



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Traffic and Parking Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 19, 2025

6:00 PM

This meeting was held via Zoom and was called to order by Chair Sait at 6:00 pm and adjourned at 7:23 pm on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors Burnley, Wilson, Sait), 0 opposed, and 0 absent.

Councilor Burnley joined the meeting at 6:03 pm.

Others present: Brad Rawson - Director of Mobility, Brian Postlewaite - Director of Engineering, Justin Schreiber - Senior Transportation Planner, Suzanne Rinfret - Director of Traffic and Parking, Delaney Fisher-Cassiol - Clerk of Committees.

Roll Call

Present:	Ward Five City Councilor Naima Sait and City Councilor At Large Jake Wilson
Absent:	City Councilor At Large Willie Burnley Jr.

1. Committee Minutes
(ID # [25-0596](#))

Approval of the Minutes of the Traffic and Parking Committee Meeting of March 24, 2025.

RESULT:	<u>ACCEPTED</u>
AYE:	Ward Five City Councilor Sait, City Councilor At Large Wilson and City Councilor At Large Burnley Jr.

2. Order
(ID # [25-0927](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Strezo
That the Director of Parking consider adding additional handicapped parking spots on Washington Street by the Cobble Hill senior center.

Suzanne Rinfret, the Director of Traffic and Parking, explained that requests for handicapped parking spaces should go through the ADA Director and are then reviewed by the Traffic Commission. Councilor Wilson noted that while this isn't a central business district, it is a busy area. Applications for new spots can be obtained from Director Rinfret.

RESULT:	<u>RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED</u>
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3. Order
(ID # [25-0839](#))

By Councilor Sait
That the Director of Mobility update the traffic signal equipment at the intersection of Rogers Avenue and Boston Avenue.

Chair Sait raised concerns about frequent accidents at the location, noting

that the street and sidewalk are at the same level and that two vehicles have crashed into a post there within the past year. She asked about current traffic patterns and what safety improvements could be made.

Brad Rawson, Director of Mobility, explained that all traffic signals in the city rely on controllers that manage timing and phasing and many of Somerville's controllers are 30-40 years old and not equipped to handle modern needs like transit priority, emergency vehicle preemption, or dedicated left-turn signals. The controller at this location in Ball Square is undersized and has limited circuit capacity, making upgrades difficult.

Brad Postlewaite, Director of Engineering, added that the equipment at this intersection is outdated and not capable of managing the complex demands of current traffic. Because the city's signal infrastructure spans many generations of technology, the project is large and complex. Upgrades must meet ADA compliance standards and allow for emergency signal integration. They plan to reuse existing equipment when possible, but this approach is more complicated than a full replacement. Signal reconstruction is estimated to cost between \$50,000 and \$100,000 per location.

Councilor Wilson emphasized that this intersection is especially busy due to its proximity to the Ball Square MBTA station and noted its unusual layout and high pedestrian traffic.

Councilor Burnley asked for clarification on ADA compliance, specifically whether it includes audible signals and other accessible features. Director Postlewaite responded that the upgrades would make the signals accessible for individuals with various disabilities, including visual impairments, by being audible and that pedestrian buttons would be reachable for people using wheelchairs as well.

Councilor Burnley also inquired about the project timeline, but Director Postlewaite did not have a definitive answer. Councilor Burnley asked how intersections are prioritized for upgrades and whether MBTA access is a factor. Councilor Sait asked how many outdated traffic signals remain citywide and what the process is for prioritizing their replacement. Director

Postlewaite did not have specific numbers but offered to follow up with more information.

Director Rawson encouraged the committee to consider the broader context and offered to research and provide more information on the status of the current signals.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

4. Order
(ID # [25-0743](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Director of Mobility install a rapid flashing beacon with push button STOP sign in front of the East Somerville Community School, on the Cross Street side, to assist in street crossings.

Director Rawson recommended that the item remain in committee due to its complexity. He noted that the city has already implemented raised crosswalks and nearby speed humps as traffic-calming measures in the area. While these treatments can be compatible with rapid flashing beacons, any installation would first require a detailed parking and engineering review to ensure it meets the criteria for this type of traffic control device.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

5. Order
(ID # [25-0647](#))

By Councilor Burnley Jr.

That the Director of Mobility speak with this Council regarding the Safe Streets Ordinance 2025 annual report.

Chair Sait highlighted the importance of community safety and transparency in the implementation of the Safe Streets Ordinance.

Councilor Burnley shared that he collaborated with Director Rawson and Director Postlewaite over the past year to craft the ordinance. He brought it forward to promote transparency around the city's progress on safer streets-particularly regarding the expansion of protected bike lanes and sidewalk accessibility. Councilor Burnley emphasized the importance of public feedback and community awareness around the timeline and location of these improvements.

Director Rawson noted that the administration released the 2025 Safe Streets Ordinance Annual Report at the beginning of March. Senior Transportation Planner Justin Schreiber then presented highlights from the report, which

included an interactive map of upcoming projects and planned installations.

Chair Sait relayed questions she received from constituents about the difference between “quick-build” and “permanent” infrastructure. Senior Transportation Planner Schreiber explained that quick-build projects include elements like flexible posts, while permanent infrastructure involves full construction such as curbs. Although the full network does not need to be built with permanent materials, all full-construction projects must be permanent. Most improvements will be quick-build due to their speed and cost-efficiency.

Chair Sait asked whether quick-build installations would eventually be upgraded to permanent infrastructure. Director Rawson responded that while the ordinance does not require quick-build projects to be made permanent, the city’s priority is to build out the full network first before revisiting areas for permanent upgrades.

Councilor Wilson inquired about how the Safe Streets Ordinance aligns with the Bicycle Network Plan. Director Rawson responded that the city’s approach emphasizes community engagement, design feedback loops and phased implementation to ensure an inclusive and informed process.

Councilor Burnley expressed appreciation for the transparency and ambition of the plan. He noted that prior to 2024, the city had only three miles of protected bike lanes, and the goal is to expand to 29 miles over the next ten years. He asked whether there are any uncertainties in the 2026 prioritization plan. Director Rawson acknowledged federal funding could be unpredictable, but the city has contingency plans in place in case grant funding changes. Along with this, he also noted that construction timelines can shift, but is hopeful that everything will go to plan.

Councilor Wilson brought up the “Neighborways” program and stressed the need for clear public communication and awareness, particularly around cyclists riding against traffic on one-way streets. He emphasized the importance of educating drivers and police officers in the city.

Senior Transportation Planner Schreiber explained that Neighborways are a lower-cost way to introduce bike infrastructure on streets where traditional bike lanes may not be feasible. While not explicitly included in the ordinance, Neighborways are part of the city's broader priority network. He said the current large signs and pavement markings have helped raise awareness and improve safety in those areas. Councilor Wilson also asked about the cost of the Neighborways infrastructure on Glen Street and Director Rawson said he would follow up with specific cost information.

Councilor Wilson raised pedestrian safety concerns on Walnut Street due to tree roots disrupting the sidewalk. Director Postlewaite responded that sidewalk reconstruction is prioritized based on accessibility and existing conditions. In some areas, large trees make traditional sidewalk improvements difficult. He mentioned a pilot design on Liberty Avenue using bump-outs with existing curbing to preserve trees while improving accessibility. Walnut Street is not on the immediate priority list but is on the city's radar.

Councilor Burnley also highlighted the installation of over 100 traffic-calming features across the city, which are shown on the aforementioned interactive map. He believes this is a great start and will be a good conversation to have annually. He emphasizes that this is about safety for the community as well as increased transparency.

To close the discussion, Chair Sait requested that future public meetings start by highlighting key accomplishments and the overall vision to help frame the conversation and emphasize progress.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED