



# City of Somerville, Massachusetts

## City Council Traffic and Parking Committee

### Meeting Minutes

**Monday, February 27, 2023**

**6:00 PM**

This meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Chair Gomez Mouakad at 6:03 p.m. and adjourned at 7:27 p.m. on a Roll Call Vote: 2 in favor (Councilors Gomez Mouakad, Clingan), 0 opposed, 1 absent (Ewen-Campen).

Councilor Wilson was unable to attend; President Ewen-Campen named Councilor Clingan to serve in their place.

Others present: Michael Potere – Assistant Clerk of Committees; Brad Rawson – Director of Mobility; Adam Polinski – Transportation Analyst; Kristen Cox – Somerville Resident; Adam Epstein – Somerville Resident; Elaine Koury – Somerville Resident

#### **Roll Call**

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

1. Committee Minutes (ID # [23-0206](#)) Approval of the Traffic & Parking Committee Minutes of February 6, 2023.

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

#### 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 stated that the administration has a goal of providing as many free Charlie Cards to low- and moderate-income residents as possible. That program is just beginning, and Director Rawson stated he would return to the Committee with more data when it becomes available.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked if data was available for similar programs in neighboring cities, like Boston. Director Rawson stated that data is available and that the administration is evaluating it, noting that usage of the program is lower than expected in Boston.

Councilor Ewen-Campen asked if there was a general legal framework in place to implement and expand the program, and Director Rawson stated that it is already in place, and that expanding the program will be re-evaluated when the budget for next year is put in place. Director Rawson added that he is getting very positive feedback from the residents currently using the program in Somerville.

Chair Gomez Mouakad added that the program is particularly beneficial to immigrant communities, and placed the item on the agenda to be discussed again in two months.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

### Traffic Calming

3. Order  
(ID # [22-1839](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad

That the Director of Mobility respond to the petition regarding traffic calming and additional bicycle parking at the Kennedy School.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Somerville Resident Kristen Cox to read a letter written by Somerville Resident Isaura Vergucht, who stated that the streets near the Kennedy School are particularly dangerous for young children walking to school because cars often speed through the area. Vergucht's letter continued be expressing support for the installation of speed bumps in the area.

Resident Kristen Cox, speaking on her own behalf, expressed support for additional bike racks at rear of the Kennedy School.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Somerville Resident Alex Epstein to speak, and who stated that his young children are future Kennedy School students and expressed further support for adding speed bumps to calm traffic in the area.

Chair Gomez Mouakad stated that traffic calming measures for Cherry Street have also been in discussion for several years, and that all schools in Somerville should have traffic calming measures in place.

Director Rawson responded to the feedback by stating that the administration is currently planning its 2023 bike rack installation priorities, and that the Kennedy School was visited and assessed for additional bike racks in 2022, and that they are in the process of being ordered now, with an expected installation date of the summer or fall of 2023. Chair Gomez Mouakad asked about the locations of the new bike racks, and Director Rawson stated that he did not know their precise locations. Chair Gomez Mouakad added that the planning process should take cargo bikes into consideration as well.

Alex Epstein asked about the current spray traffic markings around the school, and Director Rawson said he would look into that.

Councilor Clingan asked if the administration had plans for a more holistic approach to traffic calming measures at all Somerville schools, and Director Rawson stated that the effort is intended to be systematic, and that the administration bases its decisions on speed hump locations by resident feedback. Director Rawson stated that, in 2023, the focus will be East Somerville, and that it will expand in 2024.

Councilor Clingan clarified that he was interested in knowing whether there was a broader safety management plan for the city regarding school “pick ups” and “drop offs,” and Director Rawson indicated that such a plan is in place and the administration is working with multiple departments to implement it. Chair Gomez Mouakad echoed Councilor Clingan’s interest in a city-wide plan, and Director Rawson stated that the effort has taken several years, and that the flagship construction for 2023 will be rebuilding Washington Street in front of the Argenziano School, and if other opportunities come up, they will be evaluated with an effort to direct resources to them. Chair Gomez Mouakad stated that she would like a commitment for projects from the administration for 2024 and asked Director Rawson to provide additional information at the next meeting.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

4. Order  
(ID # [23-0083](#))

By Councilor Gomez Mouakad, Councilor Kelly and Councilor Strezo  
That the Director of Mobility consider improvements to deficient conditions impacting the safety and pedestrian accessibility of Cedar Street.

Chair Gomez Mouakad stated that this is her order, and that she put it together because she and her husband have witnessed cars speeding and several accidents on Cedar Street and that she would like to see traffic calming measures implemented. Director Rawson stated that his department is working on reviewing options for Cedar Street, including a raised crosswalk between Alpine and Morrison, but that other traffic calming measures require a longer-term design and implementation plan. Chair Gomez Mouakad added that she would like to see additional speed and radar signs on Cedar Street.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

5. Order  
(ID # [22-2117](#))

By Councilor McLaughlin and Councilor Wilson  
That the Director of Mobility increase lighting and short-term traffic calming measures on the corner of Pearl and Franklin Streets, to address safety concerns while the construction of Pearl Street is delayed.

Director Rawson stated that Adam Polinski, Senior Planner for the Mobility Division, has been working to make sure these streets and sidewalks are

repaved and accessible to people of all abilities, and that the subsurface work necessary to begin the surface work has been completed, and that the project is expected to be completed on schedule this year. Senior Planner Polinski added that members of the community raised the issue of safety at the intersection of Franklin Street and Pearl Street, and that a raised intersection is being built as a result, and will be completed in several months. Chair Gomez Mouakad asked if there was a date for the raised intersection to be completed, and Senior Planner Polinski stated that there was not, but that it would probably take a few months, but that since the contract for the work is a two-year contract and it began last year, the work should be completed by the end of 2023.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

6. Order  
(ID # [22-2144](#))

By Councilor Scott

That the Director of Mobility respond to constituent complaints regarding the bus stop placement westbound at Beacon and Washington.

Chair Gomez Mouakad sponsored Somerville Resident Elaine Koury to speak, and who stated that the bus stops at Beacon and Washington and Beacon and Calvin were moved two years ago without taking input from the residents of the area, and that as a result two parking spaces were removed. Resident Koury continued that losing those two parking spaces makes it difficult for the people who live there to have convenient parking for guests, particularly guests who may have limited mobility. Director Rawson responded that that block is challenging because it has multiple competing curb uses, including a fire hydrant, and also stated that the MBTA has a requirement that bus stops are 100 feet long. Director Rawson continued that there may be options in the area for side street access, or reconsidering the loading zone. Director Rawson also stated that the MBTA typically spaces its bus stops around 1,000 feet apart, and that that combined with the location of crosswalks, makes the area challenging. Councilor Ewen-Campen asked if the bus stop was moved due to new MBTA bus stop design considerations, and Director Rawson responded that it was. Chair Gomez Mouakad by thanking Resident Koury for the feedback and stated her hope that there might be a solution with the Mobility Department. Director Rawson stated that the Parking Department and Fire Department would need to be involved in the discussion as well.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

7. Order  
(ID # [22-2146](#))

By Councilor Scott

That the Director of Mobility work with residents on Lake St to ensure that the parking plan for ongoing projects does not block driveway access.

Director Rawson stated that staff from the Mobility, Parking, and Engineering Departments evaluated the situation and determined that it was similar to numerous other streets in Somerville, that the driveways were still

accessible during the construction, and that no further action was necessary.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

8. Order  
(ID # [22-2148](#))

By Councilor Scott and Councilor Wilson

That the Director of Mobility update the Ward 2 Councilor on the prioritization of speed bump installation on the requested streets.

Chair Gomez Mouakad began by listing the streets in the request. Director Rawson responded that the administration's priority in 2023 is the Western Washington Street project, and that traffic calming measures are generally deployed based on feedback from residents. Senior Planner Polinski indicated that, based on that feedback and working with Councilor Scott, the administration then considers its budget and determines where to place the speed humps. Senior Planner Polinski added that streets that were identified for traffic calming measures included Dane, Calvin, Perry, West Wyatt, Newton, a portion of Concord Ave, and that some of these will be constructed this year, the timing of which will be determined when a contractor has been hired. Chair Gomez Mouakad stated that schools should be a priority when considering traffic calming measures.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

9. Order  
(ID # [22-2115](#))

By Councilor Ewen-Campen, Councilor Gomez Mouakad and Councilor Clingan

That the Director of Engineering install a protective guard over the expansion joint on the Medford Street bridge, as it poses a safety risk for bicyclists.

Director Rawson stated that this issue was identified previously and requested the item be kept in committee for another month to allow the MBTA time to approve the specific details of the plan. Councilor Clingan asked Director Rawson to provide more details on what, specifically, is the safety risk on this bridge, and Director Rawson responded that it is a gap between where the bridge meets the earth, and that the design needs to be approved and properly implemented by the MBTA, and recommended a follow up on this matter. Chair Gomez Mouakad commented that these expansion joints need to be carefully considered for cars as well as bikes because bikes have smaller tires that can become stuck and injure cyclists.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**

10. Order  
(ID # [22-2145](#))

By Councilor Scott

That the Director of Mobility address resident parking subsidies in negotiated Transportation Management Plans for major developments.

Director Rawson indicated that parking garage subsidies to developers are done with the goal of reducing car usage and discouraging driving, in part by requiring parking to be available to the public. Chair Gomez Mouakad

clarified that Somerville is not subsidizing parking, but rather seeking to reduce car dependency and usage.

**RESULT: RECOMMENDED TO BE MARKED WORK COMPLETED**

11. Order  
(ID # [22-2147](#))

By Councilor Scott

That the Director of Mobility update this Council regarding replacement of the HAWK signals on Beacon Street with RYG stoplights.

Chair Gomez Mouakad stated that this matter will be tabled because the Engineering Department was not present to respond to it.

**RESULT: KEPT IN COMMITTEE**