



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

February 28, 2022
REPORT OF THE TRAFFIC AND PARKING COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Beatriz GomezMouakad	Ward Five City Councilor	Present	
Jake Wilson	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Ward Three City Councilor	Present	

Others present: Brad Rawson-OSPCD and Brian Postlewaite-Engineering

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:08 p.m. by Chairperson Gomez Mouakad and adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Approval of the January 24, 2022 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Studies

212958: That the Director of Parking provide regular updates on the status of the Parking Utilization Study.

Mr. Rawson called the committee members attention to a written letter from Suzanne Rinfret, director of Traffic and Parking dated February 3, 2022 providing an update on this item. It states the city has been working on this plan for the past year or so. There has been a public survey available in five languages.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked about the task force and if they have concluded their work. Director Rawson stated the task force is an ongoing engagement and will serve as a sounding board for the conclusion of the study.

Director Rawson provided details about the Parking Profile ranging from coding in geographic information and regulation for curb spaces. They also discussed how many parking permits for households, business permits and curb space will be detailed in Parking Profile. The task force will convene in early March to help think through how the draft profile will resonate with the different scenarios.

Councilor Wilson asked what the plans are after the pandemic and GLX. Director Rawson explained that they will incorporate what has been learned from the different traffic patterns.

Councilor Wilson asked to revisit after the pandemic and to make sure we are looking at the latest and greatest data.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked for clarification on the data and how it will be used. Director Rawson stated that the consultant team have taken photos of signage on all public city streets. This would address neighborhoods that have different types of scales and transit proximity. They will start developing frameworks working with all business communities, city staff and city councilors. Curb spaces that are used for outdoor dining, bus or bike will be captured in the study. They can develop a scenario to improve safety around crosswalks. The chair stated there is a lot of tension about parking. The purpose of the parking study is not to eliminate parking in Somerville but to show how parking is used in Somerville, effectively and efficiently.

Councilor Wilson asked about the snow after the last big snow storm in January and if this would be included in user behavior. Director Rawson stated he needs to check the scope of work to evaluate the snow conditions and will get back to the committee. The chair shared a list of those included on the Parking Study Task Force.

The chair asked Mr. Rawson to provide notification when the Parking Task Force meetings are to be held and suggested he stay away from having meetings in the summer months.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212957: That the Director of Mobility provide regular updates on the work towards a comprehensive bicycle, pedestrian, and MBTA plan.

Director Rawson provided a slide for the bicycle network plan to show a vision for users of all ages and abilities to ride a bike to anywhere in the city. There are a series of workshops underway. There is a public engagement platform and can email at transportation@somervillema.gov <<mailto:transportation@somervillema.gov>> or take an online survey to share information at somervillema.gov/bikenetwork.

Please see attached slides for this item.

Director Rawson stated the next meeting will be March 2, focusing on the youth. The March 19th meeting will focus on the parent's community.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked if there will be a recommendation for the bicycle network. Director Rawson stated the work scope in the community engagement includes a diverse street network in Somerville. They are focusing on the level of traffic stress which could include hills and curb cuts.

The chair asked if bicycle parking connection will include the public bike share system.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Ongoing Projects - New Business

212867: That the Director of Mobility update this Council on efforts to establish a 20 MPH speed limit for all neighborhood residential streets.

Director Rawson stated this agenda item was discussed at the January meeting. He provided a quick map for visualization. The city has been involved in every regular neighborhood to

include a robust signage program. They have completed the regulatory process and recommendation to the city's traffic commission and working through the process to establish 20 mph for all users of the road and create a workable workflow. See attached slides. The parking department has ordered a number of signs.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked to include the streets that are 25mph such as Broadway and Somerville Avenue on the map. Councilor Wilson asked about signs being posted on all streets. Director Rawson stated a sign is required to make the 20mph enforceable. He also stated that by the summer, all signs will be posted for the 20mph. The chair asked what the conditions are in the surrounding neighborhoods. Mr. Rawson stated that Boston and Cambridge are similar to Somerville. Other municipalities such as Arlington and Medford are 20mph around senior housing, places of worship and schools.

Chair Gomez Mouakad would like to have an education approach for the undocumented residents who will be able to obtain a driver's license this year.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212972: That the Director of Mobility update this Council on efforts to reduce cut-through vehicle traffic on neighborhood residential streets.

Mr. Rawson stated the primary discussion is on traffic calming solutions. He shared slides on motor vehicle volumes with speeds reduced to 40-50% around the city. The staff continue to feel strongly to use traffic calming methods. Councilor Wilson asked if there has been monitoring Lowell Street and if they can receive data on how effective this treatment has been in the area.

The chair asked if there is a way to minimize the use of Waze at night time. She also asked if there is any way to advocate to eliminate cutting through neighborhoods in Somerville and better head ways on the Green line.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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213076: That the Director of Mobility conduct an equity study of bus routes to determine targets for fare-free buses.

Mr. Rawson is willing to work with the city council on a fare-free policy to eliminate cost barriers. Councilor Ewen-Campen stated he was surprised and disappointed that the city is not working on this initiative already. Mr. Rawson stated that the city has been working on broader means to test the programs on high school students. They are trying to carve out the time to work on the program. Councilor Wilson referenced Boston's fare-free program and hope that Somerville will move ahead on this request.

The chair asked if the city has any single bus line that is just Somerville. Mr. Rawson stated that all bus lines go to other cities and would probably have to work with the other cities on a pilot. The city of Boston is funding all of the efforts on the fare-free program. Mr. Rawson has been in discussions with other municipalities about fare-free programs. The chair also asked if there is a study on lower income and where people are coming from. Mr. Rawson stated the information is prepared by MBTA on ridership data and will sometimes interview people about their traffic

patterns. Mr. Rawson stated they have some ridership data for the 14-15 buses here in Somerville. He will find the relevant information and provide to the committee.

The chair wants an understanding of how the city could provide subsidized fares at all angles by the next meeting. Chair Gomez Mouakad also asked if there is a study on lower income residents and where people are coming from.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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213060: That the Director of Mobility update this Council on future plans for pedestrian "beg" buttons, which were disabled in favor of automatic signaling during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Councilor Wilson asked about the long-term future of the buttons during the pandemic. Mr. Rawson stated there are 25 traffic signals in inventory in Somerville. He shared a slide showing locations of the buttons. There will be an ongoing policy discussion.

Chair Gomez Mouakad asked about the map showing buttons that run automatically and if there is a plan to upgrade. Mr. Rawson states they will continue to work with constituents to identify signals and provide more predictability of the buttons. He also suggested to put a 311 workorder or emails to traffic department with any questions about the buttons.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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212973: That the Director of Parking update this Council on the suitability of existing parking for seniors and explore additional options for selected street parking in central business districts.

Mr. Rawson spoke to Ms. Rinfret and look forward to following up with Councilor Wilson. There is no mechanism for this and will have more conversations with Ms. Rinfret.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212870: That the Director of Mobility and the Director of Parking collaborate with the Fire Department to address problematic parking within 20 feet of intersections.

Mr. Rawson provided an update in January and continue to look at all regulations and setbacks. The process remains underway on the transition process going forward. Mr. Rawson stated please continue to use 311 or transportation app to help get the information to traffic and parking. Chair Gomez Mouakad stated that residents are really concerned about day lighting and can send photos to 311. Councilors can address on a case by case basis. Councilor Wilson suggested the fire chief appear before the committee on this matter.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212966: That the Administration provide a report for all departments using city vehicles for non-emergency services, detailing the measures taken to ensure that staff follow traffic regulations, including the hands free while driving law, and maintain maximum traffic safety while driving.

The chair received a lot of reports that city staff are driving while on their phones. Mr. Rawson suggested that a conversation be held with the human resources department on people who operate city vehicles.

The chair would like the director of intergovernmental affairs have someone from HR come before the committee on this matter.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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213039: That the Director of Mobility replace the HAWK signal at Buckingham and Beacon Streets with a standard RYG stoplight signal.

The city has been working on this issue and this location for some time. Mr. Postlewaite talked about how to improve the HAWK system itself and implementation at Buckingham is to upgrade the pedestrian button to be more available for use. They have found a way to modify the signal timing to shorten the blinking red light at the end of the cycle. Mr. Postlewaite stated they are also working to understand the compliance of various signals. They are studying and understanding signals to determine what are effective in Somerville and if there is a safer system to be installed in Somerville. Mr. Postlewaite stated the HAWK signal is not designed for high speed roads.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked why not use RYG instead of HAWK. Mr. Postlewaite stated the MUTCD (Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices) has specific guidance of when to use certain signals.

Mr. Postlewaite will report back to the committee on his studies in May.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Traffic Calming - New Business

212980: That the Director of Mobility utilize traffic calming measures on the corner of Rush and Cross Streets to address speeding and traffic issues that contributed to a crossing guard being hit by a car.

The chair read all items together and addressed as a group.

Mr. Rawson stated there are several items that were discussed in January and the team has been working on this order. He showed a visual of the areas including Cross street. There are no legal crosswalks for this area and the work is under contract for a raised crosswalk. This work should be completed by late summer. There is a speed hump for Pearl Street for Cross St. to Franklin St. Mr. Rawson stated they are proposing a raised crosswalk for this area in calendar 2023. This information has been shared with Councilor McLaughlin.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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212982: That the Director of Mobility install traffic calming in the crosswalk in front of 1370 Broadway.

Mr. Rawson stated this is not part of paving contract and working on city wide strategy for 2022.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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213042: That the Director of Mobility install a speed hump at the base of Somerville Avenue Extension where it intersects with Linwood and Fitchburg Streets.

Mr. Rawson stated this is not part of paving contract and working on city wide strategy for 2022. They are aware of the issue and looking into traffic calming methods.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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213046: That the Director of Mobility implement traffic calming measures on Cedar Street.

The chair stated that at least three pedestrians have been hit in this area.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Traffic Calming - Ongoing

212800: That the Director of Mobility and the Commissioner of Public Works install permanent speed bumps on Sycamore Street between Medford Street and Evergreen Avenue.

Mr. Rawson will let the councilors know what projects are in the queue and share expectations. Councilor Wilson expressed concerns around schools.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212802: That the Director of Mobility and the Commissioner of Public Works install speed bumps on Jacques Street, between Temple Street and Edgar Avenue.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212803: That the Director of Mobility daylight the intersections noted within.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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212868: That the Director of Mobility employ quick-build daylighting and traffic calming measures to improve visibility and compliance with the STOP sign on Jacques Street at its intersection with Edgar Avenue.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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State Related Projects

213040: That the Director of Mobility and the Director of Engineering provide a written timeline regarding the upcoming MassDOT replacement of the Webster Street rail bridge and explain what public input process will be followed locally.

Mr. Postlewaite stated this project will need attention from the entire community. They have just begun coordinating with the state and they are not sure how quickly they can start the work. This is a high priority for the state and requires a lot more inspections than any other bridge. MassDot has not informed the city of the public meetings yet. Mr. Postlewaite stated the goal is to extend the green line out and made it clear for the state to address the commitment that was previously made by them.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Reference Material:

- Discussion materials (with 212957)
- Discussion materials (with 212867)
- Discussion materials (with 212972)
- Discussion materials (with 213060)
- Discussion materials (with 212980)