2013 ANNUAL REPORT



Somerville Bicycle Advisory
Committee



2013 ANNUAL BIKE REPORT

Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee

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Somerstreets on Highland Avenue with the Bicycle Committee and Officer Maryann Manfra

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, promote bicycling as a means of transportation, and help implement bicycle policy, programs, and routes for all ages and abilities.

As of 2009, 4.5% of Somerville residents commuted by bicycle. Many more cycle on a daily basis to run errands, get to school, attend events, or for recreation. This statistic is a more than doubling in bicycle commuting over two decades (1990, 2%) and a 50% increase in the past decade (2000, 3%). However, commuting data do not tell the whole story, since the journey to work only makes up about 16% of trips. To add data, SBC assists the City in conducting bicycle & pedestrian counts annually, using real-life snapshots to help document how transportation choices are changing. These data reveal significantly faster rates of bicycling growth in Somerville than is reflected in commuting data from the American Community Survey.

This increase of bicyclists has paralleled the improving conditions for bicycling in Somerville. In 2013, the City was recognized as a Silver level Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists, only two years after attaining Bronze. Improvements over the past two years include traffic calming measures, improvements on and extension of the Community Path, increased mileage of bicycle lanes and sharrows, and activities like City-sponsored community bike rides.

The SBC continues to advocate for improving conditions for bicycling, focusing on increasing both bicycle facilities and public outreach to promote safe, practical cycling in Somerville. Our overall goal is at least 10% of Somerville residents commuting by bicycle in 2020, or approximately double today's rate.

INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS

2013 marked significant developments on several major projects around the city.

Hubway

In 2013, the City of Somerville expanded the footprint of the Hubway bike share program in Somerville by 50% by purchasing and installing 4 additional stations. Hubway allows annual, monthly, or daily members to rent a bicycle for a point to point trip, retrieving a bike at any station and returning it to any station. Hubway launched in Boston in July 2011 with 610 bikes and 61 stations. In 2012, it expanded into Somerville, Cambridge, and Brookline. The Somerville Bicycle Committee will continue to support the City as they further expand Hubway's reach into Somerville. One significant unfulfilled opportunity is potential sponsorship by Tufts University to help expand Hubway coverage in West Somerville, Davis Square, and Powderhouse. In Cambridge, Harvard and MIT have voluntarily sponsored multiple Hubway stations, and universities such as BU have contributed to expanding Hubway coverage in Boston.

Beacon Street Reconstruction

The committee has recommended improvements to the Beacon Street corridor since 2006. Beacon Street routinely sees amongst the highest rate of bicycle and pedestrian activity in the city, which has only increased in recent years as demonstrated by the City's annual bicycle and pedestrian counts. Throughout 2013 the City has worked on plans for Beacon Street that would more equitably allocate the right-of-way for bicyclists and pedestrians, rather than simply rebuild existing conditions. SBC provided input in 2013 to improve preliminary designs for the City's first cycletracks, or physically separated bicycle facilities, along this heavily traveled bicycle route. The Committee sees the vital Beacon

Street reconstruction as a key piece of an enhanced bicycling corridor stretching between Porter and Kendall Squares and into Boston. Another piece of this key corridor, the Longfellow Bridge, is under reconstruction as of 2013, while another piece, Broadway in Cambridge, has seen some improvements this year including a road diet.

Community Path Extension

The Community Path extension from Cedar Street to Lowell Street began construction with a groundbreaking on May 13, 2013. Construction is anticipated to be completed in Fall 2014. (Note that in 2014, MassDOT announced the construction of the Community Path from Lowell Street to North Point alongside the Green Line Extension)

Grounding McGrath

MassDOT held a public meeting in May presenting its draft recommendations from the "Grounding McGrath: Determining the Future of the Route 28 Corridor" study. The report recommended replacing the McCarthy overpass with a six lane "boulevard", and the Somerville Bicycle Committee responded with a letter expressing a preference for the consideration of a more neighborhood-scale four lane road, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities studied with the same attention given automobile facilities. In a much appreciated response, MassDOT Administrator DiPaola wrote to the SBC stating that Rendering of proposed design for Beacon Street as the project enters the environmental permitting stage, a four lane option would be considered.

SBC INFRASTRUCTURE **PROPOSALS**

In 2013, the City worked to maintain the bicycle markings implemented over the past several years. See Map #1: Historical Progression of Bicycle Infrastructure, for the locations of bike infrastructure over time.



Hubway in Somerville





Rendering of Community Path Cedar-Lowell Extension

Temporal Do Not Enter Signage

The SBC identified locations in the city where temporal "Do Not Enter" signs have been used to decrease traffic congestion particularly around schools when children are traveling to or from them, or to protect neighborhoods from rush hour cut-through traffic. The SBC felt that these "Do Not Enter" signs were not intended for bicycles when originally installed and that their restrictions put an unfair burden for bicyclists to travel longer distances than necessary or on roads that are not as safe or comfortable as the neighborhood streets affected by these restrictions. The SBC presented proposals to add "Except Bicycles" signage to some existing signs in order to legally allow bicycle travel at all times. The Traffic Commission voted down the first set of requests by the SBC, however in 2014 the SBC will continue to work with the Traffic Commission to address any concerns they have and to get these restrictions eliminated for bicycles.

Washington Street

The SBC looked at alternatives for improving the stretch of Washington St from Union Square to McGrath Highway, including adding bike lanes. As part of the proposed development of the 181-197 Washington St parcel, at the City's request the developer has agreed to widen the north sidewalk and add bike lanes in both directions. This will be coordinated further for the Union Square Streetscape Improvements project (design kickoff January 2014).

Striping proposals

The SBC proposed striping improvements including bike lanes and/or sharrows for Park St between the railroad tracks and Somerville Ave, Central St between Somerville Ave and Highland Ave, Summer St, Summer St/Bow St intersection in Union Square, Webster Ave, and Prospect St. We expect these improvements to be installed by the city in 2014.

The SBC also began discussions regarding the possible addition of bike lanes or cycle tracks on Broadway through Magoun Square and Winter Hill. With the upcoming redesign of Broadway in Winter Hill, the SBC will reiterate this request.

Input on Ongoing City Projects

SBC gave input on various infrastructure projects throughout the course of the year. These projects include City, State and private projects:

- Union Square Streetscape Improvements
- Community Path Extension
- Davis Square Streetscape Improvements
- Green Line Extension Station Bicycle Parking
- Beacon Street Reconstruction
- Repaving priorities

Furthermore, the SBC provided input to the City into the interim improvements planned by MassDOT around the McCarthy Overpass, including parts of Washington St, Medford St, and Somerville Ave. This project, slated for construction in Fall 2014, will include a network of new bike lanes, priority lanes, and cycle tracks.

Bike Parking

The MBTA completed the installation of a secure Pedal and Park bicycle cage adjacent to the Davis Square east headhouse, in addition to new sheltered and unsheltered spaces adjacent to the west headhouse.

The SBC provided guidance on the design of bicycle parking proposed in several development projects under review. These projects were located in the CCD-55 zoning district, and under the current requirements of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, CCD districts are among those with the highest bicycle parking requirements.

At the request of the City Planning Department, the SBC formed a Bike Parking Subcommittee to review the language and requirements of section 9.15 (bicycle parking) of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. We anticipate providing recommendations in 2014.

The City piloted winter bike corrals, leaving several in place for use all year, which were met with a lot of use.

EVENTS AND PROGRAMMING

The SBC and the City recognize that cycling is as much about community and culture as it is about pavement and paint. Somerville benefits from its diverse and growing cycling population. This was evident throughout the events SBC organized or participated in during 2013.

Bay State Bike Week

Once again, the SBC was happy to host multiple events during Bay State Bike Week AND Bike Month in 2013, including the Rush Hour Race, the Spring Ride, and the Commuter Breakfast.

Rush Hour Race

For the second year, the SBC co-hosted the Rush Hour Race with Livable Streets Alliance. We held the event on May 7, the week before Bay State Bike Week, but still during Bike Month! The event was a great success, raising awareness about different commuting options and what may be faster (and more fun than others!). The event kicked off at RedBones with Mayor Curtatone. The end of the race was South Station, and this time pitted a cyclist, a T rider, a driver, an inline skater, and a runner against each other. This year, the T rider won the race, followed closely by the inline skater and then the cyclist. The driver came in last, however all the participants

were celebrated and a great time was had by all. Many thanks to RedBones for hosting the kickoff!!

Bike Commuter Breakfast

We held our third annual Bike Commuter Breakfast during Bike Week on Monday May 13. We greeted commuting cyclists at our usual location on Beacon Street in the southwestern corner of the Star Market parking lot. We had well over a hundred cyclists stop by, where bike commuters enjoyed scones, coffee, and other breakfast goodies, while discussing all things cycling with SBC members. Once again, many thanks to Petsi's Pies and Star market for providing refreshments, and to Bike Boom for free bike check-ups.

Member Meet and Greet

On September 24, the Committee held its first "Meet and Greet" at the Precinct in Union Square. We met in the back room, and the Precinct Bar provided complimentary appetizers. It provided a chance for prospective members and interested people to come and find out more about the SBC and was a good chance for general discussion outside of the typical meeting structure. The event attracted 20-25 people, and there was interest in repeating it several times during the following year.

Rides

The Committee organized three bike rides this year: a spring Historic Bike Tour, a fall Tour de Somerville, and a winter Illuminations Bike Tour.

Spring Historic Tour: On Sunday, May 12, 2013, the SBC and the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission co-sponsored our 12th annual Bicycle Tour of Historic Somerville. This year's theme was Industrial Somerville - Past and Present. 75 enthusiastic cyclists visited the sites of former factories such as MW Carr and



Bike Week Commuter Breakfast





Tour de Somerville 2013



Bike Week Rush Hour Race



Spring Historic Tour

American Tube Works, as well as currently active industries such as Taza Chocolate, HD Chasen, and Fringe. Many of the old industrial buildings that we passed are still standing, and have been converted to a variety of new uses such as artists' studios, offices, condominiums, and the Assembly Square Marketplace. Our event included a guided "hard hat" walking tour of the new Brooklyn Boulders rock-climbing gym, then still under construction in a former Ames Envelope factory building.

Tour de Somerville: The SBC's 21st annual fall bike tour took place on Saturday, October 19, 2013. This year's theme was Over, Under, Around, and Through, featuring Somerville's many bridges and underpasses as well as our less common tunnels and railroad crossings. Our tour included a preview look at two major pieces of Somerville bicycle infrastructure that are scheduled to open in 2014: the 'Wellington Undercarriage" boardwalk along the Mystic River under Route 28, and the Community Path extension between Cedar and Lowell streets adjoining Maxwell's Green. The event attracted over 150 cyclists, the most ever for any SBC-sponsored bike ride. As in past years, Redbones provided delicious lemonade and cornbread at our halfway rest and refreshment stop by the Mystic River.

Illuminations Ride: We held our fourth annual Illuminations ride coordinated with the Somerville Arts Council. The ride was held on Sunday, December 15, after being postponed for a day due to a winter storm on Saturday. Given the cold weather and winter road conditions, we had a large turn out of 16 cyclists, one passenger and one runner. We rode slowly through the snowy streets of Spring Hill and viewed some amazingly lit homes. Afterwards, about half of the cyclists joined the trolley riders in City Hall for cookies and hot cocoa.

Somerstreets: In addition to tabling at Somerstreets events over the summer, the Committee organized bike decorating and a cycle track demonstration for kids.



Illuminations Ride



Tabling at Somerstreets



Temporary Cycle Track at Somerstreets

EDUCATION AND POLICY

Bikeable Community Training

On October 30th, MassBike held the second part of its Bikeable Communities Training at Brooklyn Boulders, a local Somerville climbing gym. Price Armstrong from MassBike summarized a variety of types of bicycle infrastructure as well as examples of how these infrastructure types have been implemented locally. The presentation also covered some basic policies to support cycling. The training was intended to be accessible to those with limited knowledge of cycling policies and infrastructure. About a dozen attendees asked guestions to gain clarification on how bikes can be better accommodated in their local community. We look forward to hosting additional training workshops related to promoting cycling in Somerville in the future.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Counts

The City organized its yearly bicycle and pedestrian counts in September this year, with SBC members and volunteers helping at locations around the city. The counts show another significant increase in the number of cyclists observed around the city: 16% increase from 2012-2013; 81% higher in 2013 versus the first annual counts in 2010. The full report is available online and selected maps are included at the end of this report.

Silver Level Bicycle Friendly Community Award

In 2013, the City reapplied for Bicycle Friendly Community status given the improvements in infrastructure and policy that had been implemented since the first application in 2009. The awarding agency, the League of American Cyclists, responded by recognizing the city as a Silver Level BFC – a great improvement in only a few short years. The award recognizes the full spectrum of a bike friendly municipality, from miles of bike lanes to bike education in schools to

number of events and groups. The League also offered a list of recommendations for working towards higher levels in future years, including further improving intersections for cyclists, lowering speeds, and initiating more programs and events for awareness.

NACTO Membership

The City joined NACTO (National Association of City Transportation Officials) as an affiliate member in 2013. NACTO is at the forefront of multimodal transportation planning and regularly discusses and determines best practices in the most progressive cities around the country.

Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Vehicle Safety Campaign

The Committee provided advice for the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Vehicle Safety Campaign that the City developed through the Office of Communications and the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development. The poster campaign debuted in summer 2012 and is ongoing, complimented by increased enforcement and education from the Police Department.

Complete Streets Policy

The League of American Cyclists' top-level recommendation to the City to become more bicycle friendly was to adopt a Complete Streets policy. Such a policy would codify how Somerville designs its streets to safely and equitably serve all users—bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, and motorists.

Based on national research and on language from the Massachusetts Municipal Association, the Committee drafted a Complete Streets Ordinance bill for Somerville that was endorsed by the Mayor before being taken up by Board of Aldermen committees in 2012, where it remained for discussion in 2013.

Note: it was approved in Spring 2014.

COMMUNICATIONS

Interdepartmental Bicycle Initiatives Meeting

The Committee met with the City departments in January 2013 for a productive conversation about infrastructure, safety, and programming. Attendees included Department of Public Works, Police Department, Traffic and Parking, Communications, and the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development The meeting occurs annually to review accomplishments of the past year, priorities for the coming year, and discuss initiatives to increase the diversity and safety of bicycle facilities in Somerville.

Mapping

The Committee worked with OSPCD to develop an updated Somerville Bicycle Map reflecting the latest on-road bicycle facilities and recommended routes throughout the city. The map is available on the City's and on SBC's unofficial website. The Committee is also working with the City of Boston to include the entire City of Somerville on the Boston Bikes map.

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



New Website

The SBC, with several members becoming new experts, completed a major overhaul of the web site this year. The site has the same URL as the old site (www.somervillebikes.org) but a whole new look and features for sharing materials like posters and calendar events. There is a feed from our Facebook page, which also increased in activity and reach this year. SBC will keep the site up to date with important and timely information for cyclists both living in Somerville and in surrounding communities.

SBC guidelines for prospective members

SBC always welcomes guests to attend meetings and volunteer. We seek to recruit additional members in 2014. If you would like to become an official voting member of the SBC, please follow these guidelines:

- Attend at least six months of meetings.
- Actively participate and meaningfully contribute to the SBC mission through events, planning, or research.
- Declare interest in becoming a member.
- The SBC allots time at a meeting to interview the applicant and vote on endorsing the candidate for membership. This endorsement is conveyed to the Mayor.
- Write a letter to the Mayor expressing interest (including resume and relevant experience).
- The Mayor approves or denies the membership request and recommends the nominee to be approved by the Board of Aldermen.
- The Board of Aldermen votes to approve or deny the nominee.
- Arrange with the City Clerk to be sworn in.

GOALS FOR 2020

To continue the growth of bicycling in the city and attain 10% bicycle commute mode share by 2020, the SBC has charted and is committed to supporting the following strategies to reach this goal:

- Complete the Community Path, to provide a direct, car-free route from Somerville to Boston via Brickbottom and North Point.
- Provide the best possible bicycle facilities on all major city roads and business districts, including state of the art designs such as physically separated bike lanes (cycletracks), contraflow bike lanes, and two-stage left turns, as well as conventional bike facilities such as bike lanes and bike route wayfinding signage, to provide safe and efficient facilities for bicyclists of all ages and abilities to travel throughout the city.
- Increase access to bike parking by installing public bike racks in all business areas and in dense residential areas; and providing centralized and preferably sheltered parking facilities at main commercial centers, civic areas and transit stations.
- Expand participation in the Hubway regional bike share program to facilitate flexible, seamless bicycle travel with neighboring cities and transit.
- Update zoning to anticipate and support increased bicycle use, which will place a greater demand than can be met by public and private bicycle parking facilities currently required by zoning.
- Educate Somerville Public School students to operate bicycles in the city, such that, with calmed vehicular traffic, at least 20% of Somerville students will choose to bicycle to school.
- Educate all residents about cycling in the city, so that drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians of all languages and backgrounds 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 cyclist in Somerville.

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.

In addition, several large scale infrastructure projects ongoing or coming up in the city that will offer substantial opportunity for bicycling improvements, including Union Square, McGrath Highway interim improvements, Davis Square Streetscape Improvements, and so on.

PRIORITIES FOR 2014

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

Bicycle Facilities

The Committee has assembled and will submit to the City a suite of proposals detailing immediate, low-cost bike facility improvements:

Central Broadway: cycletracks

Prospect Street: buffered bike lane

Central Street: bike lane

Webster Avenue: bike lane

Bow Street at Summer Street: bike lanes

• Park Street: bike lane

School Street: cycletrack

 Summer Street: climbing bike lane and downhill sharrows

 Medford Street: climbing bike lane and downhill sharrows

Education & Outreach

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

 More emphasis on building connections with the Somerville Public Schools, including identifying a possible liaison to the Committee

- Distributing maps, safety information and project materials;
- Expanding Bike Week and Bike Month programming, including collaboration with the Mayor, City departments, and external organizations

INITIATIVES FOR 2014

The SBC intends to explore a number of specific initiatives for 2014. 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:

- Support passage of the Complete Streets Bill by the Board of Aldermen and support its implementation by the City (endorsed by the Mayor in 2012), including the development of a Bicycle Facility Design Guide or the City's official adoption of the NACTO Urban Bikeway Design Guide
- Support a transparent, effective abandoned bicycle removal tagging system by the DPW (first proposed by the Committee in 2011)
- Implement "Except Bicycles" signage on temporal one way streets that already function as two-way streets for abutters, with the goal of simplifying safe bicycling on our street grid
- Submit for City approval SBC's portfolio of proposed near-term, lowcost bike facilities (see list above)
- Request a nominal Committee budget to support outreach and education events

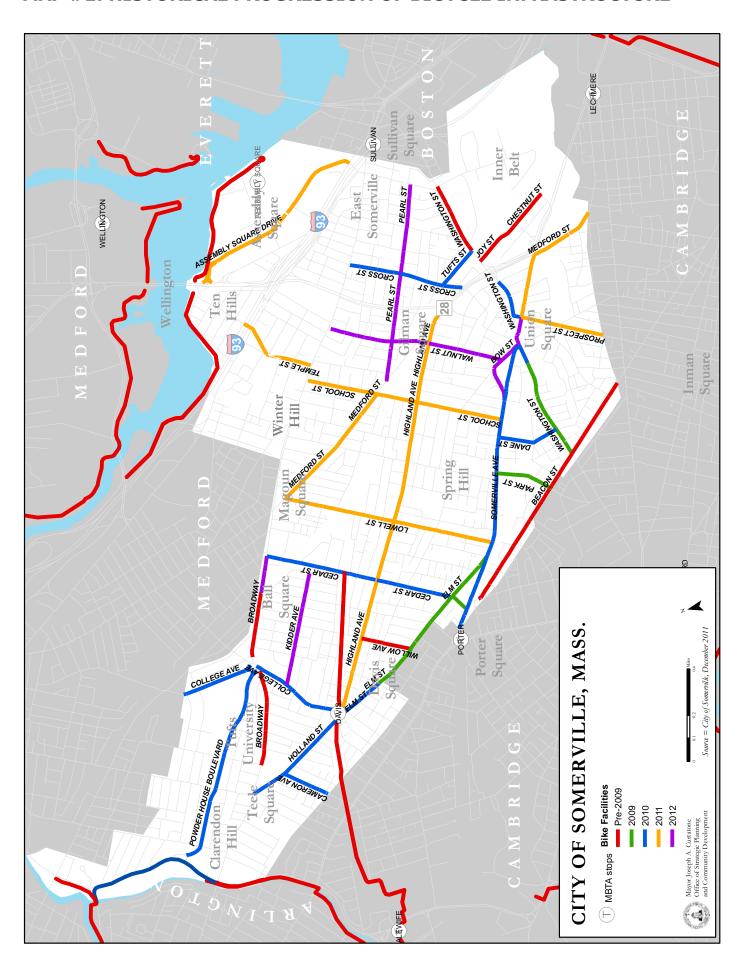
- Recruit at least four additional Committee members and increase member diversity
- Hold joint events with Cambridge, Arlington, Medford, Charlestown to promote bike planning awareness and coordination, as well as support and encourage external bicycle related groups to hold events in Somerville
- Develop and submit a proposal for a stronger private property bicycle parking requirement in Somerville to meet the growing demand for bike storage
- Monitor impact of interim McGrath Highway bicycle and pedestrian improvements and develop improvement recommendations as needed
- Beacon Street cycletracks: additional input during final design, monitor impact of construction on bike commuting, and develop detour recommendations
- Continue public engagement by hosting bike-week related events, tabling at farmers markets and participating in Somerstreets festivals
- Participate in the Union Square
 Transportation Study, Davis Square Study,
 Central Broadway Initiative, and other transformative opportunities
- Pilot year-round installation of select bike corrals and Hubway stations
- Partnering with the School Committee and other City organizations to improve bikeability of the Somerville schools



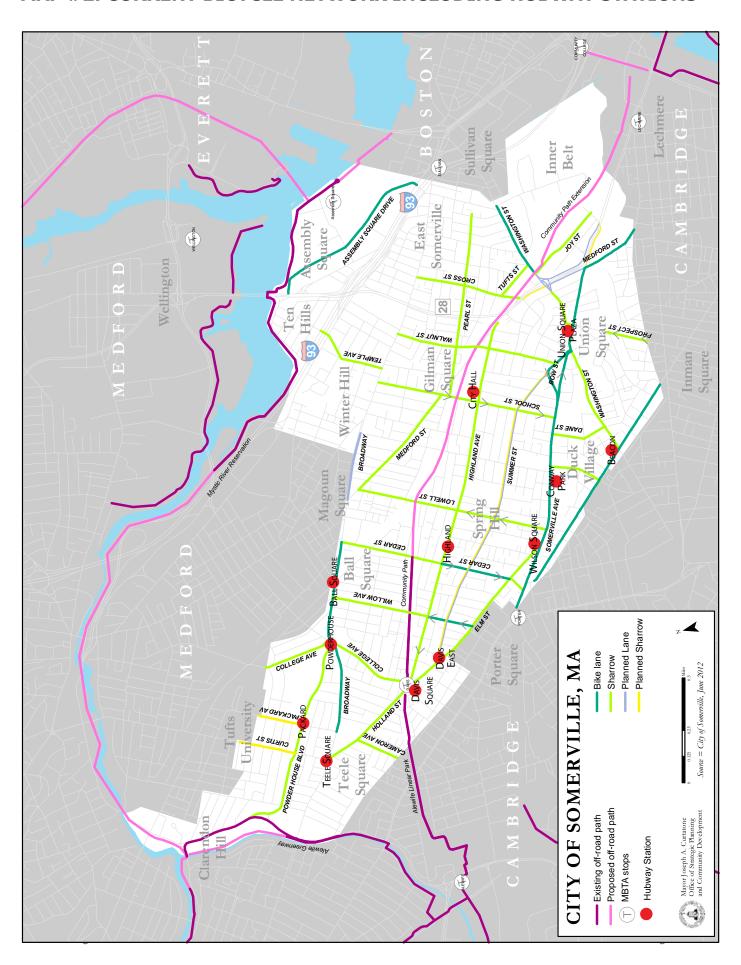




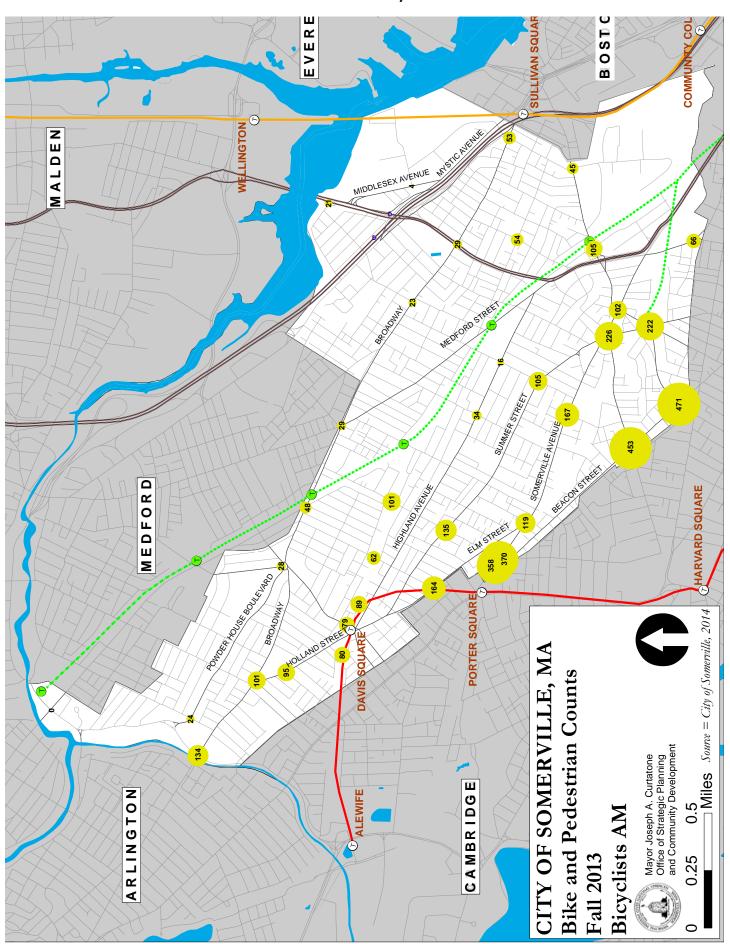
MAP #1: HISTORICAL PROGRESSION OF BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE



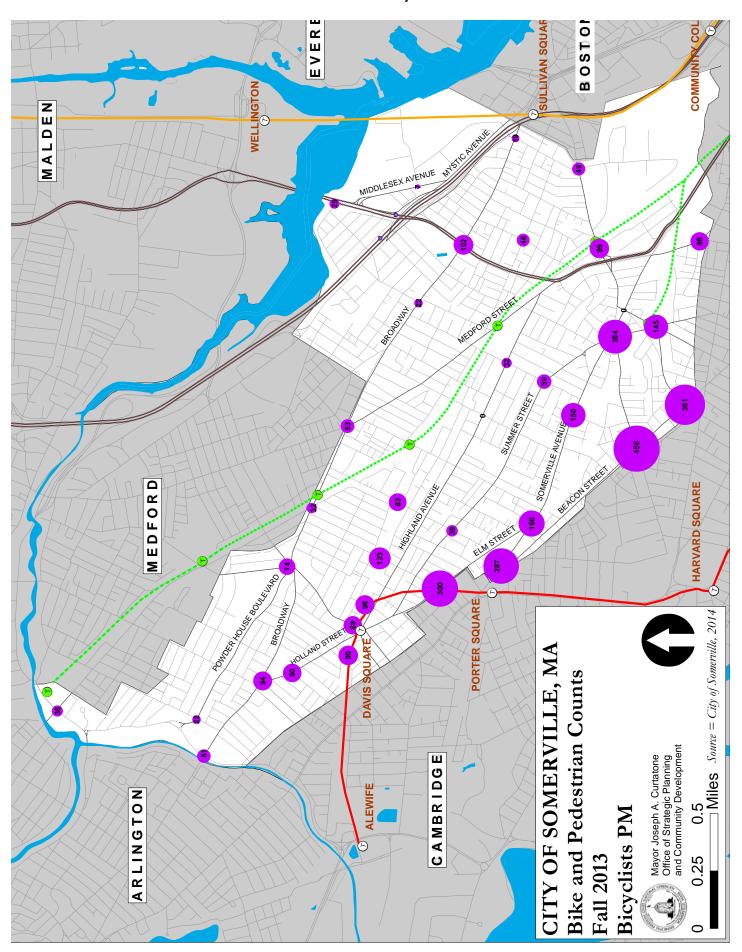
MAP #2: CURRENT BICYCLE NETWORK INCLUDING HUBWAY STATIONS



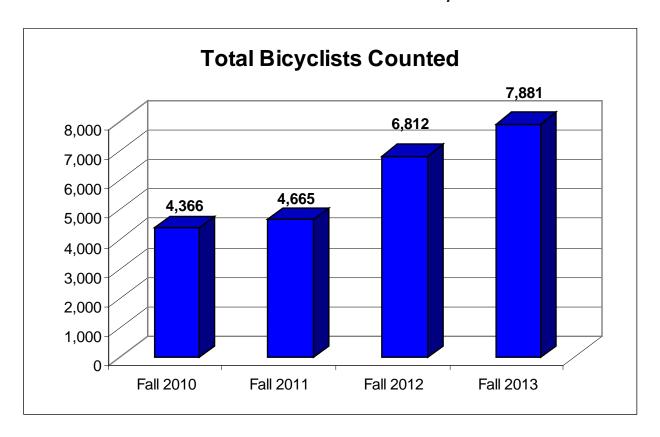
MAP #3: AM CYCLISTS BY INTERSECTION, 2013

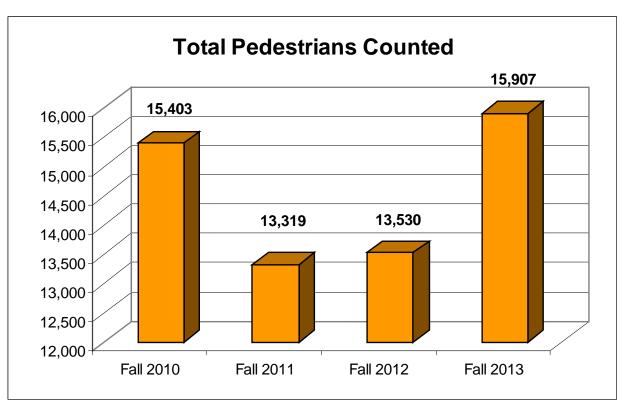


MAP #4: PM CYCLISTS BY INTERSECTION, FALL 2013



BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN COUNTS COMPARISON, 2010-2013







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