



SOMERVILLE PEDESTRIAN AND TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (PTAC) APRIL 2023 MEETING MINUTES

MAYOR KATJANA BALLANTYNE

Thursday, April 20th, 2023, 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*

Ex Officio:

Beatriz Gómez Mouakad, *City Council - Ward 5*
*Lauren Craik, *OSPCD Mobility*
Justin Schreiber, *OSPCD Mobility*

*= present

Guests:

Greg Hanafin, *Transportation Planner, OSPCD Mobility, City of Somerville*
Khao Tong, *Somerville Times*

Acting Secretary: Laura Evans

Call to order: 6:33 PM

Agenda Item 1: Procedural Business (10 min)

1. Intros & roll call
2. Announcements
 - a. Social gathering at Winter Hill Brewing is on Saturday, April 29, 3:00 - 5:00 pm on their outdoor patio.
 - b. We are hosting a community walk along Western Washington Street on Wednesday, May 24 at 6:00 pm. Adam Polinski from Mobility will lead, SBAC is co-sponsoring.
 - c. Sign up for tabling with the City! Education & Engagement needs help from the whole committee.

- d. We will be phasing out the PTAC Twitter and moving to a public newsletter.
Subscribe online: <https://tinyletter.com/SomervillePTAC>
- e. We're trying to recruit a teen member for the group - spread the message to any teens you know!
 - i. Currently reaching out to Somerville High School.
 - ii. Mobility investigating if there's a minimum age requirement.
- 3. VOTE: March Minutes
 - a. Zach motions to approve
 - b. Ted seconds
 - c. Minutes are approved unanimously

Agenda Item 2: Subcommittee Updates (15 min)

- 1. Policy & Enforcement (Christopher)
 - a. Christopher reported on City meeting on Summer Street reconstruction.
 - i. Bus infrastructure, pocket park, bioswales.
 - b. Fare evasion on Green Line Extension
 - i. Stations aren't staffed regularly, with implications for both fare evasion and passenger assistance.
 - ii. GLX shallow ramps don't always have railings - is there something the committee should do there?
- 2. Engineering & Evaluation (Zach)
 - a. Did not meet this month.
- 3. Education & Engagement (Ted)
 - a. See above under Announcements.

Agenda Item 3: Officer Nominations (10 min)

- 1. We hold elections every year for officers.
- 2. Elections will be held in the May meeting.
- 3. All current officers are willing to serve again but also welcome other volunteers.

Agenda Item 4: City Update: Safe Routes to School & Transit Pass Program (50 min)

- 1. Safe Routes to School (Greg Hanafin)

What is Safe Routes to School (SRTS)?

MASSACHUSETTS SRTS PROGRAM

- Federally funded program administered by MassDOT.
- Provides resources and staff support to municipalities and schools with the goal of increasing safe walking, biking, and rolling among public elementary, middle, and high school students.
- Centered on the 6 E's:
 - **Education** - Getting the tools students need to be smart, aware walkers and rollers
 - **Encouragement** - Building excitement about active transportation through events, activities, and contests
 - **Evaluation** - Exploring data about surrounding environments and travel behaviors to improve walking and rolling
 - **Engineering** - Seeking opportunities for SRTS-related infrastructure funding
 - **Equity** - Accessing resources on implementing sustainable and equitable programs
 - **Engagement** - Cultivating relationships between schools, communities, and municipalities

SOMERVILLE SRTS PROGRAM

- All Somerville public schools are formal partners of the MA SRTS program.
- SRTS as a philosophy that drives planning and engineering decisions.
- Collaboration with the MA SRTS program.
- Inclusion of transit as a key element of SRTS.
- Interdepartmental SRTS working group provides structure and coordination.

a.

i. What is Safe Routes to School (SRTS)?

1. Massachusetts SRTS Program

- a. Federally funded program administered by MassDOT
- b. Provides resources and staff support to municipalities and schools with the goal of increasing safe walking, biking, and rolling among public elementary, middle, and high school students.
- c. Centered on the 6 E's:
 - i. **Education** - Getting the tools students need to be smart, aware walkers and rollers.
 - ii. **Encouragement** - Building excitement about active transportation through events, activities, and contests.
 - iii. **Evaluation** - Exploring data about surrounding environments and travel behaviors to improve walking and rolling.
 - iv. **Engineering** - Seeking opportunities for SRTS-related infrastructure funding.
 - v. **Equity** - Accessing resources on implementing sustainable and equitable programs.
 - vi. **Engagement** - Cultivating relationships between schools, communities, and municipalities.

2. Somerville SRTS Program

- a. All Somerville public schools are formal partners of the MA SRTS program.
- b. SRTS as a philosophy that drives planning and engineering decisions.
- c. Collaboration with the MA SRTS program.
- d. Inclusion of transit as a key element of SRTS.
- e. Interdepartmental SRTS working group provides structure and coordination.

SRTS leadership in Somerville

- SRTS working group formed in August 2022.
- Partnership between the Somerville Public Schools, Office of Food Access and Health Communities (OFAHC), Mobility, Public Space and Urban Forestry (PSUF), Engineering, Parking, and Police.
- Working group goal: Systematize City and School coordination with SRTS as the focus.
- Meet twice per month:
 - General coordination meeting.
 - Arrival/dismissal focus meeting.



b.

i. SRTS Leadership in Somerville

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3. Working group goal: Systematize City and School coordination with SRTS as the focus.
4. Meet twice per month
 - a. General coordination meeting
 - b. Arrival/dismissal focus meeting

SRTS Core Components



c.

i. SRTS Core Components

1. Programs

2. Resources
3. Streetscape Changes
4. Community Engagement

Programs

- In-school trainings
 - 2nd Grade pedestrian safety
 - 5th Grade bike safety
- Crossing Guard program
- Bike parking program
- Transit pass programs
- School bussing programs



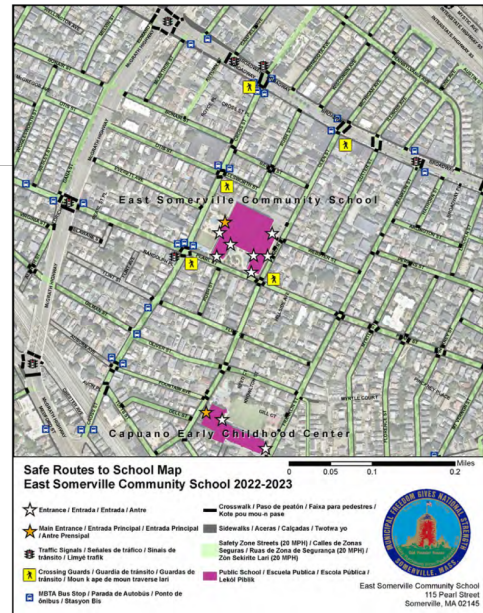
d.

i. Programs

1. In-school trainings
 - a. 2nd grade pedestrian safety
 - b. 5th grade bike safety
2. Crossing Guard program
3. Bike parking program
4. Transit Pass program
5. School bussing programs

Resources

- [SRTS website](#)
- Walking maps
- Bike facilities map
- MA SRTS resources
 - Starting a walking school bus or bike train
 - Walking and biking tips
- Arrival/dismissal policies and plans
 - Coming Fall 2024



e.

i. Resources

1. SRTS website:
<https://somerville.k12.ma.us/district-departments/health-physical-education/safe-routes-school>
2. Walking maps
3. Bike facilities map
4. MA SRTS resources
 - a. Starting a walking school bus or bike train
 - b. Walking and biking tips
5. Arrival/dismissal policies and plans
 - a. Coming Fall 2024

Streetscape Changes

PLANNING

- Data collection and analysis
 - Drone footage
 - On-the-ground observations
 - Student transportation surveys
 - Vehicle speeds, volumes, and crashes
- Project development & prioritization
 - Data, observations, feedback
 - Construction impacts
 - Advancing equity
 - # of students impacted



IMPLEMENTATION

- Quick-build toolkit
 - Pavement markings
 - Flex posts
 - Curb regulations and signage
 - Traffic patterns
- Construction
 - Speed humps
 - Curb bumpouts
 - Street and sidewalk reconstruction

f.

i. Streetscape Changes

1. Planning

- a. Data collection and analysis
 - i. Drone footage
 - ii. On-the-ground observations
 - iii. Student transportation surveys
 - iv. Vehicle speeds, volumes, and crashes
- b. Project development and prioritization
 - i. Data, observations, feedback
 - ii. Construction impacts
 - iii. Advancing equity
 - iv. # of students impacted

2. Implementation

- a. Quick-build toolkit
 - i. Pavement markings
 - ii. Flex posts
 - iii. Curb regulations and signage
 - iv. Traffic patterns
- b. Construction
 - i. Speed humps
 - ii. Curb bumpouts
 - iii. Street and sidewalk reconstruction

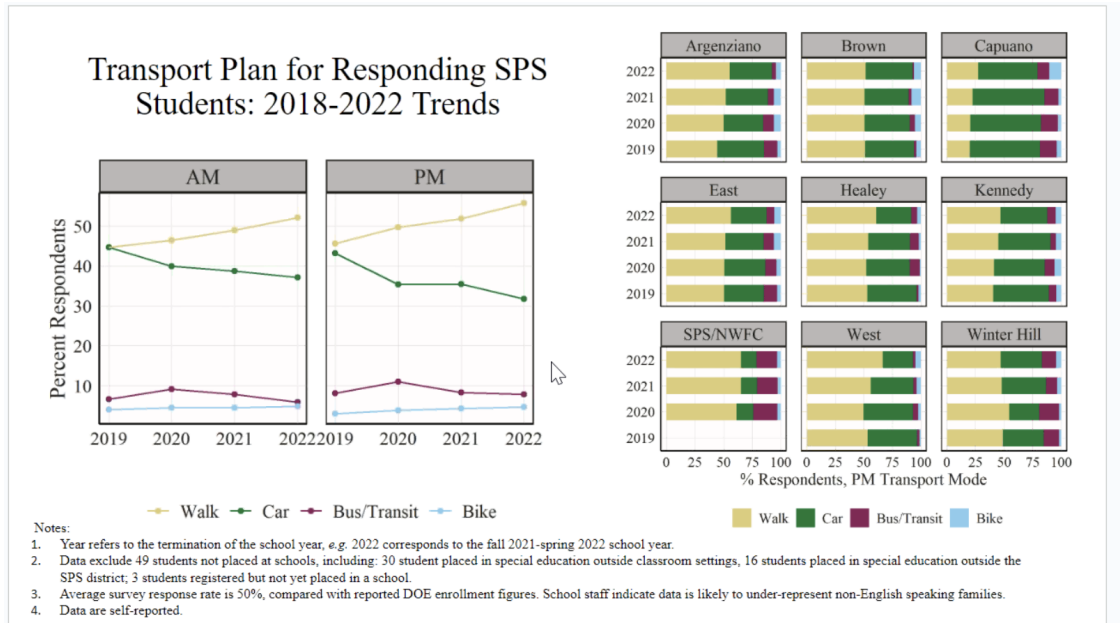
Community Engagement

- School Events
 - iWalk – International Walk, Bike, and Roll to School Day (October)
 - Massachusetts Winter Walk to School Day (February)
 - Massachusetts Walk, Bike, and Roll to School Day (May)
- School communications
- PTA meetings
- Mobility newsletter



g.

- i. Community Engagement
 1. School Events
 - a. iWalk - International Walk, Bike, and Roll to School Day (October)
 - b. Massachusetts Winter Walk to School Day (February)
 - c. Massachusetts Walk, Bike, and Roll to School Day (May)
 2. School communications
 3. PTA meetings
 4. Mobility newsletter
 - ii. Looking for feedback on ways to better reach families and make this information available
 1. Suggestion: Send handouts (e.g., route maps) home with students
- h. Questions/Discussion
- i. Question: What's the mode share for school transportation?
 1. Greg: Data is collected annually, varies a lot by school, walking generally increasing.



ii. Question: What are SRTS' goals? How are we measuring them?

- Greg: Overall goal is to make walking/biking/rolling/taking transit to school a safe option for every student, which might include reducing driving near schools and slowing down traffic on major streets surrounding schools. We don't currently have funding specifically for street reconstruction for SRTS but it's a priority in the general pool of reconstruction projects.

iii. Question: Crossing guard shortage?

- Greg: Yes, a staffing shortage exists. Hiring/management of crossing guards done by Police. There's a system to prioritize which intersections get available staff.
- Suggestion: Community outreach to recruit parents at their kids' schools.
 - City doesn't have the capacity to organize bike/walk trains, but encourages parents to organize within their own communities and provides some resources.

iv. Question: Possible to close streets around schools at pickup/dropoff?

- Greg: Collecting data and considering it, but nothing solid planned yet.

v. Question: Argenziano and construction around it?

- Lots of discussion with the Principal, actively working on making improvements.

vi. Suggestion: Freedom trail, but to schools.

- Need to collect more data about the most popular routes first, but would love to see it happen.

2. Transit Pass Program (Lauren Craik)

Program Motivation

Local Need

- 36% transit mode share, goal of 45% by 2040
- High local transportation costs
- 20% Somerville households under \$39,999
- > 24% of Somerville households do not have access to a vehicle

Regional Policy

- Means Tested Fare Discussion
- Free Bus Programs
- Local research

Opportunity

- ARPA Funding
- Political Momentum
- Aligns with Identified Community Values
- Transit as COVID recovery

a.

i. Program Motivation

1. Local Need

- a. 36% transit mode share, goal of 45% by 2040.
- b. High local transportation costs.
- c. 20% Somerville households under \$39,999.
- d. >24% of Somerville households do not have access to a vehicle.

2. Regional Policy

- a. Means tested fare discussion
- b. Free bus programs
- c. Local research

3. Opportunity

- a. ARPA funding
- b. Political momentum
- c. Aligns with identified community values
- d. Transit as COVID recovery

4. Priority for the City due to desire to increase transit mode share and assist families that are low-income and/or don't have access to a vehicle.

State Policy: Means Tested Fares

- MBTA current reduced fares for Seniors, TAP program, Youth Pass and Students
- Gap in reduced fare access for low-income riders
- Proposal to introduce a new program on means-tested fare by MBTA
- \$5 million proposed in State budget to explore means-tested fare program

Executive Summary	
Purpose	Low-Income Fares expands fare affordability across the MBTA modes, addressing an existing gap for the low-income population ages 26-64.
Development & Launch	Developing and launching a Low-Income Fare program is currently estimated to require at least 12 months with project implementation costs of approximately \$5 million. Key elements include the standard fare change process, changes to fare collection technology and fare media, the implementation of an online application, and onboarding of internal and partner staff in Community Based Organizations.
5-Year Cost	We expect \$2.4 million of ongoing annual administrative costs, with fare revenue losses and operating costs growing from \$22 million in year 1 through a steady state of \$53 million in year 5.
Broad MBTA Financial Context	Low-Income Fares are not currently in the MBTA budget. Implementing this would incrementally increase our funding gap and would require additional funding and/or reprioritization with other important initiatives impacting the Operating Budget.

b.

i. State Policy: Means Tested Fares

1. MBTA currently reduced faces for Seniors, TAP program, Youth Pass and students.
2. Gap in reduced fare access for low-income riders.
3. Proposal to introduce a new program on means-tested fare by MBTA.
4. \$5 million proposed in the State budget to explore means-tested fare program.

Somerville Transit Pass Benefits

Student M7	Parents and Guardians Pilot	Low Income Pilot	Workforce Pilot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grade 7-12 SPS students get M7 pass • 10 months • 100% free of charge • 2nd year running • Students in Grade 6 but >12yo can get an S-Card 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and Guardians of SPS students of ANY age • Needs based eligibility • Launched Dec 2022 as an ARPA pilot 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low income residents of Somerville • Partnering with CAAS • Enrolled in benefit program (SNAP, MassHealth etc.) OR up to 200% Federal poverty line • Applications open now, 500 passes available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launched Jan 2023 as an ARPA pilot to test workforce TDM measures
Low Income Pilots			
Funded by ARPA			

c.

i. Somerville Transit Pass Benefits

1. Student M7
 - a. Grades 7-12 SPS students get M7 pass
 - b. 10 months

- c. 100% free of charge
- d. 2nd year running
- e. Students in Grade 6 but >12 years old can get an S-Card
- 2. Parents and Guardians Pilot
 - a. Parents and guardians of SPS students of ANY age
 - b. Needs-based eligibility
 - c. Launched December 2022 as an ARPA pilot
- 3. Low Income Pilot
 - a. Low-income residents of Somerville
 - b. Partnering with CAAS
 - c. Enrolled in benefit program (SNAP, MassHealth, etc.) *or* up to 200% federal poverty line
 - d. Applications open now, 500 passess available
- 4. Workforce Pilot
 - a. Launched January 2023 as an ARPA pilot to test workforce TDM measures

Year to Date Findings

Student M7	Parents and Guardians Pilot	Workforce Pilot
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1291 active cards • Over 100,000 trips taken thru Feb • 33% of trips on subway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 423 active cards • 75% indicate income under \$30,000 • 58% in a no-car household • 16% mainly subway, 39% mainly bus, 45% a combination of both 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 632 active cards • 28% commute by bus, 21% by subway, 15% by a combo • 42% indicate spending over \$100/mo on transportation • 31% commute over 45 minutes

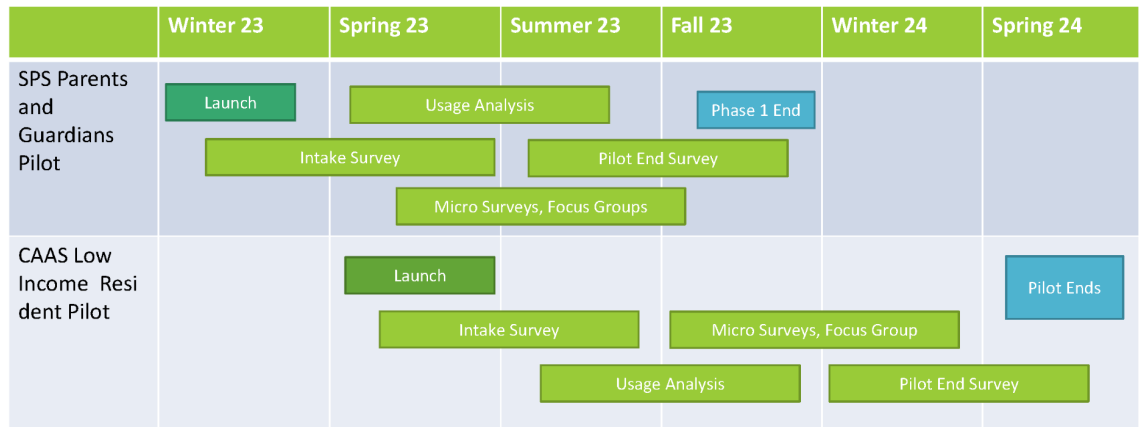
d.

i. Year to Date Findings

- 1. Student M7
 - a. 1291 active cards
 - b. Over 100,000 trips taken through February
 - c. 33% of trips on subway
- 2. Parents and Guardians Pilot
 - a. 423 active cards
 - b. 75% indicate income under \$30,000
 - c. 58% in no-car household
 - d. 16% mainly subway, 39% mainly bus, 45% combination of both
- 3. Workforce Pilot
 - a. 632 active cards

- b. 28% commute by bus, 21% by subway, 15% by combo
- c. 42% indicate spending over \$100/month on transportation
- d. 31% commute over 45 minutes

Means Tested Pilot Timeline



e.

i. Means Tested Pilot Timeline

1. SPS Parents and Guardians Pilot

- a. Winter 2023: Launch
- b. Winter 2023 - Spring 2023: Intake Survey
- c. Spring 2023 - Summer 2023: Usage Analysis, Micro Surveys, Focus Groups
- d. Summer 2023 - Fall 2023: Pilot End Survey
- e. Fall 2023: Phase 1 End

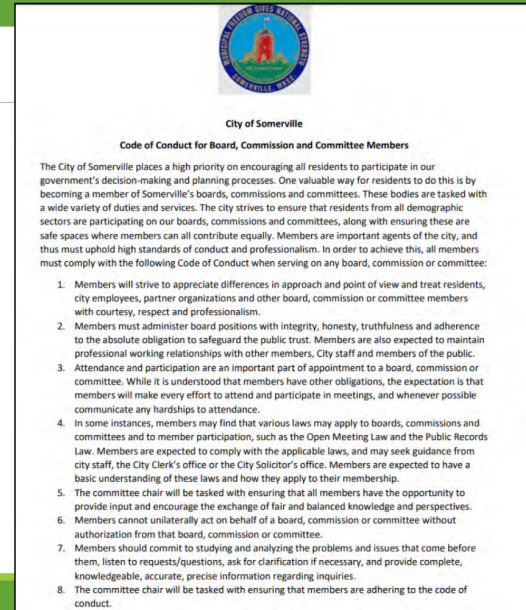
2. CAAS Low Income Resident Pilot

- a. Spring 2023: Launch
- b. Spring 2023 - Summer 2023: Intake Survey
- c. Summer 2023 - Fall 2023: Usage Analysis
- d. Fall 2023 - Winter 2024: Micro Surveys, Focus Groups
- e. Winter 2023 - Spring 2023: Pilot End Survey
- f. Spring 2024: Pilot Ends

3. General City updates

Code of Conduct

- The goal is to ensure that every member has the opportunity to work in a safe, inclusive space where they are able to effectively participate
- We will send document after this meeting, signing is not required for PTAC members but could be required if on another board/commission/committee



- a.
 - i. Code of Conduct for Boards, Commissions, and Committees
 - 1. Goal is to ensure that every member has the opportunity to work in a safe, inclusive space where they are able to effectively participate.
 - 2. Mobility will send document after meeting.
 - 3. Signing is not required for PTAC members but could be required if on another board/commission/committee.

Hybrid Meetings

Possibility to start hybrid/in-person meetings again:

Possible Accessible Meeting Locations

- Central Library
- Capuano School
- Healey School
- Argenziano School
- Somerville High School
- Winter Hill Community School
- West Somerville Neighborhood School
- West Branch Library
- Holland Street Center
- VNA Building

Mobility inquiring into more room specifics (i.e. room type and technical requirements)

b.

- i. Possibility to start hybrid or in-person meetings again, if committee wants.
- ii. Mobility researching possible locations and evaluating for accessibility, tech needs.

Construction Season Underway

- Pearl sidewalks between Mt Vernon and Myrtle underway
- Powder House and Alewife Brook Parkway Intersection Redesign
- Bow and Grand Union Bike Lanes
- Crosswalks Refresh



c.

- i. Construction Season Underway
 - 1. Pearl sidewalks between Mt. Vernon and Myrtle underway
 - 2. Powder House and Alewife Brook Parkway Intersection Redesign
 - 3. Bow and Grand Union Bike Lanes
 - 4. Crosswalks refresh

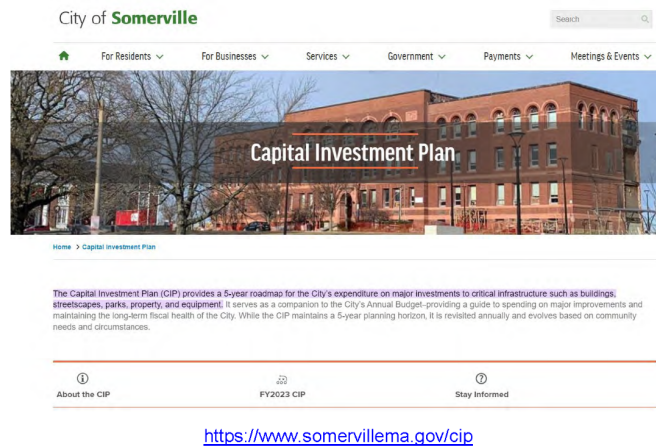
East Broadway Bus Service and Crosswalk Improvements

- Outreach that has already been completed includes:
 - On-street pop up on Broadway/Cross and Cross/Everett
 - Virtual office hours last week
 - Multilingual block walking
 - Flyering
- Additional outreach will include:
 - One more on-street pop-up
 - Broadway at Franklin Street on April 27, 3pm - 6pm
 - A second virtual office hours on April 19, 4pm – 5pm
 - Partnering with East Somerville Main Streets and Economic Development for Business Outreach
 - Multilingual digital and print outreach materials, flyering in the neighborhood
 - Project website: <https://www.somervillema.gov/eastbroadwaybus>
 - Traffic Commission (planned for May)
 - City construction and Mobility newsletters
 - CTY calls in advance of implementation



- d.
 - i. East Broadway Bus Service and Crosswalk Improvements
 1. Project website: <https://www.somervillema.gov/content/east-broadway-bus-service-and-crosswalk-improvements>
 2. Outreach that has already been completed includes:
 - a. On-street pop-ups on Broadway/Cross and Cross/Everett
 - b. Virtual office hours last week
 - c. Multilingual block walking
 - d. Flyering
 3. Additional outreach will include:
 - a. One more on-street pop-up at Broadway/Franklin St on April 27, 3-6 pm
 - b. Second virtual office hours on April 19, 4-5 pm
 - c. Partnering with East Somerville Main Streets and Economic Development for Business Outreach
 - d. Multilingual digital and print outreach materials, flyering in the neighborhood
 - e. Traffic Commission (planned for May)
 - f. City construction and Mobility newsletters
 - g. CTY calls in advance of implementation
- e. Final Bike Network Plan has been published!
 - i. <https://voice.somervillema.gov/somerville-bicycle-network-plan>

Citywide Capital Investment Plan



- Capital Plan helps guide long-term planning for investments requiring borrowing (aka "bonding")
- Several safe streets projects included:
 - Completion of Somerville Avenue
 - Clarendon Hill housing, utility & streetscape
 - Boynton Yards utility & streetscape
 - Spring Hill / Highland Avenue
 - West Broadway
 - Annual street & sidewalk reconstruction
- Annual updates to this 5-year plan

f.

i. Citywide Capital Investment Plan

1. <https://www.somervillema.gov/cip>
2. CIP helps guide long-term planning for investments requiring borrowing (aka “bonding”).
3. Several safe streets projects included:
 - a. Completion of Somerville Ave
 - b. Clarendon Hill housing, utility, and streetscape
 - c. Boynton Yards utility and streetscape
 - d. Spring Hill / Highland Ave
 - e. West Broadway
 - f. Annual street and sidewalk reconstruction
4. Annual updates to this 5-year plan

Action Items from Meeting:

1. None raised

Meeting ended: 8:02 PM