



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
CLERK OF COMMITTEES

December 5, 2018
REPORT OF THE TRAFFIC AND PARKING COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Mark Niedergang	Chair	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Vice Chair	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	Alderman at Large	Absent	

Others in attendance: Annie Connor, Brad Rawson and Mike Tremblay.

The meeting started at 6:30 pm and ended at 9:00 pm.

1. Approval of the October 17, 2018 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
----------------	-----------------

Bridge closures and detours

205352: That the Director of SPCD report to the Ward 5 Alderman and this Board on the plans for closure of the Ball Square bridge and Broadway for GLX construction activity.

The Chair said that the Administration has provided information on this topic.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

206850: That the Mayor's Office report to this Board in writing with plans for the police presence around the detour route from the Broadway/Ball Square Bridge closure to protect the Ball Square neighborhood from cut-through traffic, especially at key intersections on Cedar Street, Highland Avenue, College Avenue, and Broadway.

Ms. Connor consulted with the Mayor's Chief of Staff to receive an update. Ms. Connor reported that the Administration has been working closely with the Chief of Police to develop a plan for staffing the detour routes to prevent cut-through traffic. The plan is complete, but it is an internal, operational Police Dept document and will not be released to the public. However, Ms. Connor said the Administration would work on a summary that could be a public document to share with the Aldermen and community. The chair shared a suggestion from a community member about whether it's possible to have a special placard for those who live in the area, making it difficult for those who do not live in Somerville to cut through the neighborhood during the bridge detour. The chair talked to SPD Captain Donovan who said that he believes police have the power to keep out-of-towners from going on streets that are marked "for abutters or residents only."

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

206851: That the Director of SPCD develop a physical traffic calming infrastructure on Morrison Avenue between Cedar Street and Willow Avenue, before the Broadway/Ball Square Bridge closes in January 2019.

Mr. Rawson confirmed the plan to switch some parking and install chicanes on Morrison Ave between College Ave and Willow Ave. In terms of the other part of Morrison Ave, his department is looking at a number of options. Painting bump outs on some street corners is one, but that can't be done until the weather warms up in the Spring. The primary option they are looking at is installing flex posts in the middle of the street to slow traffic. This has proven to be effective on other streets in Somerville. Mr. Rawson said he will want to have some conversations with the neighbors and Chair Niedergang offered to organize neighborhood meetings. Chair Niedergang said that the intersection of Highland Road and Morrison Ave is of great concern because a lot of children and families cross the street there to get to Lexington Park and the Community Path.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

206390: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Traffic and Parking report to this Board on plans to improve traffic signalization and flow at problem intersections such as Powderhouse Circle, Magoun Square, and others.

This item was also discussed at the 10/17/18 meeting. Mike Tremblay provided a slide presentation on the Magoun Square main intersection. He talked about the challenges that City staff face in changing traffic signal timing. Powderhouse rotary is very challenging but it needs to be fixed, he said. There were discussions about a couple of options. One option would involve the removal of the traffic lights in Powderhouse Circle (and blocking the crosswalks at the island with jersey barriers to eliminate the crosswalks to the island). The circle would then function more like a traditional rotary. It was stated that Powderhouse Circle is a high crash location. MAPC did a report on 100 cities and this area is top 5% general traffic and bike crashes. There will be a citywide public process before moving forward next year as this rotary is a major through route for many people who live in West Somerville.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

206271: That the Administration and the Traffic Commission make any changes possible to the traffic patterns and signal timing at the Powderhouse Circle intersection in advance of the closing of the Broadway bridge at Ball Square.

For discussion of this item, see #206390.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

205693: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Traffic and Parking report to this Board on traffic calming options for Richardson Street.

There were discussions about people trying to avoid Magoun Square and cutting through on Richardson Street and Hinckley St. The chair stated that one resident suggested putting parking on the other side of Richardson to help slow traffic by narrowing the roadway and also, it would provide more parking for a neighborhood that desperately needs it. Mr. Rawson said that they had investigated this and found that Richardson is actually not wide enough to have parking on both sides and two-way traffic. He suggested

that a way to prevent cut-through traffic there would be to make changes in the intersection of Hinckley and Broadway, which could deter drivers from cutting through. The Chair said that this is an item for discussion with the neighborhood in the context of the 55-unit project that the City of Medford has permitted to be built on Broadway behind Wangs, Woody's and the pizza shop, and that the developer of that project had provided \$35,000 for traffic mitigation there. He said that he would work with Traffic and Infrastructure to organize a neighborhood meeting to discuss the traffic issues in that area.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

204348: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Traffic and Parking review the traffic signal for left turns from Somerville Avenue onto Dane Street for safety concerns during rush hour.

It was stated that Dane Street is already backed up and will get worse once the Somerville Ave Union Square detour routes vehicles onto Dane St. Mr. Tremblay has had concerns about this intersection and will work to make it better after the detour. He will also connect with the City Engineer on this matter.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

206438: That the Director of SPCD address this Board regarding traffic congestion on Oak and Houghton Streets resulting from recent traffic pattern changes in Union Square.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

Vision Zero and pedestrian safety

205285: That the Director of SPCD share plans, when available, for its upcoming Vision Zero planning process.

Mr. Tremblay gave an update on the Vision Zero process, which he said is going well, with a strong and knowledgeable committee. There is one former Bicycle Committee member on this taskforce. There are 9 total representatives with diverse backgrounds. There may be draft action items by January/February 2019. He said that the final report should be issued by April 2019. He anticipates hiring an additional staff person early next year, and once that person is working, the formation of a Pedestrian and/or Transit Committee in the first quarter of 2019.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

206946: Requesting the formation of a Resident Transit Advisory Committee as first proposed on February 8, 2018 (see #205100).

Now that construction season is over, OSPCD will spend more time on administration and policy development. Mike, Adam and Brad are reviewing resumes for a new staff member who would staff a Pedestrian and/or Transit Committee. There was discussion about whether there should be one combined committee or two separate ones. The Chair suggested starting with single, combined committee and then evaluating how that was working after a year or so. Mr. Tremblay said that the bike committee has formed sub-committees who work separately and then report back to the entire group. This process seems to work and could be a model for a Pedestrian/Transit Committee.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

207067: That the Director of SPCD report to this Board on the possibility of installing containers of small flags at key pedestrian crossings to aid in pedestrian safety.

Mr. Tremblay reviewed case studies of this technology. Seattle is using this process and Arlington is doing a pilot, one of them on a street right near where he lives. Mr. Trembley and Mr. Rawson said that they believe there are a number of problems with this model. It seems to imply responsibility for not getting hit in crosswalks belongs to pedestrians, tests show that few pedestrians actually use the flags, the flags often go missing, etc. They do not think this is the model that Somerville should use to protect pedestrians in crosswalks.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

206067: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install audible pedestrian signals so people can cross safely at the busy intersection of Highland Avenue and Central Street.

It was stated that this request came from a resident who is blind. There were discussions about perhaps establishing a goal of installing 10 audible pedestrian signals (APS) in a couple of years. There is a need to do research to find out where elderly and blind residents are living. It is challenging to install APS in City traffic lights for a number of technical reasons. This is something the City wants to do but it will take some time to get set up to do it. Cedar and Summer Streets will have an APS at the new traffic light there.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

205831: That the Director of Engineering share with this Board the feasibility of creating a pedestrian crossing on Somerville Avenue, between Belmont and Spring Streets.

Mr. Tremblay reviewed the area and said that there are no crosswalks anywhere near there so it is an appropriate and necessary location for one. Mr. Tremblay will work with Engineering to figure out exactly how to do this. Engineering hopes to have an on-call contractor on board next year to install crosswalks at various locations and once that happens this will be done.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

206687: That the Director of Engineering build a crosswalk to allow pedestrians to safely cross Washington Street at the Public Safety Building.

There have been discussions with the City Engineer about where to put the crosswalk. This is a very busy street, and a crosswalk is needed there, but there are a number of technical difficulties due to the layout of the street in terms of where to put it and how to successfully install it. They will continue to work on making this happen.

RESULT:

KEPT IN COMMITTEE

204309: That the Director of SPCD provide streetscape changes, such as painted crosswalks, at points on the Webster Avenue bridge to facilitate pedestrian crossings in that area.

It was stated that there are crosswalks nearby and for many reasons a crosswalk cannot be put on the Webster Ave Bridge.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

202792: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install a flashing cross walk sign on Broadway at the East Branch Library.

It was stated that the director of Traffic and Parking has been in touch with the Ward 1 Alderman on this issue. Mr. Rawson will follow up with Ald. McLaughlin.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

204317: That the Director of Traffic and Parking consider installing a crossing signal across Calvin Street at Washington Street.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

Traffic calming

206672: That the Director of SPCD update this Board on the implementation of neighborhood safety zones. (2nd request)

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

207128: That the Director of SPCD identify for the Ward 3 Alderman the 5 highest-speed residential streets in Ward 3 where a road-narrowing approach could be tested during Spring, 2019.

For discussion of this item, see #207127.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

207127: That the Director of SPCD work with the Ward 3 Alderman and residents of Vinal Avenue to conduct a temporary "road narrowing" experiment using flex-posts to slow vehicle speeds.

There are a number of speeding complaints on this street. Residents in this area requested police to stop the speeding. Police gave out 50 tickets, but that did not stop the speeding. The conclusion was that traffic enforcement, especially the limited amount of it that the Somerville Police Dept. has the personnel to provide, cannot stop speeding problems. There were discussions about the use of the flex posts which proved to be effective in an early morning test conducting by Alderman Ewen-Campen with volunteer traffic consultant Mark Chase working with a bunch of neighbors. Mr. Rawson also said that flex posts can work on 2-way streets. This process has slowed cars down in other areas. The flex posts cost approximately \$80 each. DPW can install these units. There were concerns about the snow plowing destroying the units and the response is that they can be removed before the snow season. It was stated that flex posts are durable and can take a few hits and do not damage vehicles that run into them. The conclusion of the discussion was that the experiment on Vinal Ave was successful and that flex posts installed on both one-way and two-way streets could be an effective, cost-effective, and practical way to calm traffic on many residential streets in Somerville.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

205450: That the Director of SPCD provide traffic calming recommendations for Vinal Avenue.

For discussion of this item, see #207127.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

205449: That the Director of SPCD provide traffic calming recommendations for School Street, from Highland Avenue to Summer Street.

There were discussions about speeding in this area and the need for crosswalks and ramps. Improvements are scheduled for 1-3 years.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

205448: That the Director of SPCD provide recommendations on making the intersection of Summer and Central Streets safer for pedestrians, bicyclists and drivers.

Ald. Ewen-Campen brought this item to OSPCD about a month or so ago. This is an unusual intersection in Somerville and drivers do not seem to know how to deal with it. The traffic lights permit vehicles to move into the intersection but then can get stranded there when other traffic signals change. It was stated that APS and major upgrades are needed to the signals. There were discussions about talking with the MBTA and rerouting Bus 85 to stay on Somerville Ave and not come up Central Street. Mr. Tremblay will work with Ald. Ewen-Campen on this matter.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

206778: That the Director of SPCD and the Director of Engineering work with the Ward 3 Alderman to use \$75,000 contributed by the 125 Lowell developers, to enhance traffic calming in the vicinity.

Ald. Ewen-Campen met with residents of Belmont and Lowell Street around this development and they have major concerns about the speed and amount of traffic. Ideas were discussed on how to slow down traffic such as: putting little trees in the street, a bump out or a raised crossing. Mr. Tremblay stated it's time to get the Engineering Dept. involved in this matter; while he has a number of ideas, he is not qualified to determine which are cost-feasible or possible to implement.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

206849: That the Director of SPCD or the Director of Traffic and Parking explain to this Board why there are no lane markings or striping on Broadway between Temple Street and Magoun Square.

Mr. Tremblay showed a slide about plans to redevelop the too-broad Broadway roadway between Magoun Square and McGrath Highway. Traffic and Infrastructure are planning to restripe the roadway in 2019. Additionally, there will be protected bike lanes, shared with busses, and transit signal priority for busses. It was stated that busses and bikes move approximately at the same speed and can share a lane. Bike lane will be put between the parked cars and the curb. There were public meetings about redoing

Broadway a number of years ago but there will be public meetings in anticipation of these long-awaited major changes to Broadway.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

Parking enforcement

206853: That the Director of Traffic and Parking report to this Board on the enforcement of 311 complaints about illegal parking, and what provisions exist for enforcement against illegal parking on Sundays and holidays.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

206202: That the Director of Traffic and Parking share how it enforces the prohibition of cars and trucks parked in bus lanes and bike lanes.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

203067: That the Director of Traffic and Parking and the Director of Information Technology provide Parking Control Officers with the ability to review local infraction history by license plate.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
----------------	--------------------------

Items to be completed (not anticipated to be discussed)

204795: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install flashing YIELD TO PEDESTRIAN signs at the crosswalk by the Kennedy School on Elm Street.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

204797: That the Director of SPCD consider painting crosswalks and speed bumps in the parking lot by the Kennedy School, and discuss these and other traffic-calming measures with the Ward 5 Alderman.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

202872: That the Director of Traffic and Parking report the number of warnings and citations issued for snow covered vehicles following the 9AM lifting of the snow emergency on 2/13/17.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

201126: That the Administration explain the process for exempting streets from next year's change in the Snow Emergency Parking Plan. (2nd request)

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

200211: That the Administration explain the process for exempting streets from next year's change in the Snow Emergency Parking plan.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

206169: That the Director of SPCD deploy traffic calming measures on Marshall Street.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

200435: That the Commissioner of Public Works place plowed snow on the non-permit parking side of Dana Street to ensure residents have parking.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

202346: That the Director of Traffic and Parking consider adding Myrtle Street to the 20 MPH list through amendment of Article 14.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
----------------	-----------------------

COMMITTEE MEETING HANDOUTS

1. Road Narrowing Report re 207127
2. December 2018 Traffic and Parking Committee Slides