

Madalyn Letellier

From: Alessandra Seiter [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, March 22, 2024 4:25 PM
To: Mayor; Jake Wilson; Willie Burnley, Jr.; [REDACTED]
Matthew McLaughlin; JT Scott; Ben Ewen-Campen; [REDACTED]
Naima Sait; Lance Davis; Judy Pineda Neufeld
Cc: City Clerk Contact; Public Comments; Transportation
Subject: PTAC recommending budget priority for FY25
Attachments: PTAC_FY25Budget_March2024.pdf

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Dear Mayor Ballantyne, Finance Committee Chair Jake Wilson, and other esteemed members of the Somerville City Council,

The Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC) is writing regarding the FY25 municipal budget. We would like to thank Mayor Ballantyne for again requesting City Council input on budget priorities, and City Council for creating public comment opportunities before the budget is proposed in June.

PTAC would like to voice one budget priority for FY25: **ensuring continued funding for the Transit Benefits Program to provide Somerville community members with free access to public transit.**

Please find our full letter attached. Many thanks for your consideration and commitment to safe, livable, and equitable streets.

Warmly,
Alessandra Seiter
Chair of PTAC
Ward 5 Resident



March 22, 2023

Somerville City Council
93 Highland Ave
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Mayor Ballantyne, Finance Committee Chair Jake Wilson, and other esteemed members of the Somerville City Council,

The Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC) is writing regarding the FY25 municipal budget. We would like to thank Mayor Ballantyne for again requesting City Council input on budget priorities, and City Council for creating public comment opportunities before the budget is proposed in June.

PTAC would like to voice one budget priority for FY25: **ensuring continued funding for the Transit Benefits Program¹ to provide Somerville community members with free access to public transit.**

For the past few years, the City has used ARPA funding to make public transit free for Somerville Public School (SPS) students, their low-income parents and guardians, other low-income residents, and City staff. The program has been immensely successful, providing a necessary complement to the MBTA's reduced fare programs for youth, seniors, and persons with disabilities. Through the Transit Benefits Program, Somerville community members took over 115,000 free trips between January and October 2023. The City distributed 800 passes to low-income community members, and 532 SPS staff participated in a pilot that resulted in expansion to all City employees. 84% of participants said the transit pass allowed them to use a car less².

The Transit Benefits Program aligns with so many of our community's goals. It centers equity by prioritizing the residents most likely to face transportation challenges. It reduces vehicle mode share by lowering barriers to using public transit. It facilitates economic mobility by making it easier for people to get to jobs within and outside of the City. And it builds trust between community members and municipal institutions, at a time when levels of distrust in government are high.

¹ OSPCD Mobility. "Transit Benefits Program." City of Somerville. Accessed March 22, 2024. <https://www.somervillema.gov/content/transit-benefits-program>.

² OSPCD Mobility. "[Mobility & Safety in Somerville: 2023 Key Performance Indicators](#)." Somerville, MA: City of Somerville, 2023.

Somerville continues to invest in high-impact projects and programs that make taking transit an equitable, accessible, and enjoyable experience. We've expanded our bus lanes, created floating bus stops, implemented Transit Signal Priority (TSP), and have no intention of stopping. PTAC applauds these efforts and encourages our elected officials to expand them further with continued funding for the Transit Benefits Program.

Thank you for your consideration and commitment to safe, livable, and equitable streets.

Sincerely,

The Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Ted Alexander	Christopher Ferry
Ginny Alverson	Vitor Pamplona, <i>Vice Chair</i>
Caroline Bodager	Zach Rosenberg
Meredith Brown	Alessandra Seiter, <i>Chair</i>
Laura Evans	Carole Voulgaris, <i>Secretary</i>

CC: City Clerk, City of Somerville
OSPCD Mobility, City of Somerville