



Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee



2012 ANNUAL REPORT



A bright spot on the Illuminations Tour. Photo by Lee Toma.



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Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
GOALS FOR 2020	2
2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS	3
Bike Lanes and Sharrows	3
Beacon Street Reconstruction	3
Complete Streets Policy	3
Organized Rides	4
Events and Other Promotions	4
Bike Week 2012	5
Pedestrian and Bicycle Counting Program	7
Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Vehicle Safety Campaign	7
Interdepartmental Bicycle Initiatives Meeting	7
Mapping	8
Guidance Provided on City Projects	8
Hubway Bike Share	9
ONGOING PRIORITIES FOR 2013	9
Bicycle Facilities	10
Education & Outreach	10
INITIATIVES FOR 2013	10
MAPS	11
Historical Progression of Bicycle Infrastructure	11
Bicycle Network as of December 2012	12
AM Cyclists by Intersection, 2012	13
PM Cyclists by Intersection, 2012	14

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, 5% of Somerville residents commute by bicycle¹, and many more cycle on a daily basis to run errands, to access educational opportunities and for personal enjoyment. This is nearly a three-fold increase in bicycle commuting over two decades (1990, 2%) and a near doubling in under a decade (2000, 3%).² To supplement these statistics, the SBC and the City have conducted a multi-year bicycle & pedestrian counting project to better document and understand how transportation choices and preferred routes 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 2012, approximately 3 miles of new bicycle lanes and sharrows were installed, including a key

connection advocated by the Committee: a lane connecting Union Square from Washington Street and Prospect to Somerville Avenue via Bow. The Bow Street lanes were installed as part of the Safety Parking (Rear Angle Parking) pilot which was well received by the cycling community. In addition, regular maintenance included repainting of over 700 sharrows throughout the city. Table #1 shows the increase in bicycle infrastructure over the past six 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 2012: the spring Historic Bike Tour, the fall Tour de Somerville, and the third 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 principal goal is at least 10% of Somerville residents commuting by bicycle in 2020.

1 US Census, 2009 American 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
2012	-	0.4	2.7
Total (incl pre 2007)	2.5 miles	10.1 miles	23.7 miles

GOALS FOR 2020

To continue the growth of bicycling in the city and attain 10% bicyclists by 2020, the SBC has charted the following elements to reach this goal:

- 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 will extend to Lowell Street with construction beginning in 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 a safe and efficient network of facilities for bicyclists to travel throughout the city.
- Increase access to bike parking, by:
 - » Installing public bike racks in all business areas in dense residential areas as needed and at schools; 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 with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), to facilitate flexible, seamless bicycle travel with neighboring cities and transit.
- Update zoning to anticipate increased bicycle use, which will place a greater demand on public and private bicycle parking facilities than currently required by zoning.
- Promote efforts to calm street traffic, so bicyclists of every age and ability can travel comfortably throughout the city, providing

input to the City on design and enforcement initiatives

- Educate grade school students to operate bicycles in the city, such that, with calmed vehicular traffic, by 2030, 20% or more of Somerville students will 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.

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.

2012 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The SBC has advanced the above goals throughout 2012, 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
- Bicycle Parking - "One in Every Ward" Campaign

The Committee provided feedback on the City's "One in Every Ward" campaign – an initiative to install eight additional bicycle parking corrals during the year, with at least one located in every ward. Prior to 2012, there were only two such on-street bike parking facilities, each of which accommodates 14 bikes in the space of one car. Somerville's campaign was followed by Cambridge also implementing a similar program.

Bike Lanes and Sharrows

The following streets were upgraded during 2012. Bicycle lanes were installed on:

- Somerville Avenue, from Prospect Street to Stone Avenue
- Bow Street, entire length
- Broadway, east of Ball Square to Cedar Street (including pilot green colored lane)

Sharrows (shared lane markings) were installed on:

- Walnut street, entire length
- Pearl Street, entire length, spaced extra closely to pilot additional "connect the dots" effect

See Map #2: Bicycle Network, for the current bicycle network.

Beacon Street Reconstruction and Cycletracks

Following the Committee's recommendation since 2006, and in light of massively increased bicycle ridership as measured by the Bicycle-Pedestrian Counting Program, the City revisited the 2013-14 reconstruction plans for Beacon Street to consider options to more equitably allocate the right-of-way for the next generation, rather than to simply rebuild existing conditions. SBC worked with the City in 2012 to promote and envision conceptual designs for the City's first cycletracks, or physically separated bicycle facilities, along this heavily traveled bicycle route. These are envisioned as the first phase of an eventual enhanced corridor between Porter and Kendall Squares, including the soon to be reconstructed Longfellow Bridge to Boston.

Complete Streets Policy

After the Committee co-led Somerville's successful application for recognition by the League of American Bicyclists as a "Bronze" Bicycle Friendly Community in 2011, the League provided recommendations for the City to become even more bicycle-friendly in the future, allowing it to compete for silver, gold, and platinum status. The top recommendation of the League was to adopt a Complete Streets policy. Such a policy would require all types of street projects to safely and equitably serve all users—bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, and motorists—as standard practice. Such a policy

would codify today's best Somerville street design as the baseline outcome.

SBC reviewed examples of highly-rated Complete Streets ordinances and policies from other cities, including Buffalo, NY; New Haven, CT; Cambridge, MA; and Rockville, MD. Based on these models and on template language from the Massachusetts Municipal Association, the Committee drafted a Complete Streets Ordinance for Somerville. The ordinance has been endorsed by the Mayor and will continue to be considered by the Board of Aldermen in 2013.

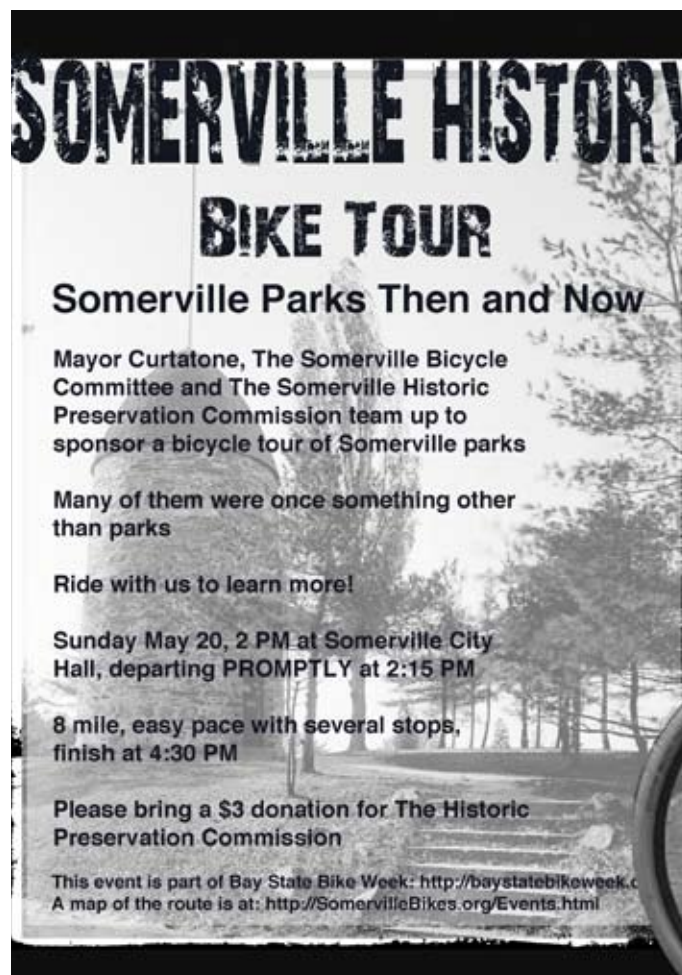
Events and Other Promotions

The SBC manned 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 events. We also used these events to gather feedback from residents on bicycling in our city, including unsafe conditions on their routes or suggestions for new bike facilities. We tabled at several of the Union Square Farmer's Markets and SomerStreets events throughout the summer.

Organized Bicycle Rides

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

The spring tour, co-sponsored with the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission, featured **"Somerville Parks - Then and Now"**. Held on Sunday, May 20, it was the last event of MassBike's Bay State Bike Week. The committee guided cyclists past 20 parks throughout the city, making stops at the Community Growing Center, Prospect Hill Park, Zero New Washington Street Dog Park, the future site of relocated Harris Park, Foss Park, Blessing of the Bay Boathouse on the Mystic River, Nathan Tufts (Powder House) Park,



SPOKE 2012 Tasting Tour, Photo by Benai Kornell



Edge of the City tour, Photo by Lee Toma

the recently renovated Hodgkins-Curtin Park, Seven Hills Park, Lexington Park, and the newly rebuilt Morse-Kelley Playground.

The **Tasting Tour**, held on Saturday, September 8, was part of the Somerville Arts Council's '**SPOKES 2012' bicycle festival**, an ArtsUnion event. Thirty-five riders visited and sampled food at seven restaurants, one in each of the city's main commercial districts. We asked each rider for a \$30 donation to benefit the Welcome Project.

For our 20th annual Tour de Somerville, on Saturday, October 13, we explored the "**Edge of the City**", riding a 15-mile counter-clockwise route that closely followed Somerville's boundaries with neighboring Cambridge, Charlestown, Medford, and Arlington. The route passed through a wide variety of Somerville landscapes: residential streets, commercial squares, industrial districts, and riverfront parks. A special treat was a panoramic view of Somerville from the rooftop of Tufts University's Tisch Library (a building bisected by the Somerville-Medford city line.)



Illuminations Ride, Photo by Lee Toma

On Saturday, December 15, we held our third annual **Illuminations** ride, coordinated with the Somerville Arts Council's Illuminations Trolley Tour. To improve the comfort of the ride, provide more time to view houses and to allow more families to join, we shortened the route and toured towards Davis Square and back. The route now runs entirely along side streets and visits the most well lit houses along Central and Spring Hills. Almost 100 cyclists joined us, nearly a quarter were families. The original route around Union Square, Ward 2, East Somerville and Winter Hill was available for smaller, self-guiding groups.

The May, October, and December rides each attracted over 100 participants.



Bike Week 2012

One of our most successful events was the Rush Hour Race. To help celebrate National Bike Month, the SBC came up with the idea of staging a **Rush Hour Race** where a cyclist, a T rider, and a motorist would compete to determine the quickest way to get from Davis Square to Kendall Square during rush hour. We partnered with the Cambridge Bicycle Committee and the Livable Streets Alliance to put together this exciting event which took place on the Monday of **National Bike Month** (May 14) and kicked off from Red Bones and finished in the lobby of Genzyme in Kendall Square. The cyclist was Josh Zisson from Bike Safe Boston, the T rider was Laurie Deitemeyer who blogs about the T (Ride Like Charlie), and the driver was SBC's own Ken Carlson. Josh (with a large group of cyclists trailing behind him), made the trip in twenty minutes and won the event. Laurie made it in 29 minutes, and Ken the driver came in last in 32 minutes. The event had a party-like atmosphere at the Redbones start and at the Genzyme finish, helped by generous donations from both businesses. The event generated a lot of media coverage and importantly brought home the message that it is much more efficient to get around Somerville and Cambridge by bicycle or by T than it is by car. And it's a lot more fun too! We plan on holding the second annual Rush Hour Race in May 2013.

Once again, we organized our **Annual Bike Commuter Breakfast** on the Friday of National Bike Week (May 18) on Beacon Street in the Star Market parking lot near Petsi Pies. The event was a clear success with over 100 bicyclists stopping by during their morning commute. Star Market and Petsi's Pies donated food, beverages, and supplies and Bike Boom provided free bike tuneups. Many of the bike commuters were unaware of the SBC's existence and expressed interest in becoming involved. Notable visitors included David Watson, Executive Director of MassBikes.

In 2012, the Committee had both a large banner and a posterboard-mounted bike route map



Rush Hour Race Participants Josh Zisson, Laurie Deitemeyer, and Ken Carlson. Photo by bostonbicyclebelles.tumblr.com

for tabling events. SBC continued developing handouts and safety related informational flyers.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Counting Program

The SBC once again supported the City's comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian counting project. Working with the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, a volunteer-conducted census 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 the fall. The amount of resources needed to recruit volunteers led to the census becoming annual in 2012 versus semiannual in prior years. The counts were taken at 36 intersections in late September.

During the annual counts, 6812 cyclists were observed throughout the city. This showed a strong continued trend upwards since 2010. The counts show both total numbers and individual modes and movements that are on the whole either sustained or increased from previous years' numbers, significantly in some cases: the total of 6812 cyclists counted is a 46% increase from Fall 2011 total cyclists and 56% increase from Fall 2010. Full information on these counts is on the City website (<http://www.somervillema.gov/departments/ospcd/transportation-and-infrastructure/counting-program>).

The busiest intersection in the morning was at Beacon Street and Concord Avenue (497 cyclists), and the busiest afternoon intersection was again Beacon Street and Concord Avenue (290 cyclists). See Map #3: AM Cyclists by Intersection, for the count locations and sample volumes.

Overall the numbers show evidence of a surge in popularity of cycling in Somerville, an upwards trend we hope to see continue in next year's count and beyond.

The bicycle and pedestrian counting project is on-going, and it is expected that the counts

will continue on an annual basis 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 developed through the Office of Communications and the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development. A member of the Bicycle Committee served on the advisory team of the campaign. The poster campaign was officially debuted by the Mayor in Spring 2012 with banners unfurled on Kids to Parks day, May 19th. With a combination of education and enforcement, the campaign posters and postcards were distributed at businesses around the city and Somerville Police increased focus on cyclist safety, including issuing warnings and citations for cyclists running red lights.

Annual Report and Interdepartmental Bicycle Initiatives Meeting

The Committee did not participate in meetings with the City departments in 2012 but will meet in early 2013 to discuss proposed improvements to the bicycle infrastructure and plans for bike-related projects. In previous years, 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 bicyclists in Somerville. SBC expects the meeting in early 2013 to again be instrumental for working together toward accomplishments in the coming year.



Officer Maryann Manfra assists with the Edge of the City Tour. Photo by Lee Toma.

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 was produced with edits by OSPCD and posted on the City's website as well as on SBC's unofficial website. This 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 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 schedule.

Guidance Provided 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:

- Union Square / Bow Street road markings
- Community Path extension
- Davis Square streetscape improvements
- Green Line Extension
- Somervision, Somerville's Comprehensive Plan
- Route 28 underpass
- Beacon Street
 - » Repairs of existing hazardous conditions
 - » Conceptual design for 2013-14 full reconstruction

- Alewife Brook Greenway: Curb cut restoration request
- Request that DCR repair and improve the path alongside Route 16 between the Mystic Valley Parkway bridge and the Medford city line.

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

Hubway Bike Share

In 2012, the City worked with neighboring municipalities and MAPC to bring the Hubway bike share program to Somerville. In August, the first 4 stations were launched in Somerville: Beacon/Washington St, Union Square, City Hall, and Conway Park. In October, 4 more were added: at Wilson, Davis, Ball, and Powderhouse Squares. In 2013, 4 more stations are planned. The Somerville Bicycle Committee reviewed station locations and will continue to support the City as Hubway's expands further in Somerville.

Hubway allows users to rent a bicycle for a point to point trip, retrieving a bike at any station and returning it to any station. Users sign up as 1-day, 3-day, or annual members. The first 30 minutes or each ride is free, with a tiered pricing schedule above 30 minutes.

PRIORITIES FOR 2013

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 priorities for this year focus on gaps in connectivity.

- Connecting the discontinuous Broadway bicycle lane segments;
- Connecting the Beacon Street and Somerville Avenue bicycle lanes;
- Connecting the Somerville Avenue bicycle lanes to Spring Hill via Central Street;
- Connecting the Somerville Avenue bicycle lanes to Inman Square via Webster Ave; and
- Continuing to move the Community Path project forward, by assisting with Lowell Street to Inner Belt funding opportunities



Photos from the Edge of the City tour by Lee Toma.



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 a new “I Bike Somerville” T-shirt for community events and fundraising;
- Distributing information and free lights/bells for the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Vehicle Safety campaign;
- Distributing our revised “Somerville By Bicycle” map at events;
- Expanding Bike Week and Bike Month programming, including more collaboration with the Mayor, City departments, and external organizations
- Working with Shape Up Somerville on bike routes to/from schools and encouraging kids to bike.

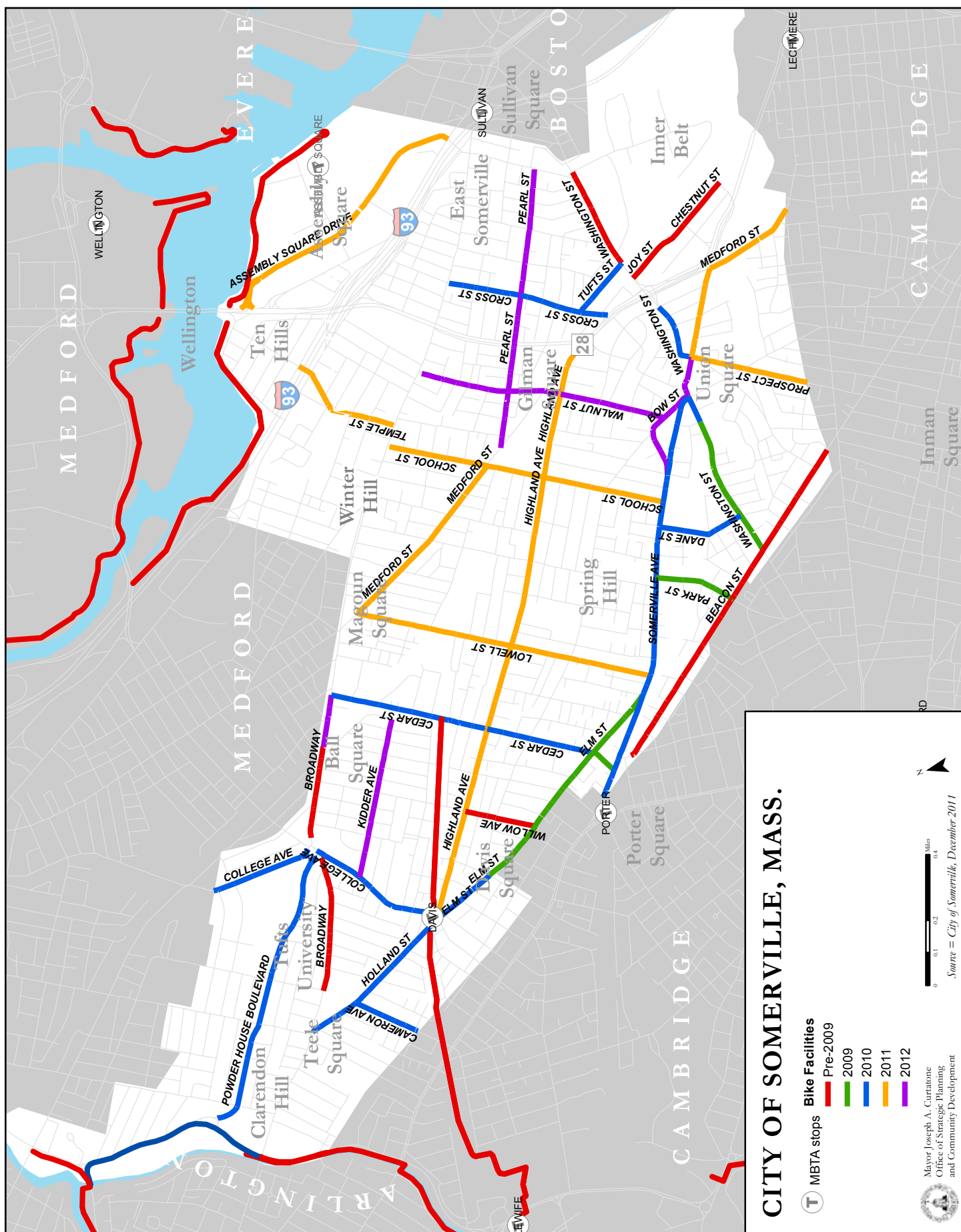
INITIATIVES FOR 2013

The SBC intends to explore a few key initiatives for 2013. 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:

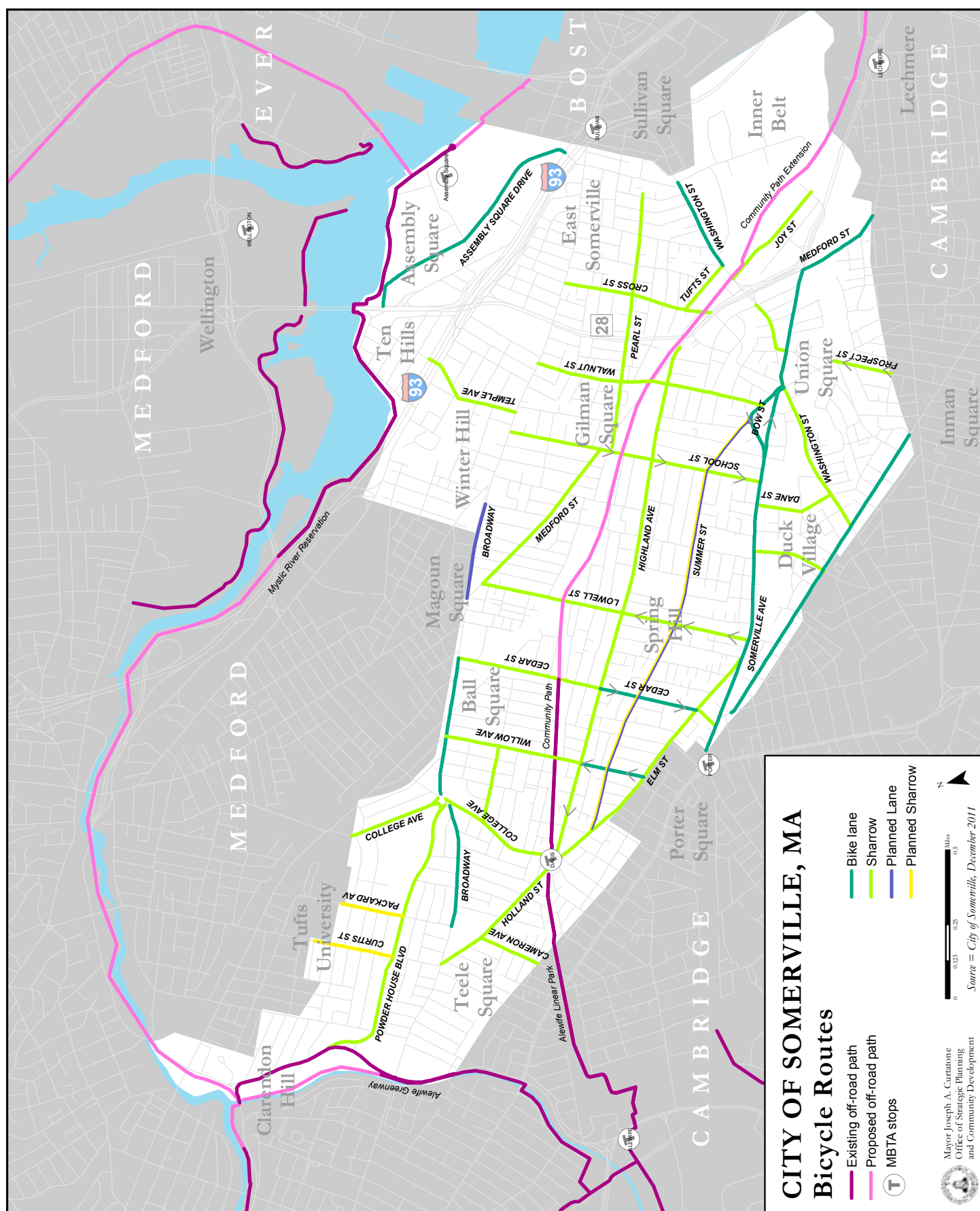
- Support the implementation of a Neighborhood Greenway traffic-calmed corridor, possibly on Hudson and Hancock Streets that will enable safe all-age biking and walking in the street;

- Amend legacy municipal traffic regulations that contradict bicyclists’ rules of the road with respect to state laws
- Incorporate quality cycletracks in the reconstruction of the high demand bicycle route along Beacon Street;
- Support the adoption and implementation of a citywide Complete Streets Ordinance, including development of a Bicycle Facility Design Guide
- Implement and track safety of bicycle exceptions for time-based “Do Not Enter” zones
- Investigate year-round installation of select bike corrals and, system dependent, Hubway stations
- Development of a long-range Comprehensive Bicycle Plan
- Partnering with the School Committee and other City organizations to improve bikeability of the Somerville schools.

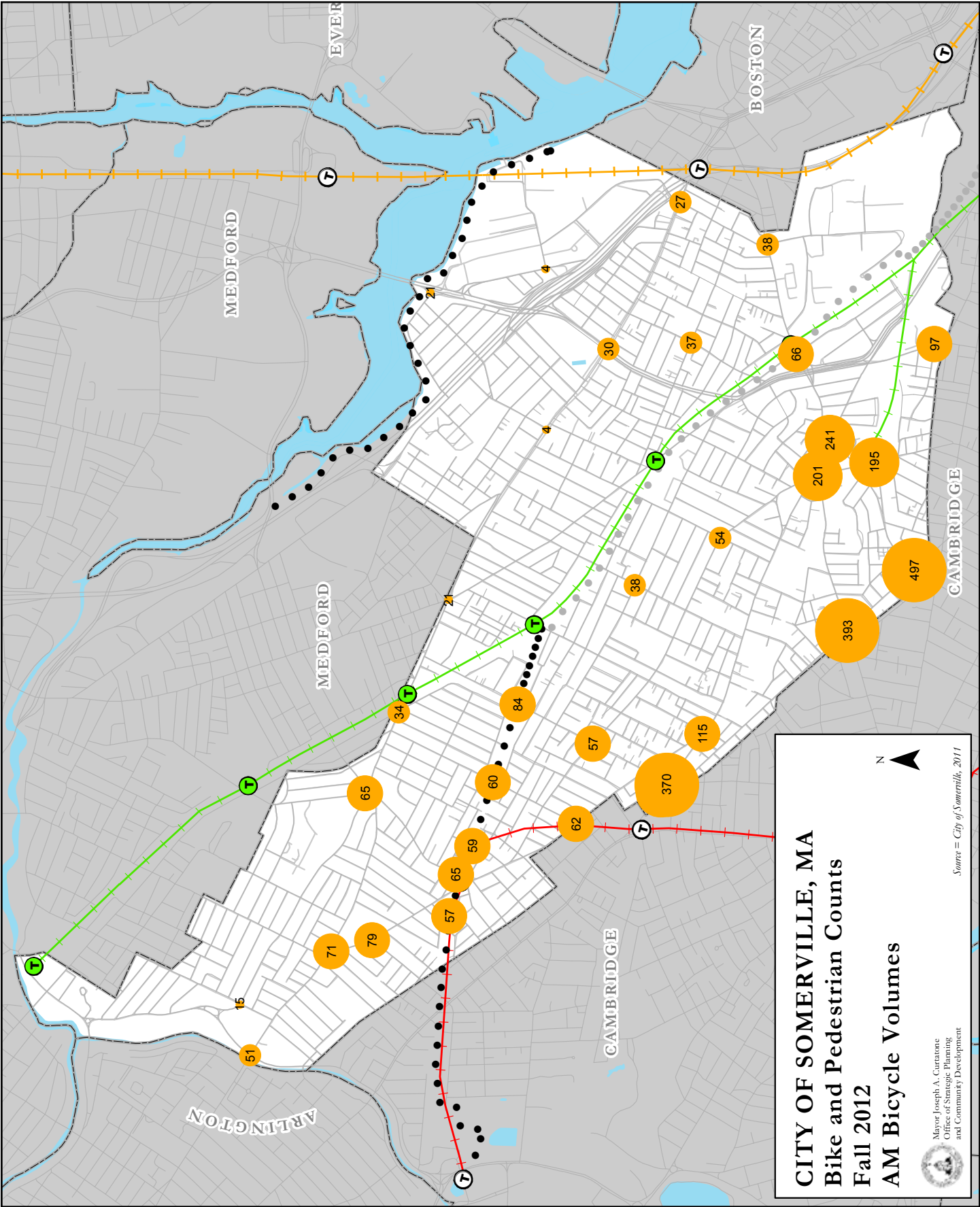
MAP #1: HISTORICAL PROGRESSION OF BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE



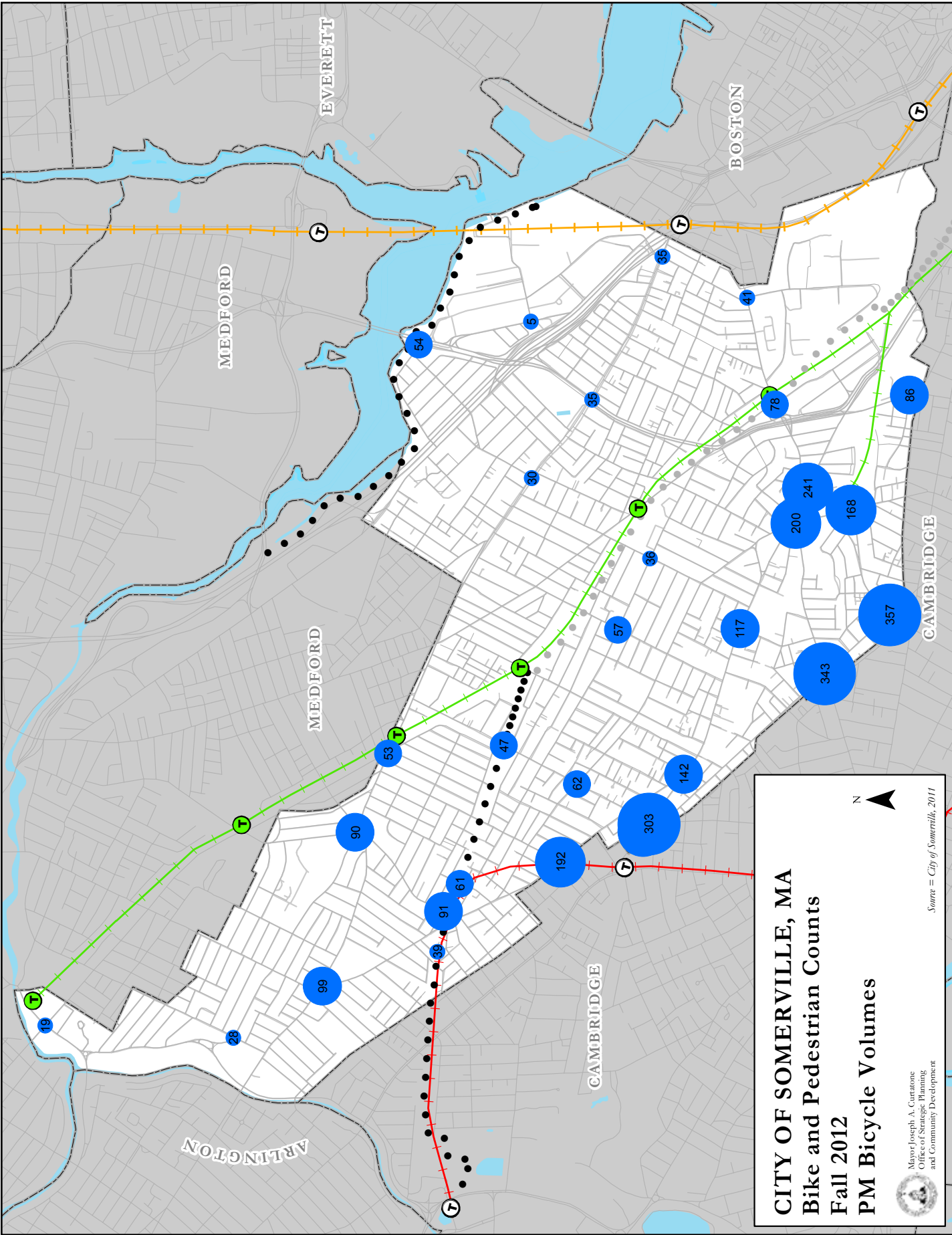
MAP #2: BICYCLE NETWORK, DECEMBER 2012



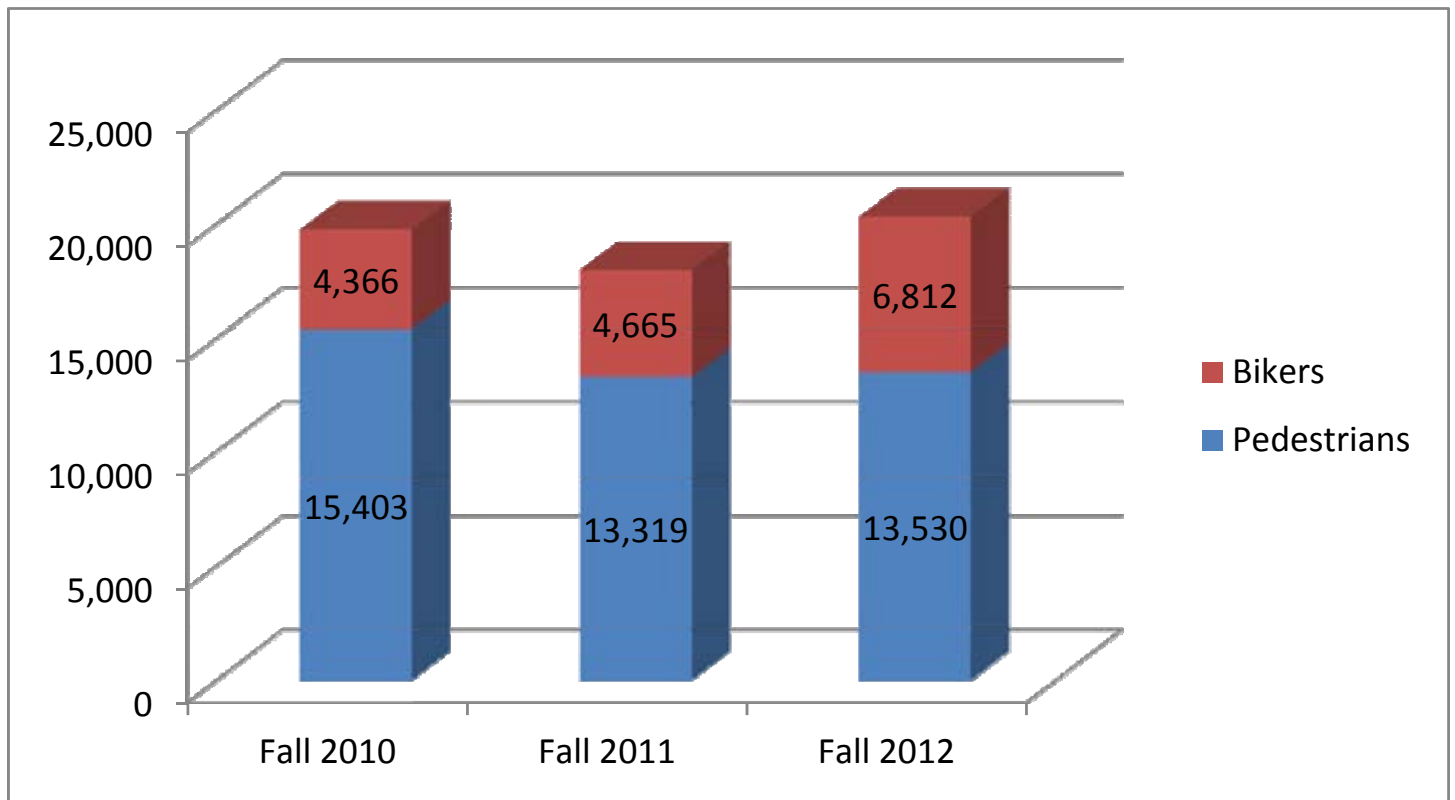
MAP #3: AM CYCLISTS BY INTERSECTION, 2012



MAP #4: PM CYCLISTS BY INTERSECTION, FALL 2012



BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN COUNTS COMPARISON, 2010-2012



The background of the page features a large, faint, circular seal of the City of Somerville, Massachusetts. The seal's outer ring contains the text "MUNICIPAL FREEDOM GIVES NATIONAL STRENGTH" at the top and "SOMERVILLE, MASS." at the bottom. Inside this ring, the text "TOWN 1842" is on the left and "1872 CITY" is on the right. The center of the seal depicts the Old Powder House, a stone building with a flag flying from a pole on its roof. Below the building, the text "HONORABLY PURCHASED FROM PAWTUCKET • 1639" is written in a curved path. The words "OLD POWDER HOUSE" are printed in a straight line below the building's base.

SOMERVILLE BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

For more information:

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

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