



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

GEORGE J. PROAKIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Honorable Members of the Somerville City Council
FROM: George J. Proakis, OSPCD Executive Director
DATE: February 25, 2021
RE: Mid-year request: OSPCD Mobility Division

I am pleased to submit for your consideration a mid-year funding request to expand critical service delivery in the OSPCD Mobility Division. This proposal is intended to support the scaling-up of the Administration's safe streets program, including community engagement, planning, design and project implementation.

The request before the council is to transfer \$77,700 in salary lag funds from existing OSPCD division accounts to allow the mobility team to hire three new positions and expedite efforts to implement key programs. Details about that request are below.

Mobility Division Needs

The OSPCD Mobility Division has a staff of five technical professionals. The division staff specialize in implementing key projects and programs identified in the City's Climate Forward, Vision Zero and SomerVision plans. The staff has been instrumental in the efforts to make Somerville into a model walkable/bikeable/transit-oriented community. The staff has also been instrumental, during COVID-19, in working to re-think our public space to permit safer street crossings, shared streets and expanded areas for outdoor dining.

The substantial efforts of this team have allowed the City to implement safer streets in many Somerville neighborhoods. But, despite steady program growth, improved interdepartmental coordination and exceptional production rates, the City's progress on key strategic commitments has not been able to keep pace with the rising interest in these programs in our community.

In February 2020, we developed and presented to the Council a strategy to spin the Mobility team off from OSPCD into a free-standing Department of Transportation. The COVID-19 pandemic put that strategy on hold, and allowed us time to reflect on this initial proposal. We determined that, while a free-standing DOT may still be an appropriate model for Somerville in the future, the most immediate need is for additional staff capacity to deliver more projects, as

well as a further analysis of models for the future of this work. Therefore, this request reflects that current need.

The funds will be used as follows:

Salary Request: Three new positions will be established. One position is proposed as an Outreach Coordinator (NU-11), with key responsibilities including outreach, engagement, public information and constituent services. Two positions are proposed as Senior Planner positions (NU-07), with key responsibilities including policy planning, street design, project management and project evaluation. We estimate that new staff could be in place for approximately six weeks of FY21, resulting in a pro-rated personal services cost of \$27,700. Hiring this staff in FY21 will allow the Mobility Division to be fully staffed before the summer, so the larger staff can implement more effective mobility solutions during this coming construction season. These staff will need continued funding into FY22 and beyond, at a starting annual rate of approximately \$239,292 for the three positions in total.

Professional and Technical Services Request: Furthermore, we respectfully request your support to transfer \$50,000.00 to the Ordinary Maintenance line for Professional and Technical Services to initiate a series of policy planning activities. In total, these efforts are estimated to cost \$190,000, with the remaining \$140,000 in funds to be requested in FY22. These activities will be undertaken by current and new staff, in addition to traffic calming, Vision Zero and project design work that are being funded with current financial resources. These efforts will occur in addition to the citywide parking study that Mobility is supporting, which is funded and lead from the Parking Department:

- Organizational Design process startup (\$10,000)
 - As noted above, the City wishes to examine our current organizational roles and responsibilities in transportation, and to seek internal and external stakeholder feedback on alternative models of organizational design. This will permit us to understand if the Mobility Team should remain in OSPCD, be converted into a new Department of Transportation, or be a part of a different organizational strategy. It will also allow us to determine, with the help of the community, the additional workload and staffing needs beyond this current request. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) has offered to support Somerville in this process, leveraging national best practices. Initial stakeholder engagement is proposed for Spring 2021; work is anticipated to continue in FY22.
- Bike Network Plan public process startup (\$10,000)
 - Our Citywide Bike Network Plan development was paused in Spring 2020 due to COVID-19 impacts. We propose to restart our stakeholder engagement process in Spring 2021 by initiating existing conditions assessment and establishing a project website. Work is anticipated to continue in FY22.
- Bus Network Plan support (\$20,000)
 - The MBTA has begun planning for post-GLX bus service in Somerville, and the City proposes to secure technical assistance to engage our local stakeholders and

articulate a local plan for reliable and equitable bus transit. Work is anticipated to continue in FY22.

- Municipal Transportation Demand Management Plan (\$10,000)
 - Somerville's new zoning ordinance requires robust Transportation Demand Management (TDM) planning for private development. As a large employer, the City proposes to begin a planning process to reduce Vehicle Miles Travelled and motor vehicle reliance by the municipal workforce. Initial data collection and process planning is proposed for Spring 2021; work is anticipated to continue in FY22.

This mid-year re-allocation of funds would accelerate startup of these initiatives and allow us to complete significant additional efforts in the Mobility Division. I look forward to discussing this further in a forthcoming City Council committee meeting.

Financial Summary of Mid-Year Request for Mobility Division

Salary Request

	Estimated Class	Annual	For FY 2021
Senior Planner - Mobility	NU7	\$88,434.00	\$10,236.99
Senior Planner - Mobility	NU7	\$88,434.00	\$10,236.99
Outreach Coordinator - Mobilty	NU11	\$62,424.00	\$7,226.01
Total		\$239,292.00	\$27,700.00

Projects (P&T)

	Total Budget	FY21	FY22
Bike Network Plan	\$40,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$30,000.00
Bus Network Plan	\$70,000.00	\$20,000.00	\$50,000.00
TDM study	\$50,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$40,000.00
NACTO study	\$30,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$20,000.00
Total	\$190,000.00	\$50,000.00	\$140,000.00

Budget Impact

	FY 21 Request	FY 22 Request	Continuing Cost
to mobility P&T	\$50,000.00	\$140,000.00	\$0.00
to mobility salaries	\$27,700.00	\$239,292.00	\$239,292.00
Total	\$77,700.00	\$379,292.00	\$239,292.00