



City of Somerville, Massachusetts

City Council Traffic and Parking Committee

Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 28, 2022

6:00 PM

President McLaughlin appointed himself to the committee for this meeting only, replacing Councilor Ewen-Campen.

Others present: Brian Postlewaite – Director of Engineering, Suzanne Rinfret – Director of Parking, Brad Rawson – Director of Mobility, Aneesh Sahni – Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, Hannah Carrillo – Legislative Liaison, Peter Forcellese - Legislative Clerk.

The meeting took place virtually via GoToWebinar and was called to order at 6:00 PM by Chair Gomez Mouakad and adjourned at 8:03 PM on a roll call vote of 3 in favor (Councilors McLaughlin, Wilson and Gomez Mouakad), none against and none absent.

Roll Call

Present: Vice Chair Jake Wilson, Chairperson Beatriz Gomez Mouakad and Matthew McLaughlin
Absent: Ben Ewen-Campen

1. Committee Minutes (ID # 22-1644) Approval of the Traffic and Parking Committee Minutes of September 26, 2022.

RESULT: **APPROVED**
AYE: Vice Chair Wilson, Chairperson Gomez Mouakad and McLaughlin
ABSENT: Ward Three City Councilor Ewen-Campen

Studies

2. Order (ID # [22-0300](#))
By Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Davis, Councilor Wilson, Councilor Kelly, Councilor Scott and Councilor Ewen-Campen
That the Director of Mobility conduct an equity study of bus routes to determine targets for fare-free buses.

Director Rawson explained that the city is investing \$3-4 million in unrestricted Charlie Cards as a means of making all lines free to assist a greater number of residents. There are guidelines that must be met in order to participate in this pilot program. Councilor Wilson asked if there was any MAPC work being done with municipalities and Director Rawson said that Boston is working with Brookline. He also mentioned that there are some positive bills coming out of Beacon Hill to identify revenue streams. Councilor Wilson commented that the state has made bad choices regarding public transportation for 40 years and he hopes the passage of the fair share

amendment will help to alleviate some of the resulting problems. Chair Gomez Mouakad inquired about the city's outreach efforts and Director Rawson said that the student pass program has 2,000 participants in grades 7-12 and outreach is being coordinated with SOIA, the public schools, SHA, Clarendon Towers, Council on Aging, and other community organizations. Chair Gomez Mouakad asked Director Rawson to prepare a memo on this item for the next committee meeting.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

3. Order
(ID # [22-1758](#))

By Councilor Burnley Jr. and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Economic Development, Director of Mobility, and Director of Parking explore North-South microtransit routes and report to this Council regarding feasibility and cost.

Councilor Wilson commented on discussions about a partnership with Cambridge about North-South routes. Director Rawson noted that the 2nd draft of the MBTA's plan is an improvement on its prior version. The MBTA has acknowledged that there would be difficulty traversing some of the routes due to the length of their busses, however, they are willing to work with the city to try to reach acceptable alternative methods. Director Rawson spoke about the numerous other transit entities within the city and he expects that all of them would work with the city and the MBTA to link together to move people around, noting that the city had commissioned some shuttles during the rebuilding of the Ball Square bridge. Chair Gomez Mouakad would like the city to consider routes from elementary schools to the high school. Councilor Wilson asked if Cambridge has been at the table with the MBTA and Director Rawson replied that has not yet occurred.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

Projects

4. Order
(ID # [22-1599](#))

By Councilor Wilson and Councilor Kelly
That the Director of Mobility provide documentation of the current process for determining the locations of traffic calming measures, and communicate this information to the public via the website.

Director Rawson said that crash data is used to look for hot spots and that the annual update to that data is being performed now. Census data is also used to obtain demographic information. The Engineering and Mobility Departments work together to prioritize sidewalk and street work. Chair Gomez Mouakad would like the highlights of Vision Zero's status prepared for the January committee meeting. Councilor Wilson asked that a process explainer be uploaded to Mobility's webpage to provide information to the public.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

5. Order
(ID # [22-1733](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin

That the Director of Mobility update this Council on plans to place a ramp on Walnut Street, by Leather's Park, as part of the Neighborways program.

Director Postlewaite told the members the Engineering Division has included a new ramp at this location in the current annual streetscapes contract and anticipates construction in 2023. Councilor McLaughlin commented that said length of time (several years) it's taken to get this done isn't right, since all he actually asked for was a curb cut. He asked why such a simple request was rolled into a redesign of the area. Director Postlewaite said it took time to find the right balance to get it done without causing a problem in another area, however he agrees that the city needs to do a better job fixing interim problems quickly. Councilor McLaughlin spoke about a recent plan to install raised sidewalks and Director Postlewaite said the 1st design was done 2018 and that the work is slated to begin in the spring.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

6. Order
(ID # [22-1928](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Strezo

That the Director of Mobility update the Ward 1 City Councilor on the proposed Kensington Connector walkway connecting Assembly Row to East Somerville.

Director Rawson said city has a strategy to improve the connector and to get MA-DOT moving on the project. The public art was finished in 2021 and MA-DOT completed some raised crosswalk work in 2022. In 2023, additional design work will be done in conjunction with the state and will include lighting. Bids are expected to go out in 2024 for construction. Councilor McLaughlin commented that even with the state's improvements, the area is still dark, making it unsafe for pedestrians. He noted that the city has to sign a lease with the state to maintain the bike path and asked if the city could lease the connector area to make it easier to get the work done. Director Rawson replied that might be able to happen. Councilor McLaughlin asked when the project might finally be completed and Director Rawson said that he would try to get a timeline of what to expect.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

Traffic Calming/Road Safety

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7. Order
(ID # [22-1684](#))
- By Councilor Strezo, Councilor Clingan and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Mobility establish a neighborhood traffic plan for the area surrounding the Healey School, including Edgar Avenue, to mitigate speeding.
- Director Rawson said staff is working with an interdepartmental group to develop a program for 2023. Jaques Street has had speed humps installed and Heath Street will be done in a couple years. Refuge islands are being installed, as well. Councilor Wilson noted the traffic around the Healey School makes the area dangerous and he wants the city to get in front of this problem before a child is injured.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
8. Order
(ID # [22-1689](#))
- By Councilor Clingan
That the Director of Engineering develop a plan to redesign the intersection of Broadway and Main Street.
- Director Postlewaite said that the Engineering and Mobility Departments have been coordinating internally and with the MBTA to improve the traffic signal operations at this location. This intersection is currently in the 5-year plan. This will be reevaluated in the winter to determine where it might be in upcoming years. In the interim, the city has been working with the MBTA to improve operation of the signal. Magoun Square isn't part of the plan because of the condition of the pavement, i.e., it was reconstructed about 15 years ago. Councilor Wilson remains concerned about the Central Street and Broadway crosswalk and he would like that area considered during the redesign. Director Postlewaite said that the traffic engineer is analyzing all intersections in the city.
- RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**
9. Order
(ID # [22-1723](#))
- By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Mobility update this Council on plans to place a stop light near the new East Somerville Green Line station.
- Director Postlewaite said the Engineering and Mobility Divisions have assessed the need to install a traffic signal at this location, which will require coordination with the longer-term design plans for this area, including a new intersection with New Washington, floating bus stops and improved crosswalks. In the interim, GLX-C will be refreshing crosswalks and installing flashing crosswalk signs. Councilor McLaughlin commented on the stop light and said that it's not a guarantee, but just a possibility, and he wanted to know what changed. Director Rawson said technical engineering analysis has been done and sightlines need to be changed. He noted that underground utilities are also in play. He will continue to look at this and
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will move forward if a solution is found. Councilor McLaughlin asked that this not wait for 90 Washington Street to be developed, since that may not happen for years.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

10. Order
(ID # [22-1724](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Parking place a STOP sign on Tufts Street's intersection with Washington Street and ensure its visibility to vehicle operators.

Director Rinfrett reported that the Parking Department coordinated with Engineering and Mobility to replace the stop signs at Tufts and Washington Streets and that the work has been completed.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

11. Order
(ID # [22-1725](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Wilson
That the Commissioner of Public Works address the malfunctioning streetlight on the corner of Knowlton and Morton Streets.

Director Rawson reported that the DPW performed a site visit and determined that it was functioning properly at that time.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

12. Order
(ID # [22-1728](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Engineering repaint the crosswalk at Tufts and Washington Streets.

Director Postlewaite reported that the City is coordinating with GLX-C and the MBTA to execute this fall.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

13. Order
(ID # [22-1729](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Engineering ensure that the bus lane on Washington Street, before the train bridge, is visible.

Director Postlewaite reported that the City is coordinating with GLX-C and the MBTA to execute this fall. In addition, this will be part of a larger design implementation discussed in item 22-1723.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

- 14. Order (ID # [22-1730](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin
That the Director of Mobility and the Chief of Police work with city and state officials to implement short-term pedestrian safety measures at the listed I-93 intersections.

Councilor McLaughlin said that the state is working on this area and he still gets calls about the dangers there. Director Rawson said that staff is working with MA-DOT for a more permanent solution. These locations are on Mobility’s 2023 work plan and watch list. Director Rawson will prepare an update for the next committee meeting.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE

- 15. Order (ID # [22-1732](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin
That the Director of Mobility prioritize a stop light on Grand Union Blvd. and Artisan Way.

Councilor McLaughlin said that this is a 4-lane roadway and drivers ignore the stop signs, endangering pedestrians. Director Postlewaite commented that this intersection hadn’t risen to the top of Engineering’s list, but it will be put on the list now. Director Rawson said that Mobility has been trying to design protected bike lanes for the area and that, next year, parking will be ‘floated’ there as a short-term safety measure. Councilor Wilson asked that street markings in the area of Lucky Strike be re-painted if possible.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

- 16. Order (ID # [22-1924](#))

By Councilor Clingan and Councilor Wilson
That the Director of Mobility install a speed hump on Evergreen Avenue between Thurston and Sycamore Streets.

Director Rawson said the department intends to follow through on this but wants to find the best solution. He said Councilor Clingan asked that time restrictions and one way street traffic be considered to alleviate the problem.

RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED

17. Order
(ID # [22-1926](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin, Councilor Burnley Jr., Councilor Clingan, Councilor Davis, Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly, Councilor Pineda Neufeld, Councilor Scott, Councilor Strezo and Councilor Wilson

That the Director of Mobility implement traffic calming measures, including speed bumps and raised intersections, on streets perpendicular to Washington Street, including Myrtle, Florence, Pinckney and Dell Streets.

Councilor McLaughlin pointed out these streets have been used as cut through streets for years. Director Postlewaite said speed humps are part of the Pearl Street reconstruction contract and that the “bucket list” of speed humps has already been exhausted. He will work with Mobility to try to find a solution, but it’s a budget item. Director Rawson said that other funding sources will be looked for along with possible changes to the contract, to get these added.

RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE