



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS CLERK OF COMMITTEES

May 13, 2020

REPORT OF THE TRAFFIC AND PARKING COMMITTEE

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Mark Niedergang	Chair	Present	
Jesse Clingan	Vice Chair	Present	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Niedergang at 6:05pm and adjourned at 7:24pm.

Others present: Annie Connor - Mayor's Office; Brad Rawson - OSPCD; Suzanne Rinfret - Traffic & Parking

The Chair noted that it was important to be updated on Mobility and Parking, particularly heading into budget season, to get insight about potential changes and issues that the COVID-19 pandemic may have created.

Approval of the February 19, 2020 Minutes

RESULT:	ACCEPTED
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Mobility

210051: That the Director of Mobility update this Council on that Division's work over the past few months and plans for the rest of the spring and summer.

Mr. Rawson agreed that the pandemic has changed how the community moves around, but the Mobility Division continues to operate with the same sense of urgency to aid residents in getting around and focusing on zero-carbon mobility goals. The department has been working steadily in four areas: Policy, Finance, Design, and Construction.

Policy initiatives have continued in support of the Vision Zero Task Force, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committees, which have all been able to meet and continue their important work remotely. The Traffic Commission has also continued to meet and voted to reduce speed limits on many streets around the City. Mobility's work on private developments has also continued with the Planning and Zoning teams to advance the goals of affordable housing, green space, and low-carbon development.

Grant writing continues and several large grants have been awarded, including funds to upgrade traffic signal equipment in Davis Square. Another grant from MassDOT secured \$200,000 in support

of the Blue Bikes program, and to deploy additional stations. The Council will also vote tomorrow on whether to accept a \$325,000 grant from the MBTA in support of the City's expenditures and work on the GLX project. An application is being prepared to the state Gaming Commission to seek a grant to extend the Silver Line to Somerville.

The City's annual paving projects - such as on Holland Street and College Avenue -- have been delayed, but the community and technical design processes have continued. Design modifications on Medford Street are also underway and the work should begin soon. A resurfacing program for McGrath Highway, in conjunction with MassDOT, is also under design, with the expectations that it will take place next year. The Powderhouse Rotary project is continuing, as is the Green Line Extension project, including design of stations, streetscapes, and community path.

The Construction installation program has installed flashing beacons and signs, the Beacon Street construction project is nearly complete, and pavement markings for traffic calming and public safety have been implemented throughout the city.

Councilor Clingan asked which streets were prioritized for pavement markings, particularly crosswalks, and Mr. Rawson noted that the Vision Zero action plan calls for two prioritization schemes - crash data (generally higher arterial roadways), and communities of concern (environmental justice populations based on demographics).

Chair Niedergang asked about the Parking Study Task Force. Mr. Rawson noted that data collection has been paused due to financial considerations and concerns about the accuracy of parking data in the current conditions. Mobility is researching options for continuing the work in other ways. Ms. Rinfret echoed that it is important to wait to collect the data to get a true depiction of what is happening on the street in terms of parking.

Mr. Rawson shared that for the next several months, the priorities include using "quick build" solutions such as flexible delineators and movable planters, in order to be fiscally responsible. MBTA Green Line Extension construction around the forthcoming new GLX station areas will focus on making streets safer in those locations, through dedicated bus lanes and bicycle infrastructure. Powderhouse rotary design is continuing, and cost estimates and recommendations for pavement markings, signal changes, and flex post installation are forthcoming. Shore Drive is also being designed, with community feedback, and alternatives are nearly ready for stakeholder consideration. Grand Union Boulevard bicycle facilities and Mystic Avenue crosswalks and signals are also high priority locations. Some smaller projects include the Healey School neighborhood, in particular the intersection of Edgar Avenue and Jacques Street; flex posts and paint at Albion Street and Hudson Street; on Central Street near Hoyt-Sullivan Playground; and flex posts or planters at Summer Street and Quincy Street.

Councilor Ballantyne asked for more details about Powderhouse Boulevard and the protected bicycle lane plans that have been discussed now for years. Mr. Rawson noted that while work with standing City committees has continued successfully, larger community involvement presents challenges in terms of how to involve and engage the full range of people in the community. The usual methods of flyering and meetings in the community can't be used. He stated that stakeholder and resident engagement for questions about bicycle facilities, traffic calming, and other issues are still needed for Powderhouse Blvd, but said that the Mobility Dept has not yet figured out how to do this effectively. Councilor Ballantyne wondered specifically about the traffic light and signal near the school, the data which were to be collected before the stay-at-home order was issued. Mr. Rawson noted that no report has been submitted by the consultant, but preliminary departmental data showed a reduction in speeds, volumes, and crashes. Councilor Ballantyne emphasized that the intersection of Powderhouse Boulevard and Curtis Street, in particular the signaling, should be prioritized for this

year. Mr. Rawson said that he would speak with the consultant about their completing the report so Mobility could look at their data and recommendations for that intersection.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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Traffic Calming

206691: That the Director of SPCD prioritize for this Board the traffic calming projects in the City, and the process to determine those priorities.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207499: That the Administration respond to the requests outlined in the attached resident petition, organized by the Pedestrian and Transit Advocacy Group, to accelerate traffic calming investments and improve coordination and oversight.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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207996: 8 residents submitting comments re: #207499, a proposal to accelerate traffic calming investments.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Big Picture Planning

209806: That the Director of SPCD inform this Council about who is planning the traffic management for the GLX stations at Lowell Street and at Ball Square, and the timeline for any infrastructure and streetscape work that may be necessary.

Mr. Rawson detailed that in Gilman Square, design development for a capital construction project is underway and the conceptual design (known as 25% design) is almost finalized. This milestone is essential to compete for federal and state construction funding. This will include rebuilding the intersection and the utilities underneath. At Lowell Street, the geometry of the bridge is a limiting factor, so traffic calming and accessibility to the station are the focus. There may be opportunity for pavement markings to discourage drivers from stopping on the bridge to drop people off to get on the GLX at the station under the bridge. Union Square streetscape and engineering work is complex, and a longer-term process that engineers are working toward. Chair Niedergang asked about public involvement for the design of streets around the new stations, saying that they are supposed to open in about a year-and-a-half, not far off. Mr. Rawson replied that the GLX team is engaging and meeting with the Community Working Group, which has members designated to represent specific station areas and the Somerville community as well as Cambridge and Medford reps. Those regular monthly meetings have continued. Mr. Rawson will research whether there is opportunity for larger outreach in the coming months.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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208334: That the Vision Zero Task Force provide the City Council with an update on its activities.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

209657: That this Council's Committee on Traffic and Parking provide feedback on SomerVision 2040's chapter on Mobility.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

208041: That the Director of SPCD and the Bicycle Committee update this Council's Traffic and Parking Committee on establishing a comprehensive city-wide bicycle plan.

The Bicycle Committee has continued to meet and review the scope of services for the citywide bicycle network plan. The budget for consulting services will not be recommended given the current fiscal challenges, and other solutions are being considered utilizing staff, advisory committees and volunteers. Chair Niedergang added that the professional talent and skill level of the Bicycle Committee is unrivaled and suggested that they could play a critical role.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

209372: That the Director of SPCD prepare a plan for congestion pricing tolls to address traffic and air pollution.

Chair Niedergang noted that this may be moot at this time, due to lack of traffic and congestion due to the Coronavirus restrictions. Mr. Rawson commented that a focus remains on trying to accelerate the transition away from a petroleum based transportation system. There are concerns about the ability to implement pricing solutions locally, but the Administration will continue to advocate at the state level for congestion pricing. The Mobility Division is also working with a team at Tufts University to collect air pollution data during the stay-at-home order. The previous regular normal amount of air pollution from vehicles in many parts of the City was unsustainable, unhealthy, and unjust. Chair Niedergang also noted a concern about vehicles from outside the city leading to increased traffic congestion and the volume of traffic negatively impacting pedestrian safety and neighborhoods.

RESULT:**WORK COMPLETED**

Areas of Concern

208844: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council on actions, communications and collaboration with State agencies to improve pedestrian safety in the Mystic Avenue area by I-93, following the death of two pedestrians hit by motor vehicles there.

RESULT:**KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

204965: That the Director of Traffic and Parking install a crosswalk at Woods Avenue and Route 16.

Woods Avenue and Route 16 involves the state, and Councilor Ballantyne highlighted challenges posed by bureaucracy, but noted that advocacy by the state delegation has been consistent. Mr. Rawson added that a consulting budget has been secured for a corridor plan for sections of Route 16. Chair Niedergang inquired about a potential timeline and Mr. Rawson noted that it was speculation, but 2021 would likely be the soonest a crosswalk would be installed.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209142: That the Director of SPCD report to the Ward 6 Councilor on plans to improve cyclist wayfinding through Davis Square.

Mr. Rawson elaborated that a construction grant award that can be used in the 2021 construction season will provide opportunities to improve signals and signage in Davis Square, particularly around the Community Path. The ADA upgrades also considered this, and may allow for some workarounds until the grant funds are received.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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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.

RESULT:	KEPT IN COMMITTEE
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Housekeeping

209787: Responding to #209644 re: GLX mitigation requests.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209774: Director of SomerStat responding to #204874 re: publishing de-identified parking permit data.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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209644: That the Administration update this Council by February 25, 2020 of any negotiated relief related to the recently-announced GLX delayed timeline and resultant impact to the city's residents and businesses.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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207660: That the Commissioner of Public Works clean or replace the right turn signal at the corner of Broadway, turning onto Temple Street, as it is not visible during the day.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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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.

RESULT:	WORK COMPLETED
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205936: That the Administration work with this Board on a fund for traffic calming and

pedestrian/transit infrastructure pilot projects through such sources as demand pricing for meters in business districts and the creation of incentives for residents to forgo residential permits so as to create more business permits.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

205700: That the Administration report on the feasibility of giving parking permits to cars that are part of car-share programs and housed in Somerville for an extended period of time.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED

204874: That the Director of Traffic and Parking publish de-identified parking permit data in the city's open data portal so as to permit community analysis and discussion of issues related to the supply and demand of parking.

RESULT:

WORK COMPLETED