



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

September 20, 2021
REPORT OF THE TRAFFIC AND PARKING COMMITTEE

| Attendee Name | Title | Status | Arrived |
|--------------------|---------------------------|---------|---------|
| Mark Niedergang | Chair | Present | |
| Jesse Clingan | Vice Chair | Present | |
| Katjana Ballantyne | Ward Seven City Councilor | Present | |

Others present: Hannah Carrillo-Mayor's Office, Brad Rawson-OSPCD, Deputy Chief Christopher Ward and Brian Postelwaite-Engineering

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairperson Niedergang and adjourned at 6:51 p.m.

Approval of the May 17, 2021 Minutes

RESULT: ACCEPTED

Traffic Signals, Crossing Guards and Pedestrian Safety

212254: That the Director of Mobility replace the HAWK signal at Buckingham and Beacon Streets with a standard RYG stoplight signal.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

209148: That the Commissioner of Public Works immediately replace the HAWK signals on Beacon Street with more suitable and effective RYG pedestrian-activated signals.

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.

Mr. Rawson stated this is a policy issue and Mobility is working in collaboration with Engineering and consulting with advisory committees. There are established best practices that are case-specific for

deploying signal patterns. Presence of seniors and children are often used as a criterion for concurrent signaling. Mr. Rawson will update the Committee regarding a framework for the City to use.

Chair Niedergang stated he had heard concerns from many parents regarding this intersection a couple of years ago. He has not heard much recently and is not sure if this is still a live issue.

Mr. Rawson stated they have not received any complaints recently and continue to collect data, keeping a close eye on this location. He said that the signal had been changed to pedestrian-exclusive and that seems to have satisfied all the stakeholders in the area.

Chair Niedergang said that the item should remain in Committee in order to discuss the general policy issue once the Administration has developed a recommendation.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

212258: That the Director of Engineering provide a timeline for the change of the signaling at Webster Avenue and Washington Street to a pedestrian exclusive interval.

Mr. Postelwaite stated that the request to shift to pedestrian exclusive phasing has been received and that the engineering contractor for the project, WSP, is in the process of reviewing and studying the potential change and evaluating the intersection. They are also doing additional traffic counts and trying to get data to determine if a pedestrian exclusive signal phasing would be acceptable by design standards. The expectation is to have the study complete this fall. The bulk of the work on the project will be closing out this fall and the project is supposed to be complete by the end of the year. Mr. Postelwaite expects to have a final recommendation on the signal this fall and if a change is warranted, it would be implemented before the end of the year.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

211994: That the Administration urgently address the insufficient number of crossing guards and present to this Council their plan to ensure student safety in the absence of guards at multiple large intersections.

Deputy Chief Ward was present at the meeting to address this item. He stated the City has 13 vacancies at crossing locations due to the age of crossing guards and their concern about the COVID 19 pandemic. Many older people are apprehensive now about being out in the public. The Human Resources Dept is in the process of improving the outreach. Deputy Ward said that they have developed a new recruitment brochure to increase outreach which is posted on the City and the Police Department websites.

Councilor Ballantyne has been inquiring about this matter and affirmed that she was told that seniors have concerns about being outside.

Chair Niedergang stated that putting brochures on websites is not outreach and urged that Human Resources and the Police Dept. do some real outreach. He suggested someone should be in the community reaching out to faith community leaders, neighborhood leaders and other leaders who could tell people they know that crossing guard jobs are available. He said that perhaps police officers on their rounds could mention the need for crossing guards to the many people they interact with.

Councilor Ballantyne stated that the need for crossing guards should be added to school websites and should be featured in the school newsletter.

Dangerous Intersections and Roadways**211397: That the Director of Engineering install a crosswalk at Woods Avenue and Route 16.**

Mr. Rawson stated this item has been a topic of discussion in this Committee for some time now. Mobility is working with the Dept of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and with the City's state legislative delegation who have secured some funding for design of the crosswalk. Mr. Rawson stated they are working with DCR to get a contract in place to move the design of this intersection forward.

Councilor Ballantyne stated she has been trying to get the crosswalk in place for a while. She has talked with Rep. Barber about this matter and Rep Barber was able to secure the funding for the study.

Chair Niedergang asked if the funding is adequate for a full design of a crosswalk. Mr. Rawson stated the funding is enough to get the full design done. The Chair also asked if additional funding would be needed to get the actual crosswalk built and what would be the time line for getting it done. Mr. Rawson stated that additional funds would need to be secured to actually implement a crosswalk and that he will reach out to his colleagues at DCR to get the timeline and report back to the Committee.

211819: That the Director of SPCD install flashing STOP signs on Lowell Street at its intersection with Albion Street to prevent accidents caused by speeding or incautious motor vehicles.

Items 8 and 9 were discussed together.

Chair Niedergang stated this has been a long-standing issue. Neighbors have been advocating for stop signs on Lowell Street at Albion and improvements in this area. He said that improvements were made about a year ago, and that they have made the area safer, but have not solved the problem and it is still dangerous.

Mr. Rawson stated the city has installed some quick-build traffic calming elements in the area and conditions have improved following the 2020 installation of traffic calming markings & bollards, but further changes are needed. They are in the midst of a review and analysis right now. The preliminary review shows that motor vehicle speed is the primary problem, so further traffic calming is needed, specifically asphalt speed humps on either side of the bridge. They are investigating raised traffic-calming devices in between Hudson and Albion and also on the other side of the bridge. There is a due diligence process and they may be able to deploy a construction team and put speed humps in this fall. However, emergency response is a consideration; installation is possible this fall, but no promises (weather, contractors, supply chain issues, etc.)

Councilor Ballantyne was curious about the painting or markings on the speed bumps. Mr. Rawson stated there are standard engineering markings to use such as chevron arrows and vanishing lines which indicate to a driver that a speed hump is approaching.

Councilor Ballantyne is concerned that drivers may not understand what the chevron arrows mean and it may be too late once they hit the first bump. She does not believe the current markings on Powderhouse Blvd on and by the speed humps there are working to notify drivers. Mr. Rawson stated there are engineering standards and will work with the team to see if they can go beyond what the standards require. Councilor Ballantyne stated the markings should indicate caution and have the drivers slow down.

The Chair stated he would like to have the work installing the speed humps completed before the winter, as ice and snow make the hilly part of Lowell Street especially dangerous.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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211820: That the Director of SPCD use the \$220,000 in traffic mitigation funds paid by Maxwell's Green in 2011 to improve the traffic-calming infrastructure around the Magoun/Lowell GLX station.

Items 8 and 9 were discussed together.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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210898: That the Director of SPCD update the Ward 6 Councilor on any plans to further improve pedestrian safety at the intersection of Willow Avenue, Elm Street and Beech Street, possibly with a center island and bump outs.

Items 10 and 11 were discussed together.

Mr. Rawson stated they have been discussing this location in Committee for some time. A series of around a dozen flex posts have been installed in the area in the center of the intersection to narrow the roadway, simulating a concrete traffic island. Feedback is this quick build solution has been helpful.

Mr. Rawson stated that Beech Street is a very wide street. They are currently working with Cambridge to shorten up that crossing distance by reconfiguring the distance to have a more traditional, shorter intersection. Cambridge might be able to advance their work on this in the coming months.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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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.

Items 10 and 11 were discussed together.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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Somerville High School Parking

211815: That the Director of SPCD re-convene the High School Parking Working Group and provide an update on what is being done to understand and address parking issues for teachers, staff, and residents.

Mr. Rawson stated that Mobility is planning a fall 2021 outreach strategy that will include the High School Parking Working Group including City Councilors and will discuss recent progress and challenges. There are additional measures to bring to the Working Group. The City Council funded Charlie Cards for students so they can take public transportation for free and the Administration pulled grant funding together to provide free Blue Bikes use for City staff. They have also freed up some parking in Gilman Square.

Councilor Ballantyne asked if the parking study to develop and accurate data base of all parking spaces is complete. Mr. Rawson stated work is underway right now which will include the first stage for a digital map of every street in the city and inventorying the parking spots.

Mr. Rawson said that the new Mobility outreach staff, Kate White, will circulate dates for reconvening the Working Group to its members and hopes the meeting will happen soon.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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City Employees Driver Safety Training

212251: That the Commissioner of Public Works and the Director of Mobility report to this Council whether the video "Safer Trucking in Changing Cities" is being used to train City truck drivers in safe driving techniques.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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210975: That the Administration and the Commissioner of Public Works discuss the vehicle training process for all DPW employees and contractors whose job requires them to drive city vehicles.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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211128: That the Commissioner of Public Works discuss installing speed limiters on the city's vehicles to monitor speed and ensure that employees are observing speed limits.

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| RESULT: | KEPT IN COMMITTEE |
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Housekeeping - Items to be completed if no objections

211822: Inviting the Council, the Administration and the public to the Highway Justice for People: Mystic and McGrath Rally, on May 26 at 6 PM, at the empty lot on the corner of Broadway and McGrath Highway, to demand that MassDOT prioritize the safety of people over the movement of cars.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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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.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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210593: That the Director of Constituent Services and the Chief of Police discuss tracking bicycle crashes and how 311 and 911 staff are trained to handle such calls.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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210899: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Parking implement traffic calming measures on Powder House Terrace.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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210895: That the Director of Capital Projects revise the College Avenue reconstruction plan to include additional safety measures for pedestrians at both perpendicular and parallel crossings.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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211798: That the Mayor, the Director of SPCD, the Chief of Police and this Council collaborate with the State Delegation and community advocates to pressure the MA Department of Transportation to implement traffic safety improvements to McGrath Highway and Mystic Avenue to prevent more pedestrian deaths.

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| RESULT: | WORK COMPLETED |
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