



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Traffic and Parking Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 6, 2023

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Gomez Mouakad at 6:00 pm and adjourned at 7:58 pm with a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Wilson, Chair Gomez Mouakad), none opposed, and 1 absent (Councilor Ewen-Campen).

Councilor Pineda Neufeld served on the committee in lieu of Councilor Ewen-Campen in this meeting.

Others present: Hannah Carrillo – Mayor’s Office, Kimberly Wells – City Clerk, Brad Rawson – OSPCD, Steve Craig – Constituent Services (311), Suzanne Rinfret – Traffic & Parking, Cheryl Horan – Green Cab & Yellow Cab, Stephanie Widzowski – Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

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

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [22-2071](#)) Approval of the Traffic & Parking Committee Minutes of November 28, 2022.

RESULT: ACCEPTED
AYE: Chairperson Gomez Mouakad, Vice Chair Wilson and Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

Public Communications

2. Public Communication (ID # [22-2080](#)) Green Cab Company, Inc. requesting an increase the taxicab meter rate to \$1.95 for the first 1/8 of a mile, \$0.45 for each additional 1/8 of a mile and waiting time of \$28 per hour.

Clerk Wells explained that, because taxi fares are regulated by ordinance, the requested change must be recommended for approval by the Traffic & Parking Committee, at which point Clerk Wells will submit an update to the city ordinance. She added that the changes are meant to align with Cambridge fares.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Cheryl Horan, Vice President of Green Cab Company, who described the requested change in fares from 2022 and the rationale behind the changes. She noted that the last increase in prices was 12 years ago. Chair Gomez Mouakad talked about the voucher program and partnership with SOIA to give those in need discounted rides.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE APPROVED**
AYE: Chairperson Gomez Mouakad, Vice Chair Wilson and
 Pineda Neufeld
ABSENT: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

Studies

3. Order
 (ID # [23-0093](#))

By Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Ewen-Campen and Councilor Gomez Mouakad
 That the Director of Mobility share and discuss with this Council, the plan to use the \$100,000 in funding secured from the state for a traffic study of the intersection of Route 16 and Broadway.

Dir. Rawson explained that the Mayor and departmental staff have been working with a state delegation to acquire state funding for high risk intersections, and as a result of the work, DCR has become interested in partnering with the city. Somerville has been proposing a model in which state funding secured by the delegation goes to DCR, who then develops a proposal to assign that funding to Somerville. He said that \$100,000 is enough to start the conceptual work, but would not “rebuild the intersection of the future”. The city will also need to submit its scope of services to the state for approval. The startup process is expected to take weeks or months.

A group called the Rt 16 Traffic Calming Coalition, made of many interested parties, meets monthly to discuss issues. Contact SASS (Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets, SomervilleSafeStreets@gmail.com [<mailto:SomervilleSafeStreets@gmail.com>](mailto:SomervilleSafeStreets@gmail.com)) to get involved with the coalition or to attend meetings. Dir. Rawson said that the intent is to share the scope of services with the coalition for feedback, and the city will be preparing an overall work plan for the project.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld said that construction will be starting soon at the intersection of Rt 16 and Powder House Blvd, and asked how long the wait for the traffic study will be given that detour. She also asked about the potential for traffic calming at the Stop&Shop intersection. Dir. Rawson said that similar studies take 6-12 months, but since it is still early in the process, it will be hard to tell. He talked about changing the traffic signal timing of opposing left-hand turns at the Stop&Shop intersection and about opportunities for quick-build implementation.

Councilor Wilson asked if the city had discussed with the MBTA increasing bus service along Rt 16, to which Dir. Rawson said that the MBTA has not expressed interest or support for that yet.

RESULT: **RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK
 COMPLETED**

Loading Zones - Commercial Parking

4. Order
(ID # [22-1836](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Davis
That the Director of Constituent Services add a 311 Service Request category for reporting parking in bicycle lanes.

Dir. Craig explained that Constituent Services streamlined the reporting process for all types of illegal parking because prior to that, responses would be split across different platforms and became inefficient. He said that of the 3000 reports of illegal parking in 2022, about 5% of those were for bike lanes. Chair Gomez Mouakad commented that it is often delivery or work trucks parked illegally and that there needs to be proper allocation of loading zones.

Councilor Wilson asked about typical response time for these requests. Dir. Rinfret said that the person in violation is usually gone by the time an officer arrives, but Traffic & Parking will issue parking tickets en route if someone is in a bike lane. She noted that reports help the city determine problem spots and times, so that the department can plan better patrol routes to catch people parked illegally. Chair Gomez Mouakad stressed for the public to report to 311 in case of a violation.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

5. Order
(ID # [22-1830](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly, Councilor Clingan, Councilor Scott and Councilor Davis
That the Director of Mobility present to this Council on where heavy commercial vehicles are restricted per Traffic Regulations Section 7-27 Operation of Heavy Commercial Vehicles.

Dir. Rawson reviewed the list of streets restricted to heavy commercial vehicles. Chair Gomez Mouakad noted that many of the restricted streets are in Ward 5 and along the border with Cambridge, but there are few in the east half of Somerville. Chair Gomez Mouakad commented that there are many places in the city that are striving to be more pedestrian-friendly, and restrictions will be important there. She stressed the need to develop a set of guidelines for restriction.

Dir. Rawson said that many municipalities are struggling with this topic, and noted that MassDOT has a rigorous process for truck exclusions. Chair Gomez Mouakad asked if streets align with existing signage, to which Dir. Rinfret said another look will be needed to confirm.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

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6. Order
(ID # [22-1831](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Parking, Director of Mobility, and Police Chief present to this Council on enforcement of Traffic Regulations Section 7-27(a).
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
7. Order
(ID # [22-1832](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Scott and Councilor Kelly
That the Director of Parking, Director of Mobility, and Director of Engineering present to this Council on engagement and consideration of business needs regarding curbside changes.
- Taken together with item 22-1834. Dir. Rawson said that three areas of consideration are fact-finding, constituent and business engagement, and regulatory changes. He talked about the process for evaluating needs on updated and unchanged streets and added that Dir. Rinfret has an open-door policy for businesses who need to change a delivery schedule or have other curbside needs. Dir. Rinfret talked about the online application for loading zones. Dir. Rawson added that the OSPCD Economic Development Division regularly visits local businesses and relays concerns to the appropriate department. They also partner with SOIA for outreach. Chair Gomez Mouakad commented that she feels curbside issues require a dedicated position.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
8. Order
(ID # [22-1834](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Mobility and Director of Engineering present to this Council on documentation of vehicle types, timing and frequency, and turning movements when determining on-street loading zones.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
9. Order
(ID # [22-1835](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Mobility provide an update on the businesses surveyed regarding Highland Ave improvements and share the data collected.
- Dir. Rawson noted that the current construction on Highland Ave is for utility work only. He said that 2021 saw a lot of engagement and community meetings, and talked about the vision for two-way bike lanes and ample loading space, but said that surface restoration is likely years away. He said that it is unclear when the design process will start. Chair Gomez Mouakad called for engaging businesses earlier in the process.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
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10. Order
(ID # [23-0066](#))
- By Councilor Strezo and Councilor Pineda Neufeld
That the Director of Parking create a special parking designation for the area surrounding Holland Street, to accommodate seniors visiting the Council on Aging between the hours of 8 AM to 3 PM, Monday through Friday.

Councilor Pineda Neufeld described the difficulties some seniors find in parking when visiting the Council on Aging, both with reduced onstreet parking and accessibility issues with the university-owned parking lot. She said that a long-term solution is to meet with Tufts about the parking lot, but requested a short-term measure like the request in this item. Dir. Rinfret commented that adding more ADA spaces could help the issue, but creating special parking might make it harder for seniors because it would require special passes. Councilor Pineda Neufeld requested to have the Director of the Council on Aging present for the conversation. Dir. Rawson added that their office is proposing housekeeping changes on and around Holland Street, and if they find that the curb space can be used more effectively, then they will propose those changes.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Traffic Calming

11. Order
(ID # [22-1837](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Mobility evaluate cut through traffic on Vernon Street and Trull Street and provide recommendations for traffic calming.

Chair Gomez Mouakad clarified that these streets are neighborways that merit extra traffic calming measures, and asked to assuage constituent concerns that EMS vehicles would still be able to access the streets. Dir. Rawson confirmed the Chair's comments and pointed out Morrison Ave and Jaques St as comparison. Councilor Wilson asked if no-turn or do-not-enter signage for specific hours had been considered, and Dir. Rawson talked about the efficacy of different methods.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

12. Order
(ID # [22-1838](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Mobility explore traffic calming options on Porter Street.

Dir. Rawson said that the interdepartmental chair will be following up on Porter Street and that options are available, even if it is deemed too steep for speed humps.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

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13. Order
(ID # [22-1839](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad
That the Director of Mobility respond to the petition regarding traffic calming and additional bicycle parking at the Kennedy School.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
14. Order
(ID # [22-2115](#))
- By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Clingan
That the Director of Engineering install a protective guard over the expansion joint on the Medford Street bridge, as it poses a safety risk for bicyclists.
- Dir. Rawson said that staff had relayed similar concerns, and it was reported that the MBTA and a contractor had fixed the bridge joint. This needs confirmation.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
15. Order
(ID # [23-0083](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly and Councilor Strezo
That the Director of Mobility consider improvements to deficient conditions impacting the safety and pedestrian accessibility of Cedar Street.
- Chair Gomez Mouakad shared photos of areas of concern on Cedar Street and offered potential solutions, including more crosswalks and speed limit signs. Dir. Rawson said a priority is to implement better traffic calming on the Community Path between Morrison and Alpine, and that he wants to achieve on Cedar what has been done on Lowell and Sycamore streets. Councilor Wilson made other suggestions, including measures to comply with the new state law that requires giving a 4-ft berth to cyclists.
- Chair Gomez Mouakad requested a report for next time of what options could be achieved in the short term versus long term.
- RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**
16. Order
(ID # [22-2118](#))
- By Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Mobility consider installing speed humps on Highland Road, at the intersection with Morrison Avenue.
- Councilor Wilson asked about speed hump placement, and Dir. Rawson commented that it is important not to have a turning vehicle on a speed hump.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
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