

John Long

From: Ted Feldman <tfeldman@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2019 1:42 PM
To: City Council
Cc: SBAC; Gregory Ely; Emily Warren; George Schneeloch; City Clerk Contact
Subject: Budget Hearing: In support of Bike Network Plan and Vision Zero Line Funding

Dear Somerville City Councillors and Members of the City Staff,

Thank you for all of your hard work and efforts and I appreciate the inclusion of the Bike Network Plan Development and Vision Zero Line Items in the Budget. I write to support funding of the development of the Bike Network Plan and the funding of Vision Zero as I'm unsure that I will be able to attend this evening's meeting due to a schedule conflict. On the plus side, my in-person comments are more extemporaneous and therefore, less eloquent, so you instead, you get the more eloquent version of my thoughts on the matter. Full disclosure, I am a member of the Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee and the Committee's Engineering Team Lead. Full, full disclosure, I am writing as a Somerville Resident and from my perspective a cyclist and cycling advocate. The contents herein do not represent the views of the Committee, Harvard Medical School, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs or the United States Government.

Yesterday, I was shouted out while turning right onto Mossland because I pointed with my right hand rather than my left. This morning on my ride down Holland/Broadway to the Alewife Brook Greenway Corridor I passed a dad bicycling in tandem with his son on the sidewalk because "he didn't trust the motorists to give him and his son space on the road." When I told him about the plans for the Holland Bus/Bike Lane he was excited, but replied, "that's great, but the City really needs to fix the rotary [approaching Powder House Boulevard from Alewife Brook Parkway]. It seems there's always another trouble spot on the roads to fix. On my return ride I had a chance to speak with an elderly woman who had cycled from home to pick up some groceries at Stop N'Shop. She told me that she "doesn't dare cycle from her home of Broadway to Davis because there are no bike lanes."

These stories illustrate the operational needs for the Bike Plan and Vision Zero funding. As there is always another road to fix, we need data-driven, operational guides to build the next generation of complete streets in Somerville. Road designs that take into account frequent routes, i.e. "desire lines" and user stress (best defined by Peter Furth). We need such a plan to avoid missed opportunities (e.g. a shared use path on the wide sidewalk areas of Powder House) and to accommodate safe usage by all vulnerable road users from ages 8 to 80. This is particularly true as the population of Somerville is forecast to rise and nimble, multimodal transit infrastructure will be critical to meet increased demand and ensure urban mobility and equity. increasingly critical.

But, I'll give you an even better reason. In approving these budget items, you get to do great things, immense things, you get to have the final word in expressing what we as a community value. Literally, as tax policy expert, Edward Kleinbard, writes, appropriation of municipal funds is literally how a municipality acts on its value proposition. In one, relatively modest line item, supporting development of a Bike Network plan and Vision Zero initiative says that we in Somerville value (spoiler alert: you probably already know all those):

- alignment of and compliance with Somerville's environmental and Vision Zero Goals
- public safety (globally, road traffic injuries are the leading cause of death in 10 – 19-year-olds, child cyclists account for up to 8% of those fatalities and you get fewer fatalities when you reduce road speeds by say narrowing the usable area of the street with bike lanes, specific references available upon request)
- public health (references available upon request, in short: make it easier for people to be active and you get healthier people and fewer community health expenditures)
- urban mobility (intuitive, but happy to point you to references and case studies)
- gender equity and diversity (OSPCD already studies this for bike infrastructure installed, in short, build it and the diverse road users come)

- economic equity (more references available)
- environmental protection (intuitive, but happy to share references)
- economic growth
- beautification of the City (yes, we can go beyond flex posts and actually use bike lanes to reduce pedestrian desserts and create open spaces in Somerville)
- increased property values
- increased marketability and enticement of residential and commercial development.

I could go on, but I think you already know all of this and get my points. The Bike Network Plan line item is a really good deal. It's the [insert your favorite wholesaler] of positive, political forethought. We will thank you and your children's children's children will thank you.

However, I challenge you to go beyond supporting the line items. The plan and funding of the initiative is only as good their implementation. I implore you to support the plan development and Vision Zero and subsequent policies to ensure their implementation. Moreover, as our elected officials, I hope that you will work with City Staff, with us, the Pedestrian Committee, the Vision Zero Committee, with local advocates to educate our neighbors, your constituents on all of these benefits of the bike plan, Vision Zero and their implementation and what they will mean for us now and in the future.

May G-d, Yahweh, Allah, Buddah, Science, The Universe, The Star Child, The Wiccan Mother Goddess^[1], [insert your belief structure here] and/or in whatever or whichever combination you believe grant you...

the courage and fortitude to do what is right,

the ability to educate those receptive minds who turn to you with curiosity, concerns or perspectives grounded in reason and logic,

the patience to listen to and to understand the ground truth of those close minds who cannot be reasoned out of a perspective on which they have arrived, with neither reason nor logic, but through fear, any of the many presentations of insecurity, oft misplaced anger transference and projection,

and, the wisdom to know the difference.

Thank you for all you do, your thoughtful consideration and continued diligence that makes Somerville a great city in which to live!

Sincerely,

Theodore (Ted) Feldman

Somerville Resident, 48 Gorham Street

^[1] Reference to David Foster Wallace's, *This is Water*.

--

Ted Feldman, Ph.D.

VA BD-STEP Fellow
VA Boston Healthcare System
United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration

Lecturer, Biomedical Informatics
Department of Biomedical Informatics
Harvard Medical School

Google Voice (Forwards to E-mail, Office & Mobile): (617) 340-9428

Office: (617) 713-8388

Mobile: (631) 384-9891

Fax: (617) 713-8333



John Long

From: Lena Webb <lkwebb@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2019 2:52 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk Contact
Subject: City Bike Plan and Vision Zero funding is a must

Dear City Council,

I am unable to attend tonight's budget meeting but would like to share my enthusiastic support regarding the appropriation of funds towards a Bike Network Plan and the City's already officially-adopted Vision Zero goal.

To start my commentary as so many who are opposed to improvements in bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure do: I am a homeowner, I pay taxes, and I have been a resident of Somerville for 10 years. But I don't own a car, and I probably couldn't even if I wanted to at this point. I chose to buy my first home here in Somerville because there is so much to love about the City, but as property taxes rapidly increase and my mortgage goes up I am beginning to worry I won't be able to live here long-term-- and if my primary modes of transportation (bike, bus, feet) continue to be neglected, with progress postponed, and an ear turned only to those who feel entitled to parking spaces, I may feel even less inclined to stay.

As a member of the Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee I put a tremendous amount of energy and much of my free time into fighting for safety improvements not just for those who bike, but bus riders and pedestrians as well. But why must we "fight" for safety improvements? Safety of *all residents* should be a number one priority for a City, and with a financially-supported Bike Network Plan in place it would show the many residents who bike that they are seen, heard, and cared about by the City without having to raise our voices and "fight." The safety benefits offered by protected bike lanes also extends to those who walk and, though nobody believes it, drive.

And from what I've seen from the sidelines, driving in Somerville looks more frustrating than ever. I bike up Holland St thinking "these poor people." But I also feel anger as I choke on the exhaust of an entire streetful of idling cars creeping towards Teele. A Bike Network Plan and the safe infrastructure it includes will encourage more people to see how much more efficient biking around the City is than driving, and maybe get some cars off the roads in the process.

I'm going to call my two minutes of commentary up, and simply encourage you to turn what is dangerously starting to feel like lip service regarding our Vision Zero and Climate Forward goals into reality with the funding it deserves.

Thanks for all you do; I hope to remain a resident of our City for as long as possible and feel safe and heard while I'm here.

Best wishes,
Lena Webb at 56 Sterling St

John Long

From: Nate Kaufman <natekauf@rcn.com>
Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2019 3:52 PM
To: City Council
Cc: City Clerk Contact
Subject: Please support a Bike Network Master Plan

Dear City Councillors,

I am writing to urge you support to a Bike Network Master Plan in the city's FY20 budget. Devising and implementing such a plan is critical to making cycling a safe and viable alternative to driving a car in Somerville.

So many of my Somerville neighbors and friends tell me they always drive a car largely because of how unsafe they feel cycling on our streets. We need a complete network of safe cycling facilities to get people across the city, to any destination, so that there is a true choice between driving and cycling that doesn't force people to be unsafe.

A network master plan will also help Somerville achieve the goals of Vision Zero, Somervision 2030, and Somerville Climate Forward – all long-term plans that guide the future of our city.

Thank you for your consideration and hopefully your support,
Nate Kaufman
56 Gorham St #2 (Ward 7)
Somerville MA 02144

John Long

From: Lily Cohen <lily.rachel.cohen@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, June 26, 2019 6:56 AM
To: City Council; City Clerk Contact
Subject: I'm desperate for better biking infrastructure

Dear city council!

I live in ward 3 and I bike to everything including work and every single day I think I might die. basically, I've become numb to this fear, which seems like an unhealthy place to be. please, I beg of you support the Bike Network Master plan and other ways to expand biking access.

Thanks for your hard work,

Lily Cohen
my website
she/her