City of Somerville, Massachusetts
City Council Traffic and Parking Committee
Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 31, 2023   **6:00 PM**

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 6:09 PM by Chair Gomez Mouakad and adjourned at 7:52 PM on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Ewen-Campen, Wilson and Gomez Mouakad), none against and none absent.

Others present:
Brad Rawson - Director of Mobility, Katherine White – OSPCD, Justin Schreiber – Senior Transportation Planner, OSPCD, Viola Augustin – Senior Planner, OSPCD, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.
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Roll Call

Present:	Chairperson Beatriz Gomez Mouakad , Vice Chair Jake Wilson and Ben Ewen-Campen

Public Hearing on the Somerville Bike Network Plan (Item #23-0585)

1. Mayor's Request (ID # **23-0585**)

Requesting approval of the Citywide Bicycle Network Plan.

Chair Gomez Mouakad explained the process for the public hearing and said that the committee members are here to listen to the concerns of the speakers. Director Rawson, along with OSPCD staffers Justin Schreiber, Katherine White and Viola Augustin, gave a slide presentation of the Somerville Bicycle Network Plan.

The plan is consistent with the city's policy context, i.e., SomerVision 2040, Somerville Climate Forward, Complete Streets, Neighborhood Plans, and Vision Zero. The planning process began in the summer of 2021 and was published in April of 2023. The plan has three main goals: 1) to increase ridership, 2) to serve all ages and abilities, and 3) to provide equal access. Various methods of community engagement were employed to obtain input from residents, and collectively, about 1,000 responses were received.

Criteria and considerations were examined in the development of the plan and four street types were proposed: 1) protected bicycle lanes, 2) off street path, 3) neighborways, and 4) shared streets. A ranked listing of priority streets was developed as part of the plan with a goal of having a quick build priority network implemented by 2030. The plan will provide 88 miles of bicycle facilities at a cost estimated to be $9,540,000

Councilor Wilson commented that he wants to make sure that everyone is safe and would like to see increased street safety. He also wants to

maximize the funds to provide as many bike lanes as possible. Councilor Ewen-Campen commented that he has received feed back, both pro and con and will collate the comments and sit with the design team to address them. He welcomed anyone with concerns to have a conversation with him. Chair Gomez Mouakad urged residents to reach out to councilors with questions/concerns. She pointed out that the city is constantly changing and that everyone has to adapt. She also stated that bikers need to be considerate of pedestrians and that this plan is a communal engagement process.

Chair Gomez Mouakad read a letter from Bea read letter from Dr. Sara Lennox into the record.

PUBLIC HEARING
The public hearing was opened at 6:42 PM
There were thirty individuals who offered comments during the public hearing, with 33% of them expressing opposition to some aspect of the plan. The comments are summarized here:

In favor:
- More likely to support local businesses, thereby increasing their revenue
- What happens when a road is reconstructed?
- The plan should be implemented sooner
- Include Beacon Street in the plan
- This will make streets safer
- Increase staffing for the Mobility Department
- Charge higher fees for parking permits
- Sufficient data to move forward without delay
- The plan will save lives
- Accelerate parts of the quick build at dangerous areas
- Extensive outreach was done
- Commute has been improved due to protected bike lanes

Concerns:
- Opposed to methodology used - seems slanted to bike users (which is less than 5% of the city's population)
- Parking spaces are being lost for bike lanes leading to taking business away from local businesses
- City is making a strategic error by using the majority wherever possible to do things quickly and without enough public input
- The Traffic Commission is made up of appointed individuals
- Surprised that a private road was included in the plan without any notice to residents
- Residents were left in the dark about the plan
- Many stakeholders were omitted

- City is changing the use of streets
- What improvements are being made for pedestrians and seniors?
- Should have a public hearing for every street being changed
- Highland Avenue plan needs to be reconsidered
- Plan is too slow, too shortsighted, and too focused on quick build
- Glaring lack of community involvement
- This was pushed during the pandemic
- Rents will be increased as a result of paying for this
- More transparency and public hearings needed
- Public outreach should be done by certifies mail
- Concerned for people having protection under the American Disabilities Act
- The plan needs to be revised
- Why isn't the city making it easier for people to walk instead of pushing this plan?
- People are leaving city due to lack of parking
- Property values will be lowered
- If excise tax is being charged for cars, why not impose excise tax on bikes?

The public hearing closed at 7:48 PM, however, the record will remain open for written comment through June 14, 2023. Comments may be sent to cityclerk@somervillema.gov <mailto:cityclerk@somervillema.gov>, citycouncil@somervillema.gov <mailto:citycouncil@somervillema.gov>, brawson@somervillema.gov <mailto:brawson@somervillema.gov>

Chair Gomez Mouakad thanked everyone involved in creating the plan as well as those who took the time to comment.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Referenced Documents:
- Traffic and Parking - 2023-05-31 Public Comments
- Traffic and Parking - 2023-05-31 Additional Public Comments
- Traffic and Parking - 2023-05-31 Public Comments - S Lennox
- Traffic and Parking - 2023-05-31 Public Hearing Staff Presentation