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City of Somerville
Police Department
220 Washington Street
Somerville, MA 02143-1307



2025 Municipal Road Safety Grant

Date: February 13, 2025

To: City Council

From: Sergeant Michael McCarey

Re: 2025 Municipal Road Safety Grant

Dear Honorable City Council,

The following information is being provided from the Somerville Police Department regarding the 2025 Municipal Road Safety (MRS). The goal of the 2025 MRS Grant is to interact with motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians in a positive manner to provide education to the public focused on protecting vulnerable road users. With input from the community and stakeholders, SPD has evolved its strategy over the years to focus on violations that pose the greatest risk to bicyclists and pedestrians, especially encounters at crosswalks. This focus on protecting vulnerable road users will be carried forward to FY25 grant activities. Traffic enforcement education focused on red-light compliance and mid-street crosswalk safety aims to promote the safe, efficient and orderly movement of motor vehicles, bicycles and pedestrians in Somerville and complements the Somerville Mobility Division's traffic calming throughout the city. Enforcement and education programs are designed to change dangerous road use behavior and to promote voluntary compliance with the road use laws of the Commonwealth.

As with the FY23 and FY24 grant, funds for the FY25 MRS Grant are broken down into five sections. The \$60,000 of this grant is split among the five categories in the amounts indicated below.

1. Traffic safety enforcement - \$30,324.00 (traditional High visibility enforcement)
 - a. Includes: Distracted driving (phones), click it or ticket (seatbelts), speed enforcement and summer impaired driving.
2. Traffic safety equipment - \$10,775.80
 - a. Includes: 1 speed notification sign, 2 LiDar units (handheld speed verification devices) and 4 portable breathalyzers.
3. Pedestrian and bicycle safety enforcement - \$11,020.00
 - a. Includes: crosswalk decoy, and infractions that promote bicycle safety, such as blocked bike lanes, unsafe passing, dooring and j-hooking
4. Pedestrian and bicycle safety items - \$3,320.20
 - a. Includes: 400 lighted safety bracelets, 60 helmets and printed pamphlets.
5. Pedestrian and bicycle non-enforcement safety activities - \$4,560.00
 - a. Includes: events where officers can set up a safety booth and provide educational materials.

Of the \$11,020 designated for pedestrian and bicycle safety enforcement, two thirds, or \$7,200, is earmarked for pedestrian crosswalk enforcement. The remaining is earmarked to promote bicycle safety and enforcement of violations that impact the safety of bicyclists including infractions by motor vehicles that include blocked bike lanes,

unsafe passing, dooring and j-hooking. This also includes crosswalk infractions by bicyclists and infractions that put the lives of bicyclists at risk such as blatant disregard for red lights where the bicyclist puts themselves and others in danger. Officers conducting these enforcement operations will be instructed to de-prioritize and give their discretionary consideration to “true” Idaho stops and not focus on bicyclists that come to a complete stop at red lights and proceed safely through an intersection giving caution, care, curtesy and preference to pedestrians and cross traffic. This is in accordance with resolution 23-1162 presented by councilor Ben Ewen-Campen and Jake Wilson in 2023. Any focus on bicycle red light enforcement will be focused on bicyclists ignoring pedestrians in crosswalks and egregious violations of red lights where bicyclists do not even pause for red lights. Since the Traffic Office changed its focus to align with resolution 23-1162 in August 2023, there have been no grant related complaints related to bicycle enforcement that I am aware of.

It is also important to note that enforcement quotas are not a part of the FY25 grants and have not been a part of this grant since 2022. Somerville was instrumental in getting the state to rewrite the grant rules and discontinue this practice.

The goals for the FY25 grant period are to:

- Focus on major roadways and adjacent areas with high foot and bicycle traffic for speed enforcement.
- Increase enforcement of vehicles violating bicycle safety laws (blocking bike lanes, unsafe passing, dooring, j-hooking).
- Attend several summer streets events and popup tables to promote traffic safety (up to 6 events).
- Conduct pedestrian crosswalk decoy operations including mid-block crosswalks in areas of high pedestrian traffic.
- Purchase 60 helmets for distribution to vulnerable road users.
- Purchase 400 lighted bracelets for distribution to pedestrians and vulnerable road users .
- Deploy speed and pedestrian safety enforcement efforts in mid-August, just in time for the start of the fall schools and college return.
- Supplement and conduct enforcement outside of the SPD traffic units regularly scheduled hours.
- Print and distribute focused safety pamphlets during enforcement and non-enforcement interactions.
- Purchase an additional speed feedback warning sign.
- Replace ageing speed monitoring equipment with 2 new units.

Grant resources will be deployed at mid-block crosswalks and intersections with high red-light non-compliance, as identified by the Somerville Mobility Division, direct requests from City Counselors and constituents. We welcome the input of others and have met with the Somerville Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC) to address questions, identify deployment locations and other requests. We hope to meet with the bicycle coalition during the grant period to discuss additional locations of concern. Specific areas that already have been identified and will be include are Highland Ave., Broadway, Somerville Ave., Washington St. and the Beacon St. corridors, as well as Grand Union Blvd., Artisan Way, Union Square, Davis Square, Powderhouse Blvd., and College Ave.

We aim to create safer roadways for all by providing education to motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians. The grant has provisions for non-enforcement safety and education interactions that can have a truly remarkable impact on the community, addressing some causes of our most tragic traffic accidents such as vehicles failing to yield to oncoming bicycles when turning and speeding.

For reference, below is a summary of our accomplishments for the FY24 grant period.

The FY24 Municipal Road Safety Grant ran from December 23, 2023 (approved in late July) until mid-September 2024. A grant award of \$60,000.00 was pledged to Somerville.

The FY24 Grant was broken down into five sections

- 1. Traffic safety enforcement (distracted driving, click it or ticket, speed enforcement and impaired driving)
- 2. Traffic Safety Equipment (Speed notification signs).
- 3. Pedestrian and bicycle safety enforcement (crosswalk decoy, activities that promote bicycle safety such as blocked bike lanes, unsafe passing, dooring and j-hooking)
- 4. Pedestrian and bicycle safety items.
- 5. Pedestrian and bicycle non-enforcement safety activities.

During the grant period, SPD performed over 243 hours of crosswalk enforcement, 402 hours of speed enforcement and 68 hours of non-enforcement community relations building. We purchased and distributed 500 rechargeable lighted high visibility safety bracelets to vulnerable road users, including walkers, runners and bicyclists. We interacted with over 2000 individuals including 1540 vehicles on assorted stops, a breakdown of these stops is listed below. We gave out approximately 1000 safety and educational pamphlets. 1 pole mounted speed notification signs was purchased and given to Traffic and Parking for installation. As a result of the grant approval being delayed, we were not able to purchase and install the radar speed sign as planned.

In 2024, 1540 traffic stops were performed

Top violation categories include:	
Speeding	1045
Failure to yield to pedestrian in crosswalk	403
Hands-Free Violation	10
Bicycle violation (warning)	1
Other	82