

# Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee



2011 ANNUAL REPORT





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## Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee

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Brian Postlewaite, former Chairman

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Terry Smith, Traffic & Parking Department

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Sarah Spicer (June, 2011) Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development

Kathleen Ziegenfuss, Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (Jan-June, 2011)

Cover Image: Bicycle-Corral at Bow Street, Union Square

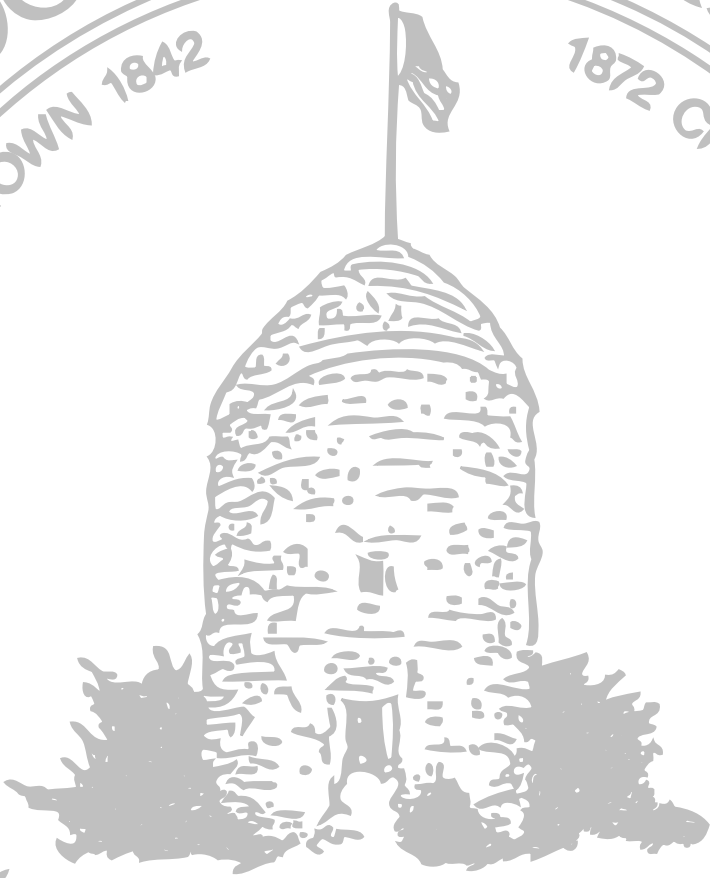




MUNICIPAL FREEDOM GIVES NATIONAL STRENGTH

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1872 CITY



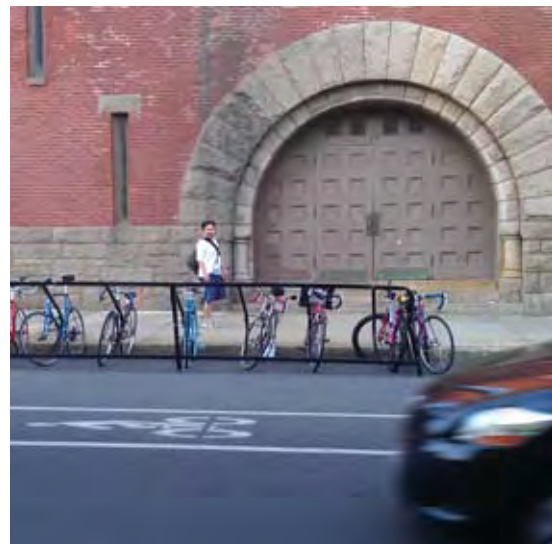
OLD POWDER HOUSE

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SOMERVILLE, MASS.

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Top: Bike Friendly Community award from the American League of Cyclists; Somerville History Ride (photo: D. Mink); New Rack at Tufts Community Garden (Photo: S. Spicer); Community Path in Winter (Photo: G. Ferrier); Bike Week Breakfast (SBC Photo); Corral at Bow St (Photo: S Spicer)

# INTRODUCTION

The Somerville Board of Alderman established the Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee (SBC) in 2001. The SBC works to improve conditions for bicyclists in the city, to promote bicycling as a means of transportation, and to help implement bicycle policy, programs, and routes for all ages and abilities.

As of 2009 nearly 5% of Somerville residents commuted by bicycle.<sup>1</sup> Ridership continues to increase, as many more residents cycle on a daily basis to run errands, to access educational opportunities and for personal enjoyment. Thus, bicycle commuting has nearly tripled over two decades (1990, 2%), with much of that growth (near doubling) concentrated in the last ten years (2000, 3%)<sup>2</sup>. To build on these statistics, the SBC and the City have conducted a multi-year bicycle & pedestrian counting project to better document and understand how transportation choices are changing.

The increase of bicyclists in the city has paralleled the improving conditions for bicycling in Somerville. These improvements over the past two decades

include traffic calming measures, the Community Path, bicycle lanes and City-sponsored community bike rides. In 2011, over eleven miles of new bicycle facilities (bike lanes and sharrows) were added, increasing the City's total bicycle infrastructure by over 50% in a single year. The table below shows the increase in bicycle infrastructure over the past five years. See Map #1: Historical Progression of Bicycle Infrastructure, for the location of bike infrastructure over time.

The SBC and the City know that cycling is as much about community and culture as it is about pavement and paint. Somerville is lucky to have an enthusiastic cycling population. This was evident during the SBC's three annual bike rides held in 2011: the spring Historic Bike Tour, the fall Tour de Somerville, and the second annual winter Illuminations Tour to see the city's holiday light displays.

The SBC plans to continue these improvements over this decade, focusing on increasing both bicycle facilities and public outreach to encourage increased cycling in Somerville. Our overall goal is at least 10% of Somerville residents commuting by bicycle in 2020.

1 US Census, 2009 Community Survey  
 2 US Decennial Census, 1990 & 2000

## Historical Growth in Somerville Cycling Infrastructure

Year	Off-Street Paths (miles)	Bike Lanes (miles)	Sharrows/ Routes (miles)
2007	1.7	0.7	-
2008	-	3.8	1.1
2009	-	-	2.5
2010	0.8	2.7	8.8
2011	-	2.6	8.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2.5 miles</b>	<b>9.8 miles</b>	<b>20.9 miles</b>

## GOALS FOR 2020

To continue the growth of bicycling in the city and to attain 10% bicycle commuting mode share by 2020, the SBC will continue to support efforts to:

- Complete the Community Path, to provide a direct, car-free route from Somerville to Boston via Brickbottom and North Point. The path currently ends at Cedar Street, but its extension to Lowell Street was under design in 2011, with a construction start date of Spring 2013.
- Provide Bike Route signage, to help bicyclists navigate our neighborhood streets and avoid roads with heavier motor vehicle traffic where possible.
- Provide bicycle facilities on all major city roads and business districts, to provide safe and efficient facilities for bicyclists to travel throughout the city.
- Increase access to bike parking, by:
  - » Installing public bike racks in all business areas; and
  - » Providing centralized and preferably sheltered parking facilities at main commercial centers, civic areas and transit stations.
- Establish and expand a city-wide bike share program with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), to facilitate flexible, seamless bicycle travel with neighboring cities and transit. Planning for Hubway in Somerville began in 2011 through OSPCD.
- Update zoning to anticipate increased bicycle use, which will place a greater demand on public and private bicycle parking facilities than currently reflected in zoning.
- Calm street traffic, so bicyclists of every age and ability can travel comfortably throughout the city.
- Educate grade school students to operate bicycles in the city, such that, with calmed vehicular traffic, 20% or more of Somerville students will bicycle to school. Cyclekids, a non-profit organization focused on this initiative, began working with Somerville schools in 2010 on this issue.
- Educate everybody about cycling in the city, so drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians, regardless of native language and background, know the rights and responsibilities of bicycling in Somerville.
- Prepare more bicycle promotion programs and materials, to provide all Somerville residents with the encouragement and support to be a bicyclist in Somerville.
- Each of these elements will help Somerville residents to bicycle more. The following measures will allow the City to chart its progress and provide feedback on the optimal use of funds.
  - » Annual bicycle counting, to chart bicycle usage; led by the Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development (OSPCD) in coordination with the SBC.
  - » Regular enforcement and recording of dangerous traffic behavior, led by the Police Department.
  - » Annual bicycle accident and incident report, to assess both problem



locations and problem behaviors; led by the SBC in coordination with the OSPCD (data sources may include MassDOT, MAPC, CTPS, City Police Reports, and other local sources).

Together, these efforts will help the SBC achieve its 2020 vision of 10% bicycle commuting mode share on safe, connected routes.

## 2011 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The SBC has advanced the above goals throughout 2011, through successful partnerships with the following city organizations and departments:

- Mayor's Office
- Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development
- Traffic and Parking
- Department of Public Works
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Police Department
- Shape Up Somerville
- Health Department
- Somerville Arts Council
- League of American Cyclists

The Committee promoted and was instrumental in the City's successful application for recognition by the League of American Bicyclists as a Bicycle Friendly Community in 2011. The League recognized the City, including the SBC, for its commitment and accomplishments in improving bicycling

conditions with a Bronze-level designation. The League also provided a set of recommendations for the City to implement to become even more bicycle-friendly in the future and to compete for silver, gold, and ultimately platinum status. These recommendations drive a number of the SBC's goals for 2012.

## '11 in 2011' Campaign

The Committee advised and promoted the City's '11 in 2011' campaign – an initiative to install over 11 miles of new bicycle infrastructure during the year. By year end, slightly over 11 miles had been installed! Prior to 2011, there were 19 miles of bicycle infrastructure throughout the city—therefore, 2011 saw a 58% increase in on-street bicycle infrastructure.

In 2011, bicycle lanes were installed on:

- Somerville Avenue, from Prospect Street to Medford Street
- Medford Street from Somerville Ave to Warren Street
- Willow Avenue from Elm Street to Highland Avenue (restored after reconstruction)

Sharrows were installed on:

- Prospect Street from city line to Webster Avenue
- Highland Avenue from Davis Square to Medford Street
- Medford Street, Warren Street to Cambridge city line
- School Street, Broadway to Somerville Avenue

- Medford Street, Walnut Street to Broadway
- Temple Street, Broadway to Mystic Avenue

See Map #2 for the current network.

## Bicycle Parking

The Committee helped the City with its Bicycle Parking Program by reviewing and suggesting locations for the 75 bicycle racks that were installed on city sidewalks in 2011, provided through the MAPC bike parking program. Installation focused on commercial squares and corridors, public buildings (libraries, schools and city offices) and other service-oriented locations.

The 2009 SBC initiative to undertake an on-street bike parking program (bike corrals accommodate 14 bicycles in the place of one parked car) resulted in the first two corrals installed by the City in summer 2011. One was sited in Davis Square and the other in Union Square. SBC conducted outreach to multiple businesses to solicit interest and to canvas optimal locations. The bike corral program has proven so popular that eight additional corrals will be installed in 2012 across all wards of the City.

## Organized Bicycle Rides

As we did the previous year, the Committee organized three bike rides in 2011: a spring Historic Bike Tour, a fall Tour de Somerville, and a winter Illuminations Bike Tour. The former two attracted approximately 150 participants each while the latter was joined by approximately 70 riders.



Top: Corral at Elm Street, Davis Square. Middle: new racks at Elm Street and Somerville Avenue. Bottom: Corral at Bow Street, Union Square. Photos: S. Spicer

The 2011 Somerville History Bike Tour, co-sponsored with the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission, was held on Sunday, May 22. This annual event during May Preservation Month included a brochure and cue map, available on the Preservation Commission's website <[www.somervillema.gov/historicpreservation](http://www.somervillema.gov/historicpreservation)> under Historic Preservation Commission > Self-Guided Tours and Brochures.

This year, we focused on places that were not yet on the city's official list of historic districts, but that the Historic Preservation Commission wants to add to that list. Cyclists toured Prospect Hill, East Somerville, Winter Hill, Magoun Square, West Somerville, and Spring Hill. Riders especially enjoyed visiting the surprisingly expansive and leafy back yard of the Russell House on Sycamore Street, the tiny streets behind Magoun Square, and the inside of the Morrison House Bed & Breakfast near Davis Square.

The 2011 Tour de Somerville, held on Saturday, October 15, featured "Arts in the 'Ville." Bicyclists visited places throughout

Somerville where art is produced, exhibited, or performed. We stopped to visit the new Artisan's Asylum (seven weeks before its official grand opening); the public art galleries of Brickbottom Artists Association and Washington Street Art Center; and Mudflat's newly opened pottery studio in the old Broadway Theatre building. (Many of our riders had also visited the Broadway during our Lost Theatres tour in May 2010, just before Mudflat began construction there.) We also briefly stopped to meet artists from three other art spaces: Fringe, a co-working space near Union Square; Joy Street Studios; and Vernon Street Studios. Participants received a map and tour guide describing over 60 other art-related places in Somerville. We've posted that map and guide on our website and also made it available to the Somerville Arts Council for future use.

On Saturday, December 17, we held our second annual Illuminations ride, coordinated with the Somerville Arts Council's Illuminations Trolley Tour the same evening. The ride visited numerous



Somerville History Bike Tour  
(Photo: Mayamocha Flickr)





Poster designed by Laurinda Bedingfield

brightly lit homes around Union Square, Ward 2, East Somerville and Winter Hill. Many bicyclists wore holiday lights and other decorations. A number of families joined us with children of all ages. Exuberant holiday cheer was shared by all.

## Events and Other Promotions

The SBC set up an information table at a variety of events over the year, using our presence to help educate Somerville residents about bicycling routes, bike safety, and upcoming bike events. We also used these tabling events to gather feedback from residents about their perspectives on bicycling in our city, including unsafe conditions on their commutes or suggestions from residents on new bike facilities that they would like to see. We tabled at several of the Union Square Farmer's Markets as well as all of the Somerstreets celebrations.

One of our most successful tabling events was a bike commuter breakfast that we organized on May 18 in celebration of National Bike Week. We set up on Beacon Street at the western edge of the Star Market parking lot near Petsi's Pies. The event was a success, despite the weather being cool and misty. We had over 100 bicyclists stop by in one hour. Star Market and Petsi's Pies donated food, beverages, and supplies. Many of the bike commuters were unaware of the SBC's existence and expressed interest in

becoming involved. The most common feedback from attendees was about the dangerous pavement conditions for biking on Beacon Street. Notable visitors included David Watson, the Director of MassBike, and Laura Smeaton, former secretary of MassBike.

The SBC led the coordination of and hosted the first-ever statewide Massachusetts Bicycle Advisory Committee Roundtable, in conjunction with the New England Bicycle Expo at the Armory on May 7. Chairs of all municipal bicycle advisory committees across the state were invited, and eight committees (Somerville, Brookline, Bedford, Chelmsford, Cambridge, Milton, Watertown, and Lexington) were represented at the all-morning panel discussion on shared issues. All agreed that this was a useful forum and should be held again. An online document repository with mutually useful information such as bicycle-pedestrian counting protocols was created and shared.

In 2011, the Committee obtained both a large banner and a posterboard-mounted bike route map for tabling events. SBC continued developing handouts and safety related informational flyers.

## **Pedestrian and Bicycle Counting Program**

SBC again supported the City's comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian counts in 2011. Headed by OSPCD, the volunteer-conducted censuses counted the number of users (cyclists, pedestrians, joggers & other users) on city streets and sidewalks for one morning peak hour and

one evening peak hour in both the Spring and the Fall. The counts were taken at 35 intersections in the Spring, with a 36th intersection (Boston Avenue and Route 16/ Mystic Valley Parkway) added in the Fall.

During the Spring counts (April 26 to May 5, 4,676 cyclists were observed throughout the city. The busiest intersection in both the morning and the afternoon was at Beacon Street and Somerville Avenue (294 cyclists observed in the AM, 352 cyclists in the PM). The fall counts documented 4,665 cyclists in 36 locations. This time, Mossland Street and Somerville Avenue was the busiest intersection during the morning (340 cyclists observed) and in the afternoon, Beacon and Washington was the busiest (264 cyclists observed). See Map #3: AM Cyclists by Intersection, Fall 2011, for the count locations and sample volumes.

In comparison with Spring 2010 counts, the Spring 2011 counts were slightly lower, likely due to cool, rainy weather during collection. The Fall 2011 counts were slightly higher than the Fall 2010 counts, in spite of the later count date. Results posted at <http://www.somervillema.gov/departments/ospcd/transportation-and-infrastructure/counting-program>. Bicycle and pedestrian counting will continue on a yearly basis to continue to monitor the effects of improved infrastructure on pedestrian and cyclist behavior.

## **Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Vehicle Safety Campaign**

The Committee provided advice for the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Vehicle Safety Campaign that the City is developing



2011 Illuminations Tour (Photo: David Larochelle)

through the Office of Communications and the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development. A member of the Bicycle Committee is on the outreach/communications team of the campaign, and will help promote safer streets for all users. The combination education / enforcement campaign will be launched in 2012.

## **Annual Report and Interdepartmental Meeting**

In March and November, 2011, the Committee participated in two meetings with the City departments to discuss improvements to bicycle infrastructure in the city and plan for bike-related projects. This meeting proved to be a successful way to bring together the Department of Public Works, Police Department, Traffic and Parking, and the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community

Development to go over accomplishments of the past year, priorities for the coming year, and initiatives that could potentially be undertaken by the City to increase the diversity and safety of bicycle facilities in Somerville. This meeting helped solidify the working relationship between the Committee and the City, and was instrumental in achieving many of the accomplishments in 2011. We anticipate a similarly productive meeting in 2012.

## **Mapping**

The Committee is providing input to OSPCD working to develop an updated Somerville Bicycle Map with on-road bicycle facilities and recommended routes throughout the city. The map will supplement the internal facilities map which can be found on the City website, and will be printable and available for distribution. In addition, the Committee is

working with the City of Boston to include the entire City of Somerville on the Boston Bikes map.

In addition, SBC began collecting community input on pavement issues via a publicly accessible online map. The pavement concerns of the community were mapped, compiled into tabular form, and submitted to DPW for consideration in the City's repaving schedule.

## Guidance on City Projects

The Committee gave advice to the City on various infrastructure projects throughout the course of the year. These projects include City, State and private projects:

- Assembly Square
- Union Square
- Community Path
- Green Line Extension Stations
- Mystic River Parkway Alewife Brook Bridge
- Broadway in East Somerville
- Somerville's Comprehensive Plan



2011 National Bike Week Commuter Breakfast (photo: SBC)

- Route 28 underpass
- Beacon Street: Repairs of existing hazardous conditions; Conceptual design for 2013-14 full reconstruction
- Alewife Brook Greenway

Through collaboration with the City, the above projects and efforts will provide greater accommodations for bicyclists.

## PRIORITIES FOR 2012

The Committee and City have agreed to work collaboratively on a number of priorities for the next year. These priorities center on bicycle facility expansions, progressive policy development, as well as education and outreach, which will together make the City competitive for a silver-level Bicycle Friendly Community award from the League of American Bicyclists.

## Bicycle Facilities

The bicycle facilities network in Somerville is expanding rapidly. The priorities for this year again focus on connectivity.



- North-South connections, such as Walnut, School and Willow Streets;
- Connecting the Broadway bicycle lanes to East Somerville;
- Connecting the Beacon Street bicycle lanes to Somerville Avenue;
- Connecting the Somerville Avenue bicycle lanes through Union Square from Prospect St to Market Basket;
- Connecting the Somerville Avenue and planned Summer Street bicycle lanes via a climbing bicycle lane on Central Street;
- Connecting the Somerville Avenue bicycle lanes to Massachusetts Avenue in Porter Square; and
- Continuing to advocate for Community Path extension, including assisting identification of Lowell Street to Inner Belt funding opportunities
- “One in every ward”: installation of 10 bike corrals citywide (8 new corrals for 2012)

## **Education & Outreach**

The SBC plans to further promote bicycle opportunities in the City. This will require new tools for education and outreach that the Committee is currently developing. Some of the tools will include:

Developing an updated Somerville Bicycle Map, for print and Internet distribution;

Distributing information for the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Vehicle Safety campaign;

Expanding Bike Week and Bike Month programming and publicity, including more collaboration with the Mayor, City departments, and external organizations.

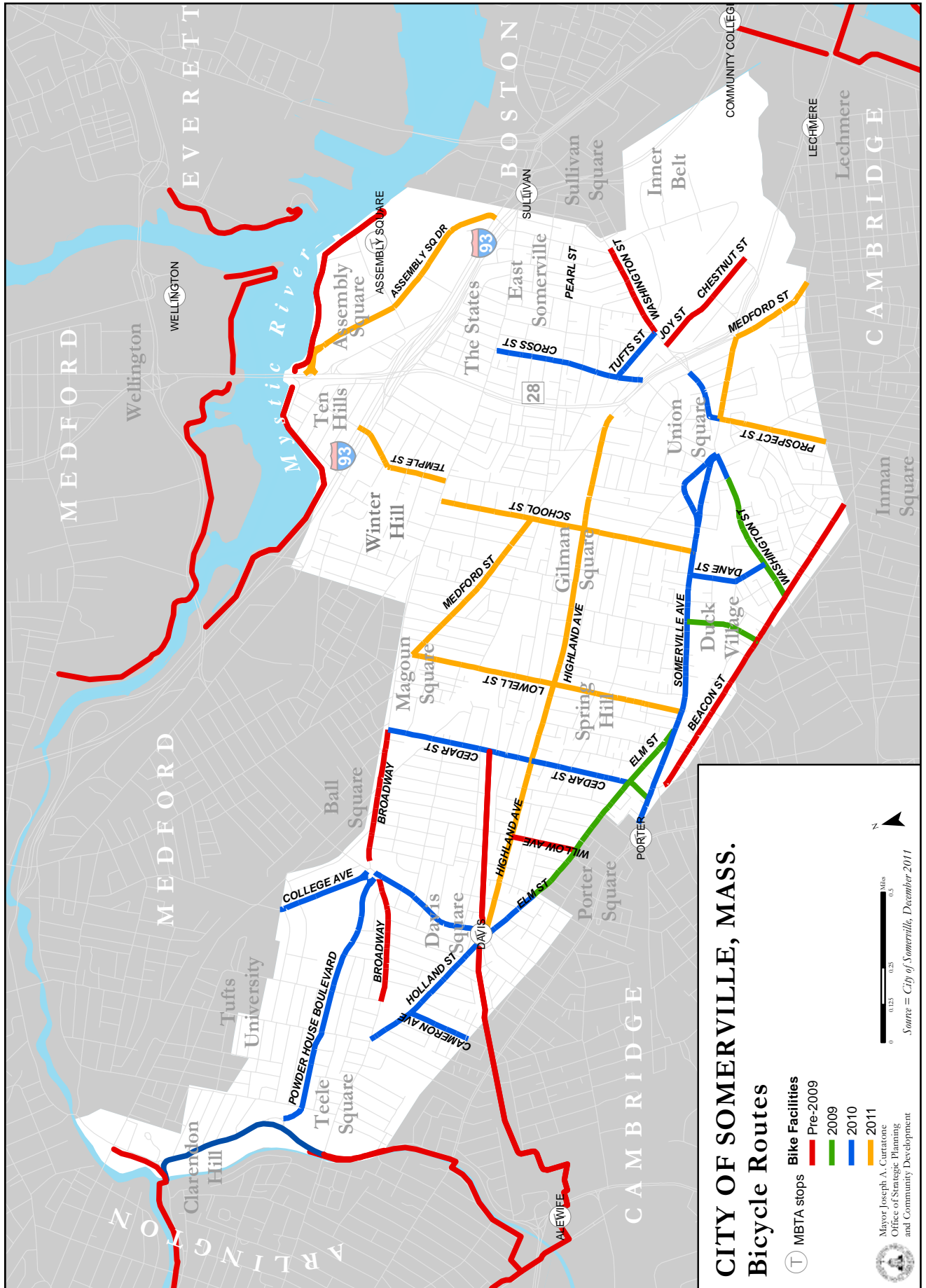
## **INITIATIVES FOR 2012**

The SBC intends to explore a few key initiatives for 2012. These would build on the City's past accomplishments and work towards the Committee's 2020 goals. We plan to work with the City on the following initiatives:

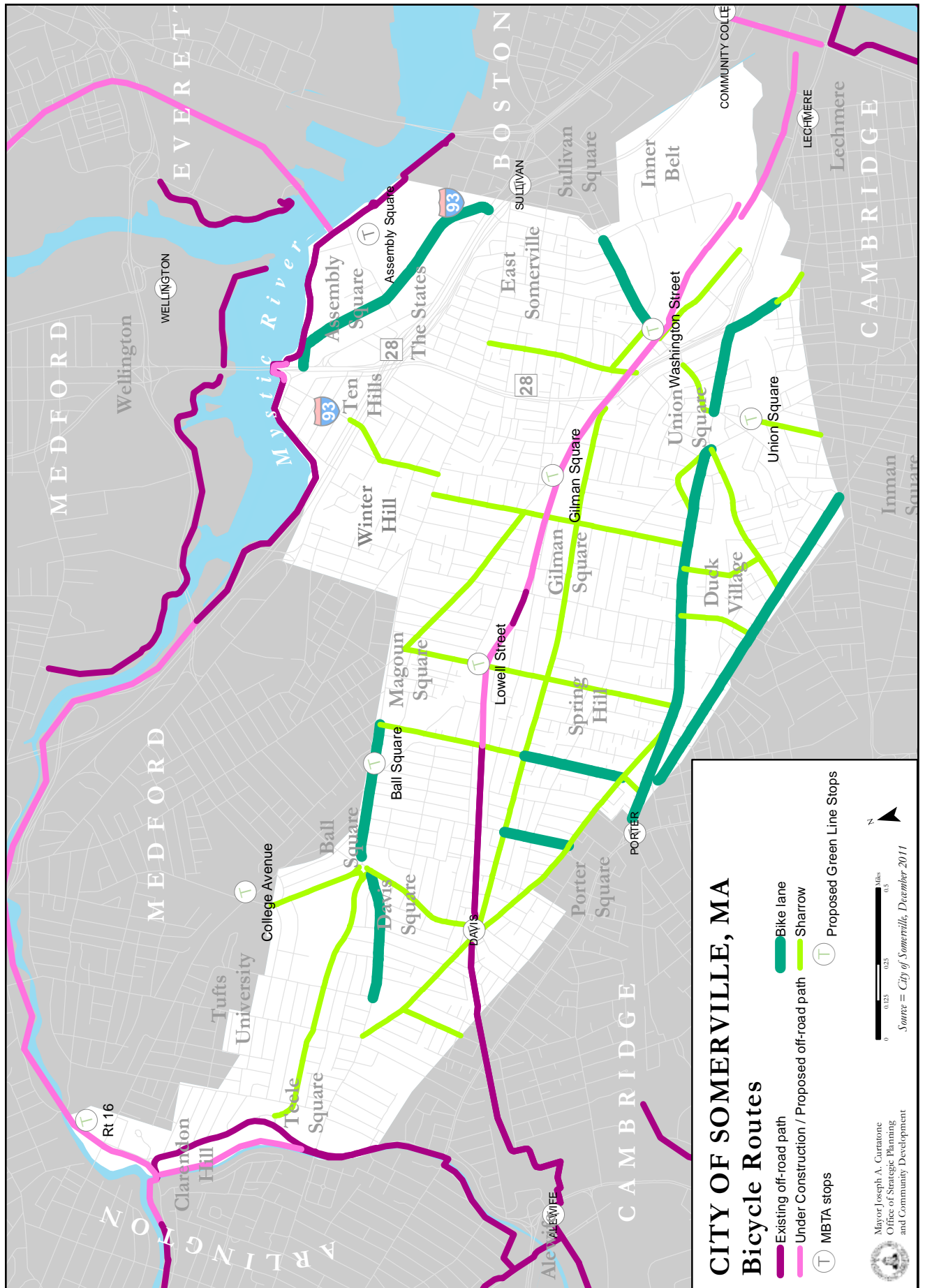
- Coordinate with the City's bike safety initiatives, organized by Communications, OSPCD, and SPD
- Develop a bicycle wayfinding signage network built upon the Community Path and neighborhood streets to link major commercial & civic centers;
- Include a cycle track in the reconstruction of the high demand bicycle route along Beacon Street;
- Develop and support the adoption of a citywide Complete Streets Ordinance or Policy, including working completion of a Bicycle Facility Guide
- Development of a long-range Comprehensive Bicycle Plan
- Partnering with the School Committee and other City bodies to improve bikeability to the Somerville schools
- See Map #4: 2011 Bicycle Infrastructure Initiatives, for the location of the priorities and initiatives described above.



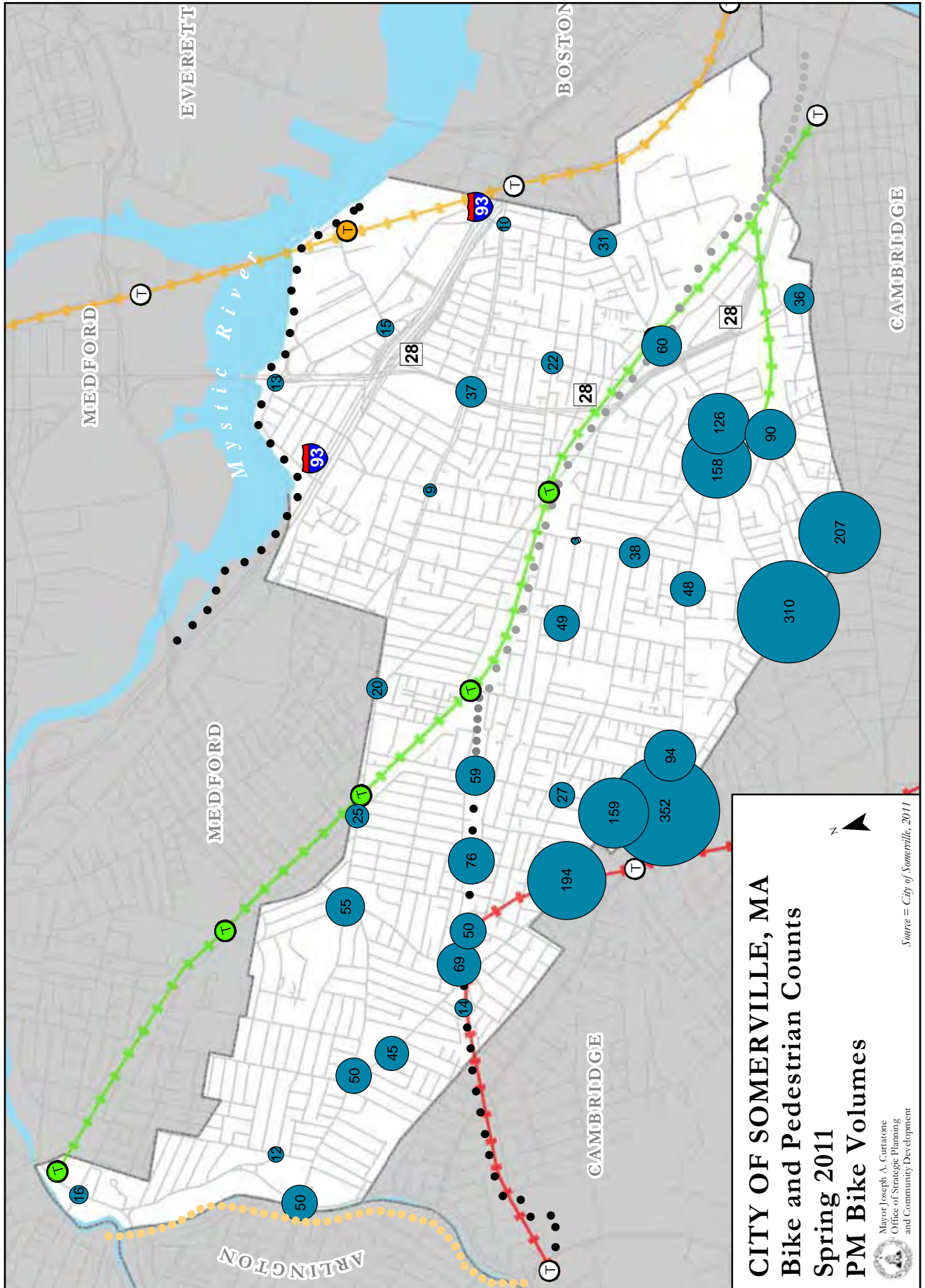
# MAP #1: HISTORICAL PROGRESSION OF BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE



# MAP #2: BICYCLE NETWORK, DECEMBER 2011



# MAP #3: PM CYCLISTS BY INTERSECTION, SPRING 2011









**SOMERVILLE BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

For more information:

<http://www.somervillema.gov/departments/bicycle-committee>

<http://www.somervillebikes.org/>