



SOMERVILLE PEDESTRIAN AND TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PTAC) DECEMBER 2022 MEETING MINUTES

MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE

Thursday, December 8, 2022, 6:30 – 8:00 PM

Virtual GoToMeeting <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/539724445>

You can also dial in using your phone.

United States: +1 (872) 240-3212 **Access Code:** 539-724-445

Community Representatives:

Ted Alexander*
Ginny Alverson*
Caroline Bodager*
Meredith Brown*
Thomas Coen*
Laura Evans
Christopher Ferry*
Vitor Pamplona, *Vice-Chair**
Zach Rosenberg
Alessandra Seiter, *Chair**
Carole Voulgaris, *Secretary**
Kirsten Walters

Ex Officio:

J.T. Scott, *City Council*
Justin Schreiber, *OSPCD Mobility**

*= present

Guests:

Lauren Craik (OSPCD Mobility)
Eric Weisman (Operations Director, DPW)

Acting Secretary: Carole Voulgaris

Call to order: 6:33pm

Agenda Item 1: Procedural business

1. Vote to approve October and November minutes
 - a. Motion: Alessandra
 - b. Second: Meredith. All voted to approve.
2. Officers are starting work on annual report.
 - a. Vitor will reach out to subcommittee leaders.
 - b. Everyone please fill out the short survey Alessandra send out with today's agenda:
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeZqHeKvUrUm2zoVv1aalo1WMQipNsyC85vPbrPUm-bFPMxJw/viewform>
3. Green line is opening!
(<https://www.somervillema.gov/news/somerville-celebrate-green-line-extension-opening>)

- a. Monday, Dec 12: Opening Day
 - i. 4:30am - MBTA General Manager sees off first train at Medford/Tufts Station
 - ii. 7am - Mayor Ballantyne and advocates at Ball Square Station
 - iii. 10am - VIP train cuts ribbon at Medford/Tufts station
- b. Saturday, Dec 17: Community Celebration
 - i. 2-4pm at Somerville High School
 - ii. Kid-friendly activities, speakers

Agenda Item 2: Subcommittee Updates

- 1. Education and Engagement: SomerStreets tabling went well on October 30
- 2. No other subcommittees have had the chance to meet.

Agenda Item 3: Presentation and Discussion with Department of Public Works (DPW) and Inspectional Services Department (ISD) (30 Minutes)

- 1. This is the second season of Somerville's sidewalk snow clearing pilot.
- 2. Presentation: FY23 snow plan with a focus on pedestrian infrastructure
 - a. Agenda
 - i. Snow Ops 101
 - ii. Vision Zero Crew Update
 - iii. Key Corridor Sidewalk Shoveling
 - iv. What's next?
 - v. Closing

Agenda

01. Snow Ops 101

02. Vision Zero Crew Update

03 Key Corridor Sidewalk Shoveling

04. What's next?

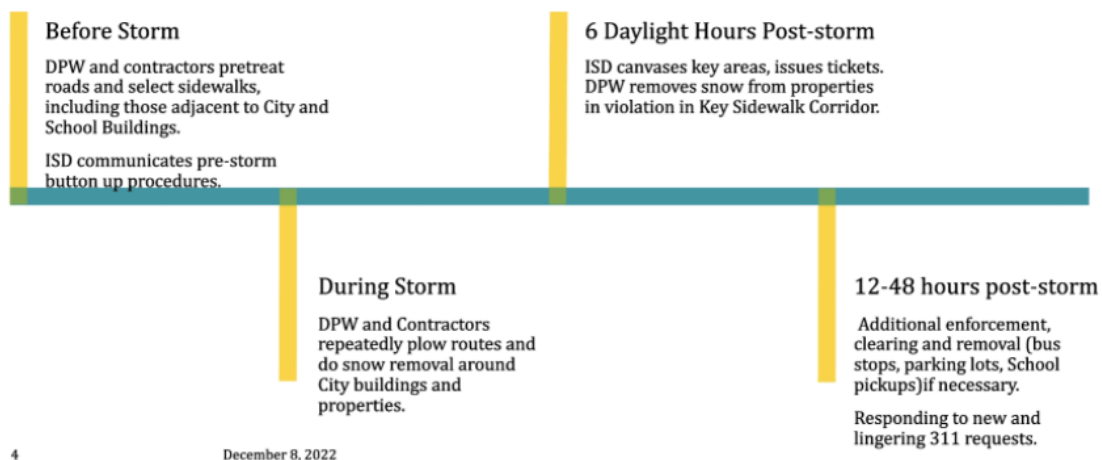
05. Closing



- b. Typical Storm Timeline
 - i. Before Storm

1. DPW and contractors pretreat roads and select sidewalks, including those adjacent to City and School buildings.
2. ISD communicates pre-storm and button up procedures.
- ii. During Storm
 1. DPW and Contractors repeatedly plow routes and do snow removal around City buildings and properties.
- iii. 6 Daylight Hours Post-Storm
 1. ISD canvases key areas, issues tickets.
 2. DPW removes snow from properties in violation in Key Sidewalk Corridor (i.e. Broadway and School St, where the pilot is happening).
- iv. 12-48 hours post-storm
 1. Additional enforcement, clearing and removal (bus stops, parking lots, School pickups) if necessary.
 2. Responding to new and lingering 311 requests.

Typical Storm Timeline



- c. What's new?
 - i. GLX Community Path
 1. Opening this winter, date TBD.
 2. Snow removal will be complicated.
 - ii. Additional protected bike facilities
 1. Holland St protected bike lanes
 - iii. Other new infrastructure
 1. Temple St islands
 2. 33 additional speed humps
 3. Additional raised crosswalks
 4. Broadway @ Winchester Island

- iv. DPW facilitated a snow drill exercise to review new facilities

What's New?

GLX Community Path...

- Opening this winter, date TBD.
- Snow removal will be complicated.

Additional protected bicycle facilities...

- Holland St protected bike lanes.

Other new infrastructure...

- Temple St. Islands
- 33 Additional Speed Humps.
- Additional Raised Cross Walks
- Broadway @ Winchester Islands



DPW facilitated a snow drill exercise to review new facilities.

5

December 8, 2022

- d. GLX Community Path
- Maintenance, especially snow removal, will be extremely difficult due to design of path.
 - Snow will be handled jointly by DPW Grounds and DPW Highway, with contractor support.
 - In the case of significant snow, parts of Community Path may not be maintained.
 - Parts of Community Path may have to be closed while snow clearing operations are underway.
 - This will be communicated if it happens.
 - This will be a learning opportunity for us, and we will be modifying our strategy and tactics once we have snow and equipment on the path.



GLX Community Path

- Maintenance, especially snow removal will be extremely difficult due to design of path.
- Snow will be handled jointly by DPW Grounds and DPW Highway. (With contractor support)
- In the case of significant snow, parts of community path may not be maintained.
- Parts of community path may have to be closed while snow clearing operations are underway.
- This will be a learning opportunity for us, and we will be modifying our strategy and tactics once we have snow and equipment on the path.

- e. When do you do snow removal?
 - i. 6 inches or more
 1. Removal may be conducted as determined by Commissioner to open schools, clear bus stops, depending on forecast, etc.
 - ii. 12 inches or more
 1. Removal expanded to include bus stops, school grounds, and City buildings.
 - iii. 24 inches or more
 1. May be expanded to include main and side streets due to mobility and public safety considerations

When do you do snow removal?

6" or more:

- Removal may be conducted as determined by Commissioner to open school, clear bus stops depending on forecast, etc..

12" or more:

- Removal expanded to include bus stops, school grounds, and city buildings.

24" or more

- May be expanded to include main and side streets due to mobility and public safety considerations.



7

- f. ISD City Sidewalk Enforcement Priorities
 - i. Around elder-care and assisted living
 - ii. Immediately adjacent to daycares and schools
 - iii. Key sidewalk snow removal area
 1. Broadway and School St, i.e. the pilot program area
 - iv. Constituent and staff complaints
 - v. Tickets are issued to property owners via door hanger AND mail

ISD City Sidewalk Enforcement Priorities

1. Around Elder-care and Assisted Living
2. Immediately adjacent to Daycares and Schools
3. Key Sidewalk Snow Removal Area
4. Constituent and Staff Complaints



8

- g. Whose responsibility is snow removal?
 - i. City
 1. City streets
 2. Sidewalks around City property
 3. Squares and islands
 4. Bridges
 5. Bus stops and adjacent ramps
 - ii. State
 1. State roads
 2. MBTA stations
 - iii. Property owners
 1. Sidewalks and curb ramps adjacent to property

Whose Responsibility is Snow Removal?

City

- City Streets
- Sidewalks around City Property
- Squares and Islands
- Bridges
- Bus Stops and Adjacent Ramps

State

- State Roads
- MBTA Stations

Property Owners

- Sidewalks and Curb Ramps adjacent to Property

10

Annual Review

December 8, 2022

- h. Vision Zero Staffing Update
 - i. FY22 Budget: We successfully funded 3 new positions in the Vision Zero crew.
 - ii. We have had the positions posted since October.
 - iii. We have received roughly 60 applicants.
 - iv. We made offers to four candidates but have not yet filled the position.
 - v. Interviews are ongoing.

VZ Staffing Update

- FY22 Budget: we successfully funded 3 new positions in the Vision Zero crew.
- We have had the positions posted since October.
- We have received roughly 60 applicants.
- We made offers to four candidates but have not yet filled the position.
- Interviews are ongoing.



12

December 8, 2022

- i. Vision Zero Equipment Update
 - i. 3 pieces of equipment dedicated for the Vision Zero crew have been purchased and are scheduled for delivery next week.
 - ii. This equipment includes special snow fighting equipment, such as blowers, sanders, and plows.
 - iii. Our existing fleet of small equipment used by the Grounds Division on the Community Path has been expanded to include an additional Gator.

VZ Equipment Update

- 3 pieces of equipment dedicated for the Vision Zero crew have been purchased and are scheduled for delivery next week.
- This equipment includes special snow fighting equipment, such as blowers, sanders, and plows.
- Our existing fleet of small equipment used by the grounds division on the community path has been expanded to include an additional Gator.



13

December 8, 2022

- j. FY22 Summary
 - i. Planning and Outreach
 - 1. Worked with Mobility to select 2 key corridors: Broadway and School St
 - 2. Communications and Mobility conducted outreach ahead of first storm.
 - 3. Planned process:
 - a. ISD conducts enforcement, issues citations.
 - b. ISD sends list of violations to DPW.
 - c. DPW clears sidewalks of properties in violation.
 - ii. Performance
 - 1. Conducted enforcement in target area after 3 storms with 4 or more inches of snow.
 - 2. Storms:
 - a. 1/28/22: 21 properties cleared
 - b. 2/13/22: 48 properties cleared
 - c. 2/25/22: 29 properties cleared

FY22 Summary

Planning and Outreach

- Worked with Mobility to select 2 key corridors: Broadway and School St.
- Communications and Mobility conducted outreach ahead of first storm.
- Planned process:



Performance

- Conducted enforcement in target area after 3 storms with 4 or more inches of snow:

Date	Properties Cleared:
1/28/22	21
2/13/22	48
2/25/22	29

- k. Lessons Learned
 - i. The process worked!
 - ii. Communications between ISD and DPW was efficient.
 - iii. DPW workers were able to incorporate process as part of snow cleanup duties.

Lessons Learned?

1. The process worked!
2. Communications between ISD and DPW was efficient.
3. DPW workers were able to incorporate process as part of snow cleanup duties.

16

- I. Next Steps: FY23
 - i. Staff up Vision Zero Crew
 1. Hiring has been a challenge, but we are continuing to get applicants.
 - ii. Collect data on Key Corridor Sidewalk Program
 1. Working with SomerStat on data collection:
 - a. Storm data (weather, timing, etc.)
 - b. Citations (address, conditions, amount collected)
 - c. Staffing (enforcement, removal)
 - iii. Better communications
 1. Communicating status of sidewalk removal, bus stop removal operations, etc.

Next Steps: FY23

Staff up Vision Zero Crew

- Hiring has been a challenge, but we are continuing to get applicants.

Collect data on Key Corridor Sidewalk Program:

- Working with SomerStat on Data collection:
 - Storm Data (Weather, Timing, etc.)
 - Citations (Address, Conditions, Amount Collected)
 - Staffing (Enforcement, Removal)

Better Communications

- Communicating status of sidewalk removal, bus stop removal operations, etc.

18

December 8, 2022

- m. Winter is frustrating
 - i. Broadway business-owner blocked off a cleared bike route to plow his lot.
 - ii. This sort of action is inexcusable (and against the law).
 - iii. After storms, DPW is out reviewing the condition of the city but we can't be everywhere at once.
 - iv. Please reach out to 311 if you see anything.

Winter is frustrating.

- Broadway business-owner blocked off a cleared bike route to plow his parking lot.
- This sort of action is inexcusable (and against the law).
- After storms, DPW is out reviewing the condition of the city but we can't be everywhere at once.
- Please reach out to 311 if you see anything.

20

December 8, 2022



3. Open for questions:

- a. Laura: What is the most efficient way to get in touch with 311 about sidewalks that have not been cleared (phone? app? Twitter?)
 - i. During the week (business hours): Calling is the best way.
 - ii. Outside of those hours, using the app and taking a picture can be really helpful.
- b. Laura: In the Broadway Pilot, tell us about the decision not to clear until 6 hours after snowfall and after someone is ticketed. Seems like priority is on waiting for property owners to do it rather than on maximizing mobility.
 - i. Resources for clearing snow are limited and laws already put that responsibility on property owners.
 - ii. Most efficient use of resources is to hold property owners accountable
- c. Ginny: How does the city assist property owners who are elderly or have disabilities?
 - i. The city has a program to match high school students with property owners that may have additional needs, so the students can help with that. This matching is through Health and Human Services.
(<https://www.somervillema.gov/news/sign-today-somerville-teen-snow-shoveling-program>)
- d. Meredith: Communication seemed good last year - what are other metrics to evaluate success of the pilot?
 - i. This year we want to collect data on “repeat offenders”, levels of snow clearance - is the issue inadequate clearing or failure to clear at all?
 - ii. Next year we’d like to collect data on the cost of snow clearing - could inform decisions about use of contractors
 - iii. How do the conditions on the ground affect whether/how people clear their sidewalks
 - iv. Upcoming meeting with SomerStat to formulate a data collection plan
- e. Meredith: If the pilot is successful, what is the vision for the future
 - i. That’s beyond what Eric can speak to. Focus for now is to get the best value from the existing pilot.
- f. Vitor: Do we have a sense of cost-per-square-foot for snow clearance? What would it take for the city to cover the whole city professionally?
 - i. Eric has previously reached out to Rochester, NY; Newton, MA, which both have varying degrees of public-sector snow removal. Don’t have data here, and context varies, but their costs were quite expensive at that point. Rochester DPW’s workforce were farmers who had equipment and time available during the winter months.
 - ii. Our sidewalks are very narrow and have a lot of sidewalk furniture - makes snow removal especially challenging, relative to a place like Newton that has more places to store snow (e.g. lawns).
 - iii. Would be possible to see what Harvard and MIT spend on snow removal.
 - iv. Somerville does hire contractors, but they charge hourly, not per storm or per square foot, so getting a cost per square foot isn’t necessarily easy
- g. Vitor: Would it be helpful to train residents on how to properly clear snow? Does inadequate snow clearing make citation more difficult or less effective?

- i. Better communication on how to properly clear snow is an interesting idea. There are specific legal standards for what is adequate.
 - ii. What justifies a citation is based on the law
 - iii. Eric personally does a very thorough job at clearing his own sidewalk.
 - iv. Most people are doing pretty well, a lot of people do very poorly.
 - v. The requirement is to clear a 36-inch path.
- h. Thomas: Question regarding 3 new hires. What would they be doing? Is this adding capacity, replacing contractors?
 - i. These are 3 additional positions. Over the past few years we've put more of an emphasis on clearing separated bike facilities, mostly using contractors with small equipment. We would like to take a bigger role on clearing bike lanes, flex posts for daylighting, the new quick-build bus lane.
 - ii. We are likely to continue to supplement our work with contractors.
- i. Thomas: Is there a way to speed up the process of clearing bus stops?
 - i. The people that clear the bus stops are the same people who clear the roads
 - ii. We like to give people 12 hours of rest between the end of snow operations and when they need to come back in to clear bus stops. This is voluntary overtime work.
 - iii. Some contractors are only used for snow removal and may not need that rest - overnight operations are very disruptive to residents (heavy trucking).
 - iv. MBTA does not support clearing bus stops - it's the responsibility of the city.
- j. Vitor: Does bus stop clearance have a lower priority than driving infrastructure?
 - i. Our streets are necessary for public safety equipment and also buses. Clearing bus stops before roads would leave no clear roads for the buses to go on.
- k. Vitor: We need the snow clearance priorities to make transit an attractive option for travelers.
- l. Alessandra: Would the Vision Zero crew help with clearing bus stops?
 - i. Clearing bus stops isn't just clearing a path to the bus stops. It's also clearing a large area around the bus stop, ramps. That requires more heavy equipment than what the 311 crew uses for clearing bike lanes.
 - ii. 3 people would not be enough for the 200 or however many bus stops we have. We have 4-5 contractors to clear bus stops within a day or two.

Agenda Item 4: Review Second Draft Bus Network Redesign Letter (15 Minutes)

- 1. Draft letter was sent out with the agenda for tonight.
- 2. We'll still be in the review timeline if we send the letter tomorrow.
- 3. Was one issue with the 90's frequency that higher frequency would relieve crowding, especially around school arrival/dismissal times. Bus often leaves passengers near the high school, the bus falls behind schedule because it is so crowded.
 - a. We'll add something about bus crowding on Highland.

4. Vote to send letter to MBTA, Councillors, Somerville Mobility, Mayor.
 - a. Alessandra motion to send
 - b. Christopher second
 - c. Unanimous vote to send the letter

Agenda Item 5: Discussion on Right Turns on Red in Somerville (15 Minutes)

1. Intended as preliminary discussion
 - a. Justin: Possibility to invite Jessica Bellow (traffic engineer) to a future meeting
 - b. General context (Alessandra):
 - i. Growing interest in Eastern US to prohibit all RTOR throughout cities, rather than doing it with signs one-at-a-time
 - ii. Blanket bans in New York, Washington DC, Cambridge.
 - iii. Pedestrian crashes double when RTOR are permitted.
 - iv. Larger vehicles make safety concerns even worse.
 - v. Other considerations:
 1. How effective would enforcement be?
 2. Would enforcement lead to more police interaction
 3. Cost associated with installing signs citywide.
 - c. Ginny: How close are we to seeing a RTOR ban in Somerville?
 - i. This not a thing the city is officially considering
 - d. Alessandra: How many intersections already ban RTOR?
 - i. This data exists - in the appendix of traffic regulations.
 - e. Christopher: Personal observation that RTOR encourages dangerous behavior/road-rage.
 - f. Thomas: If we aren't enforcing through-movements on red and double-parking, what would a RTOR ban do? Does a RTOR ban give a false sense of safety?
 - i. While eliminating RTOR would improve safety, it's not clear that a ban would eliminate them.
 - g. Christopher: Red arrow might be more effective than a "No RTOR" sign.
 - h. Alessandra: Maybe RTOR ban would help justify more signage, red arrows at signals, other design interventions.
 - i. Christopher: Maybe Cambridge and Somerville both doing it could support advocacy for a state-wide RTOR ban.
 - j. Alessandra: Larger question around traffic enforcement.
 - k. Carole: Questions around what patterns we see in the types of pedestrian incidents.
 - l. Alessandra: We have data on where RTOR signs are and where high-crash intersections are - is there a correlation?

Agenda Item 6: Other / Public comment

Action Items from Meeting:

1. Alessandra to send letter

Meeting ended: 7:57