hill in Motion,” (the addition of bus and bike lane on Broadway and removal of some parking), the McGrath and Broadway intersection, and the use of Jacques Street as a cut-through.

Mr. Rawson spoke about the congestion and that it is being suffered in many areas in metro Boston, it is not unique to Somerville. This regional dynamic and housing shortage, combined with the bridge closures, are affecting the McGrath traffic, not the new bus and bike lanes. The redesign of Broadway has been underway for five years, with many well-attended community meetings and with the goal of accommodating pedestrian and bicycle traffic with bicycle lanes and narrowing the roadway to slow speed of motorists and make crossing Broadway safer for pedestrians. The bus prioritization lane has been self-policed thus far. It is based on successes in other communities, and signage and education are forthcoming. The research has shown that motorist travel time will eventually improve as well, which should begin when the traffic signal times are adjusted and bridges are re-opened. Daily traffic should also decrease and have a higher percentage of local traffic. Councilor Ewen-Campen compared this to the detour on Somerville Avenue, which was intense for approximately two weeks but later returned to normal. There will be some sight line improvements to Jacques Street and painting on the street to calm traffic to address some of the concerns.

Several residents requested data on the impact of the changes and Mr. Rawson noted that there will be GPS data from the MBTA, as well as motorist travel time data, and cyclist counts.

Ms. Kahn asked for more information on the public process for these issues. Mr. Miller asked if notifications could be made to residents when major changes are made. Mr. Rawson noted that there is a goal to always keep stakeholders updated and invite as many perspectives as possible to the decision-making process. The ResiStat cycle and Committee meetings help guide the timeline for information sharing.

208117: That the Director of SPCD immediately install flex posts at the intersection of Holland Street and Cameron Avenue to ensure pedestrian safety.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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

This have been bike lanes painted on Cameron Avenue and there is a bicycle turn lane at the intersection that cars are not supposed to be in. This has discouraged vehicles from stopping next to each other and seems to have improved traffic at that intersection..

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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.

There is a new flashing hybrid beacon ordered and will be installed in the next few weeks, which have demonstrated to increase motorist compliance to approximately 90%.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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

207281: That the Director of SPCD work with the Ward 3 Alderman to address long-standing congestion at the intersection of Highland Avenue and Hamlet Street.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

206685: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board on when various necessary improvements to the Union Square traffic pattern, including an "All-Walk" cycle and left-turn arrows at certain intersections, will be implemented.

Mr. Rawson noted that these locations have been a concern since 2017, and updates have included changing the traffic signal from an exclusive to a concurrent pattern, and the plan now is to return it to an exclusive pattern. But he did not have a timeline for when that will happen.

See also: 208837.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

208834: That the Chief of Police post a traffic detail at the intersection of Webster Avenue and Prospect Street for the duration of the traffic detours in Union Square that reroute Washington Street traffic through that intersection.

Mr. Rawson noted that Police detail coverage is an ongoing challenge for the City, and staff are working to prioritize the sites.

See 208837 below.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208836: That the Director of Parking, the Director of SPCD and the Chief of Police increase traffic signage and enforcement at the intersection of Webster Avenue and Somerville Avenue to prevent northbound traffic on Webster Avenue from continuing north onto Bow Street or entering Somerville Avenue going in the wrong direction.

Councilor Ewen-Campen shared that it is incredibly unclear how to navigate this intersection and what is allowed. Mr. Rawson noted that there was a phase change with the work zone, and he is uncertain of the exact details but will work with staff around wayfinding signage to clarify. Councilor Scott added that because of the uncertainty, there are poor decisions being made by drivers and it is very dangerous.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208031: That the Director of SPCD use the \$220,000 in traffic mitigation funds paid by Maxwell's Green in 2011 for traffic calming on Lowell Street, between Highland Avenue and Albion Street, by constructing a traffic-calming table at the Albion Street crosswalk.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

206064: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board and the Ward 5 Alderman on plans to expend the \$220,000 contributed by the Maxwell's Green developer for traffic calming in the Lowell Street area.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208378: That the Director of SPCD install traffic calming infrastructure on Morrison Avenue, such as a speed bump between Cedar Street and Willow Avenue, as soon as possible to protect pedestrians crossing Morrison Avenue, especially at Highland Road near Lexington Park and the Community Path.

Mr. Rawson said there will soon be a crosswalk painted at Morrison and Prichard and other measures will be explored. The Chair said that he believes Highland Road at Morrison is the top priority because many children, parents and others cross there to get to Lexington Park and the Community Path.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208278: That the Director of SPCD advise the Committee on Traffic and Parking of any plans for traffic calming on Morrison Avenue between Cedar Street and Willow Avenue.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Traffic Signal Settings and Policy

208781: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Parking develop a city-wide traffic signaling policy that includes guidelines for temporary signaling during construction.

Mr. Lamar shared that there is a benefit to concurrent signaling with LPI (leading pedestrian interval), and there are accessibility concerns with the walk buttons. Councilor Ewen-Campen responded that the change to exclusive signaling was specific to certain high volume intersections and not a general policy change throughout the City. Mr. Rawson added that there is no signals policy for the City at this time.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

207903: That the Director of SPCD discuss with this Council the use of "concurrent with leading interval" pedestrian crossing timing at major intersections that see high usage by school and pre-school children, particularly at the intersection of Beacon and Washington Streets, and consider reversion to pedestrian-exclusive crossing timing at several relevant intersections.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208835: That the Director of SPCD return the intersection at Webster Avenue and Washington Street to an exclusive pedestrian crossing interval to increase safety for schoolchildren and other pedestrians.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208837: That the Commissioner of Public Works immediately reassess the signaling at the intersection of Webster Avenue and Prospect Street due to the current unsafe and frustrating conditions there.

Councilor Scott shared that the current light cycle only allows for one car to pass through the light during each cycle, which causes people to make unsafe driving decisions. In the short-term, there should be a Police detail, but for the longer-term, the signal timing needs to be addressed. Councilor Ewen-Campen added that during the Somerville Avenue detour, the intersection has been rendered even more incredibly congested and dangerous. Chairman Niedergang will follow-up with the Police Department regarding the detail. Engineering staff can observe the patterns and share those with the consultants to make adjustments to the pattern.

See also: 206685 and 208834.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

Parking Issues

208575: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Parking provide a quarterly update regarding implementation of deed-based parking permit restrictions.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208833: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Parking provide this Council with a timeline for implementing resident parking restrictions for certain new developments.

RESULT: **KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

208321: That the Mayor convene a committee to make recommendations by early 2020 for changes in City and residential parking permit policies such as those suggested by the Nelson/Nygaard consultant, as presented to the Land Use Committee on April 30, 2019.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

207575: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Traffic and Parking immediately implement "only onsite parking" requirements for those proposed projects which have been confirmed during neighborhood meetings as not being granted residential or guest parking permits.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

204876: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Traffic and Parking meet with the Committee on Traffic and Parking to discuss policies and procedures to limit residential parking permits for residents of properties that are granted relief from parking requirements by the Zoning Board of Appeals or the Planning Board.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

"Bridge Hopper"

208846: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council with ridership data for the City's "Bridge Hopper" shuttle to assess whether it has been worthwhile and whether there should be changes to its operation. (2nd request)

The contract allows flexibility to modify the service based on ridership, which is currently 15-20 people per shuttle per day. Mr. Rawson agreed that the cost per rider is high and that better expenditures of the funds to help people who are unable to get around due to the bridge closures are possible. He said that alternatives will be explored.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

208036: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council in writing by May 9, 2019 ridership data for the "Bridge Hopper" shuttle.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

Housekeeping - Items to be marked complete

208033: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install new, vehicle-safe, bolt-in-place YIELD FOR PEDESTRIANS IN CROSSWALK signs at the intersections of Lowell and Hudson Streets and Lowell and Albion Streets, as soon as they are available.

RESULT: WORK COMPLETED

207715: That the Director of SPCD inform the Ward 5 and Ward 6 Councilors and the public as soon as possible the route and schedule for the City shuttle van that will ferry

passengers around the closed Broadway/Ball Square Bridge.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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205802: That the Director of SPCD report to the Wards 1, 2 and 3 Aldermen and this Board on the plans for any GLX-related closures of Washington Street, near the McGrath Highway underpass.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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205333: That the Traffic Commission revoke the "48-hour parking ban."

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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205092: That the Traffic Commission consider creating a process for residents to comment on parking changes that affect their streets.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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205077: That the Director of SPCD update this Board on Cambridge's plan to eliminate the left turn onto Massachusetts Avenue from the Porter Square shopping center, which is likely to add traffic to White Street, a small street that is inadequate for such traffic.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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204796: That the Director of SPCD consider painting two new crosswalks on Elm Street near the Kennedy School, and discuss these and other traffic-calming measures there with the Ward 5 Alderman.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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202594: Cambridge Director of Traffic and Parking responding to #202317, requesting an appearance to discuss Inman Square traffic changes.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207590: That the Director of Traffic and Parking immediately prioritize blocking truck access to Warren Avenue to prevent additional crashes and property damage during the Somerville Avenue detour.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207591: That the Director of Traffic and Parking immediately install pedestrian safety measures on Bow Street, Warren Avenue and Columbus Avenue to deal with the increase of traffic during the Somerville Avenue detour.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED