



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

March 15, 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	

Committee members present: Chairperson Mark Niedergang, Councilor Katjana Ballantyne and Councilor Jesse Clingan

Others present: Khushbu Webber-Mayor's Office, Brad Rawson-OSPCD, Adam Polinski-OSPCD, Justin Schreiber-OSPCD, Ali Kleyman-OSPCD, Viola Augustin-OSPCD, Lt. James Polito-SPD and Lauren Racaniello-Mayor's Office. Also in attendance were Tom Lamar, Chair and Lena Webb, Vice Chair of the Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee.

The meeting was held virtually and was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Chairperson Niedergang and adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

Approval of the February 8, 2021 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Bicycle Master Plan

209758: That the Director of SPCD update this Council on creating a Bicycle Master Plan, and requiring that future road work adhere to this plan.

Mr. Rawson and staff presented slides for each section of the agenda. Mr. Rawson stated he has worked in partnership with the Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee who have experience and confidence to contribute on this topic. Additionally, they have worked with community stakeholders in all seven (7) wards to deliver more safe street options and a citywide wide network of low stress networks. Mr. Schreiber stated the goal for start up funds is to create the most robust process for 2022. One goal is to establish baseline data to identify traffic stress experienced by bicyclists on all the streets. They are also working to reach people that they do not normally hear from that may be less plugged into what's happening in Somerville. Mr. Schreiber discussed the data mining which will provide more insights about people biking. The data will help answer questions about the intersections that people may not use in certain areas.

The Committee stated how important it would be to put this information on the City’s website and state the priorities for the City. See attached slides for full details.

Councilor Ballantyne asked about the outreach strategies. Mr. Rawson stated would include: best meeting neighbors at bus stops, translation services, flyers, community partners and to be on bikes in neighborhoods. He also plans to have conversations and share data collection with merchants.

Mr. Lamar, Chair of the Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee, asked about the overall time line and process. Mr. Rawson stated he is hoping to make progress this calendar year with the bike master. Mr. Lamar asked about taking elevation change into account. Mr. Schreiber stated that elevation is not part of traffic stress, but he will have conversation with stakeholders on this issue.

Ms. Webb, vice chair for Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee asked about the city parking study and how that will involve the overall bike plan. Mr. Schreiber stated the contract is out for the parking study and is hopeful by mid-summer will start the study. He also stated that small businesses, ADA, Somerville Police Department, and numerous city agencies are also involved in the Parking Study Task Force.

Mr. Rawson stated the Bicycle Network Plan will be completed in about 18 months from now, as a conservative time line.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208041: That the Director of SPCD and the Bicycle Committee update this Council's Traffic and Parking Committee on establishing a comprehensive city-wide bicycle plan.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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206406: That the Bicycle Advisory Committee appear before this Board’s Traffic and Parking Committee to present their recent activities, priorities and outlook.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Highland Ave. Protected Bicycle Lanes

211132: That the Spring Hill Streetscapes design team continue to work closely with the Somerville Bicycle Committee and Somerville Bicycle Safety to propose improved bicycle safety infrastructure on and near the redesigned Highland Avenue, balanced with pedestrian safety, MBTA bus improvements, and ADA infrastructure.

Ms. Augustin stated that Highland Ave started as a project of the Infrastructure and Asset Management (IAM) department. There was a lot stakeholder feedback and it was decided to separate into phases. The Highland Ave sewer and streetscape design and construction and will run on a different schedule. This year and next year, work will continue with conceptual designs, will start outreach on parking issues and what the community wants for Highland Ave. The project will move to final design schedule within a year. The city-wide parking study will help provide data for the design.

Councilor Ballantyne asked about the Highland Ave infrastructure and streetscape and if there will be underground improvements. It was stated that the streetscape from Cutter Ave in Davis Square to McGrath will be done along with the underground work as a second phase of the project, following the first phase that goes up to Central Street.

Chair Niedergang asked what are the plans and timeframe for underground work west of Central Street. Mr. Rawson stated they first want to reach final design for all the work east of Central Street and will then seek funding to initiate the work west of Central Street.

Ms. Augustin stated that bike lane design for project area one is preliminary design concepts to include island crossings, parking chicanes, in-lane bus stops, and raised intersections. She also stated that through conversations with ADA, they felt strongly that parking needs to stay on one side. The intersections with bus stops may be the most complicated, with neighborhood nodes to accommodate bus stops and street furniture for businesses.

Chair Niedergang asked a question from Bonnie Dennis who was in the audience and is the chair of Disabilities Commission: will the design team work with the Disabilities Commission to insure cycle traffic will not interfere with access for people with disabilities?. Ms. Augustin stated they need to provide cross walks to accommodate ADA and they will be working this year to make sure they are not missing any details.

Councilor Ballantyne asked if the city will upgrade technology for traffic lights on Highland Ave that can sense buses with oncoming traffic. Mr. Rawson stated the city has implemented this transit priority in Winter Hill and Broadway and will bring it to Highland Avenue. The city is on the front edge with this technology with lots of potential and is working closely with the MBTA on it. The MBTA is going through an RFI to interview a number of different vendors about this technology and trying to figure what's the best to make it more standard and a predictable process. There will be pilots to try this out in smaller sections.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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211243: That the Director of Mobility and the Director of Infrastructure and Asset Management collaborate to write responses to the questions contained within regarding the Spring Hill separation project.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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College Ave./Holland St. Project

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.

Mr. Schreiber presented slides on this area and stated that at the last public meeting, the scope has really been expanded. The revised plan avoids reconstructing sidewalks directly abutting most businesses until 2022 to not further burden those businesses. Calendar year 2022 will include remaining roadways and sidewalks that will be skipped over this calendar year. They are working with the bike advisory committee to add future bike lanes. See attached slides for details of pedestrian improvements at a bunch of intersections on College Ave and Holland St.

Mr. Schreiber also stated the design for the outbound bus lane into Teele Square is delayed and that IAM will need additional funds for this work. That section also needs signal timing improvements. The Administration will be requesting additional funds for improvements to Teele Square.

Mr. Lamar asked about continuous bike routes from Davis and Teele Square. There aren't many streets that connect the squares. Mr. Schreiber recommended using Wallace Street and they will propose a change to allow bikes to go in opposite direction of general traffic and will pair with appropriate signage. He also stated that for the left turn off of Wallace Street onto Holland, there will be a small left turn box curbside t.

Councilor Ballantyne stated that she and Councilor Davis received questions from businesses in Davis Square. Mr. Rawson stated they met with a small group of business owners in the heart of the square a couple of times since the new year. The work they have been doing is to try to understand loading, customer parking for commercial entities and employee parking. Nothing has been resolved and they will continue the dialog. Mr. Schreiber stated that they are focused on finishing the designs for final pavement markings. These areas are challenging to design, he said, as, they are trying to balance competing uses for narrow roadways to accommodate the businesses in the area.

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

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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211339: That Director of Mobility and the Chief Fire Engineer discuss the potential impacts to the Teele Square Firehouse from the proposed Holland Street/Teele Square infrastructure and repaving work.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Powderhouse Blvd. Bike Lanes & Powderhouse Circle

207997: 10 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

This item will be discussed with Mr. Lamar and Ms. Webb at the next Traffic and Parking meeting on April 12th.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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208110: 6 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

This item will be discussed with Mr. Lamar and Ms. Webb at the next Traffic and Parking meeting on April 12th.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

208227: 3 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

This item will be discussed with Mr. Lamar and Ms. Webb at the next Traffic and Parking meeting on April 12th.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

208313: 3 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

This item will be discussed with Mr. Lamar and Ms. Webb at the next Traffic and Parking meeting on April 12th.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

208448: 2 residents submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

This item will be discussed with Mr. Lamar and Ms. Webb at the next Traffic and Parking meeting on April 12th.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

209045: Rachel Turek submitting comments re: #204323, a proposal for Powderhouse Blvd. safe bicycling.

This item will be discussed with Mr. Lamar and Ms. Webb at the next Traffic and Parking meeting on April 12th.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

210900: That the Director of SPCD update the Ward 6 Councilor on previously discussed plans to reconfigure the Powder House Traffic Circle.

This item will be discussed with Mr. Lamar and Ms. Webb at the next Traffic and Parking meeting on April 12th.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Bile Lanes on East Broadway

209808: That the Director of SPCD develop a plan to create parking-separated bike lanes on East Broadway.

This item will be discussed with Mr. Lamar and Ms. Webb at the next Traffic and Parking meeting on April 12th.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Dangerous Intersections and Roadways

210965: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council in writing by December 4, and discuss with the Traffic and Parking Committee at its next meeting on December 7, what the plan is for replacing flex posts when they are knocked over or displaced.

This item will be discussed at the next Traffic and Parking meeting on April 12th.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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

Mr. Rawson provided an update for this request that has been in for at least 3 years. He stated that the state delegation and City Councilors have been prodding the state agency DCR to install a crosswalk. DCR will be evaluating existing conditions and starting to plan. They are still in the planning stages. No active engineering yet for this project.

Chair Niedergang asked if he, Councilors Ballantyne, Councilor Rossetti and Councilor Mbah should reach out to the state delegations and if this would this move this request forward.

Councilor Ballantyne stated that she has asked for a crosswalk. Rep Barber got the funding for planning. The extensive work being done on the rotary at Rt. 16 and Powderhouse Blvd as part of the Clarendon Hills redevelopment project may have helped to get DCR's attention to the need for a crosswalk. The state will put in a crosswalk once they do a study. This appears to be in the first phase to hopefully get a crosswalk installed once the other project has been completed. Chair Niedergang asked about possible timing for the planning and construction, and was told it could take two-three years.

Councilor Clingan asks how much this cost would. Mr. Rawson stated the new system could cost approximately \$250,000-\$500,000, or if substantially moving a catch basin around could cost \$500,000.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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.

Mr. Rawson provided updates from last January. He stated that design efforts have continued, but some traffic calming is feasible this construction season. DPW will be installing flex posts as soon as this week for short term, tactical safety measures. He'll have more design updates for the next meeting.

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.

See 210898

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

211254: Sharing the Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets Declaration and Call to Action and inviting everyone to attend the SASS virtual Summit on February 28, 2021 from 4-5 PM.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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211052: That the Director of SomerStat, the Director of SPCD, and the Director of Parking re-convene the Parking Study Task Force in January 2021.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208684: That the Administration report on how the City could lobby for a wider width for the proposed bridge from Everett to Draw 7 Park.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Referenced Material:

- 2021-3-14 DRAFT T&P Committee - Mobility Discussion Slides