

# Safety Improvements Coming to Washington Street!

## Background

The City of Somerville plans to reconstruct sidewalks and repave Washington Street between Webster Avenue and Line Street. As part of this effort, we aim to redesign the street to increase safety and comfort for people walking, rolling, biking, driving, and taking transit.

In 2020, we implemented a pilot project to increase the reliability of the Route 86 bus. We did this by painting short bus lanes on the street and installing a separated bike lane with flexible plastic posts to protect people biking. Over the last three years, we engaged community members to hear feedback, collected traffic data, and evaluated safety and travel needs to develop a new permanent design for Washington Street.

The City is proposing to install protected bike lanes on both sides of Washington Street. Protected bikeways offer the most comfort for people biking and have the widest appeal to riders of all ages and abilities. One side will have sidewalk-level bike lanes. The other side will be street level and protected with concrete curb barriers. We will construct expanded bus stops to provide a larger waiting area. Expanded bus stops also reduce bus delays because the bus doesn't have to pull in and out of the vehicle lane. We will construct raised crosswalks across Washington Street and across some adjacent side streets. We will plant new trees along the reconstructed sidewalks. To learn more about the new designs and other safety improvements in Ward 2, visit [somervillema.gov/westernwashington](https://somervillema.gov/westernwashington).

## Construction

- Construction on Washington Street is scheduled to begin in 2023 and be completed by November 2024.
- Speed hump installation will take place in 2024.
- City contractors will start on sidewalk reconstruction and then move to repaving the roadway and installing the new traffic calming features.
- To stay up to date on construction, sign up for [City Alerts](#) available via phone call, text, or email at [somervillema.gov/cityalerts](https://somervillema.gov/cityalerts).
- You can also sign up for the City Construction Newsletter at [somervillema.gov/construction](https://somervillema.gov/construction).
- Regular updates will be posted on the project website at [somervillema.gov/westernwashington](https://somervillema.gov/westernwashington).
- If you have any questions during construction, reach out to the Construction Liaison at [construction@somervillema.gov](mailto:construction@somervillema.gov).

## Summary of Washington Street and Ward 2 Safety Improvements

For people traveling by bike, Washington Street will now have protected bike lanes on both sides of the street. Where there is parking, we will have sidewalk level bike lanes. Where there is no parking, we will have bike lanes on the street separated from vehicle traffic with concrete curb with plastic flex posts affixed atop the curbs.

**Separated Bike Lanes** are at street level but separated from motor vehicle traffic with barriers. On Washington Street, concrete curbs with plastic flexible posts installed on top of the concrete will provide protection and separation for people biking.

**Raised Bike Lanes** are protected bike lanes raised to sidewalk level and separated from the parking lane by a sidewalk curb.

For people walking and rolling, there will be 4 raised crosswalks across Washington Street, 5 raised crosswalks across side streets that intersect Washington Street, and 1 raised crosswalk on Perry Street at Lincoln Park. **Raised Crosswalks** make crossing the street safer and more comfortable for everyone. Since they are elevated (roughly to sidewalk height), people driving must slow down as they approach the crossing. Raised crosswalks also enable people using wheelchairs and other mobility devices to cross more easily.

Some bus stops will be consolidated or moved. All 7 of the bus stops along Western Washington Street will become floating bus stops. **Floating Bus Stops** are expanded sidewalks that provide dedicated waiting and boarding areas for bus riders. Floating bus stops also streamline bus service and improve accessibility by enabling the bus to stop in the travel lane. Floating bus stops are separated from the sidewalk by a bike lane, eliminating conflicts between buses and bikes at stops and improving safety for people biking.

The City will construct raised intersections on Washington Street at Skehan Street, Hanson Street at Skehan Street, and Oak Street at Houghton Street. **Raised Intersections** give priority to people walking by bringing the intersection up to sidewalk level. Raised intersections reinforce slow speeds and encourage people driving to yield to people in the crosswalks.

Across Ward 2, speed humps will be added on Dane Street, Calvin Street, Perry Street, Wyatt Street, Concord Avenue, and Newton Street. **Speed humps** are asphalt traffic-calming devices intended to reduce vehicle speeds to 10 to 15 mph. These asphalt structures are 3-4 inches high, 12-14 feet wide, and extend from curb to curb. We paint them with white triangles and yellow stripes and place signage nearby to ensure they are visible to approaching vehicles. Speed humps are typically placed 200 feet apart to prevent people from speeding in between them. Speed humps maintain access for residents, first responders, and services such as street sweeping and snow removal, and deliveries.

A new crosswalk will be added across Washington Street at Dane Street and new pedestrian signals added to the intersection of Calvin Street, Dane Street and Washington Street.

A shared bus and bike lane will remain heading eastbound on Washington Street from the Bumpus Bridge to Webster Avenue.

### [Response to Feedback from Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities Chair](#)

- Can you provide an option near the Beacon St intersection. Can you use paint to differentiate the accessible space? Especially with the bike lane? Help to signal to people biking that they are traveling next to an accessible space and to be more aware and bike slower
  - New accessible spaces will be added on Washington Street at Calvin Street and Perry Park.

- The two spaces near Kingman Road will be put next to each other and a flush curb will be constructed (like what is next to the West Branch Library).
- The existing accessible space at 303 Washington St will be remain in place.
- The bike lanes next to accessible spaces will be painted blue to make them easier to find and to warn people biking to be cautious while biking nearby.
- A total of 9% of the spaces within the project area are proposed to be accessible, so we didn't include an additional space near Beacon Street. However, we would be happy to hear feedback about considering an additional accessible space on Beacon Street near the Washington Street intersection.

<b>Western Washington Street On-Street Parking</b>		
<b>Regulation</b>	<b>Number of Spaces</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Loading	8	14%
Metered	6	10%
2 HR / Permit	23	40%
Accessible	5	9%
Teacher	16	28%
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>100%</b>

- Be mindful of safe unloading and loading for people with mobility impairments
  - Accessible spaces have been located as close to key destinations as possible and at the end of the parking lane so to provide the maximum amount of space for loading and unloading. They will also be placed as close to curb ramps as possible, and spaces that are directly adjacent to the sidewalk will have a flush curb to provide more flexibility. Where accessible spaces are located next to a raised bike lane, there will be a 2-foot buffer between parked vehicles and the bike lane.
- Should we begin to think through side street parking options? More accessible spaces? More short-term parking options?
  - The City's ADA Coordinator has worked with two nearby residents to fulfill two accessible parking requests on Leland St and Bowdoin St. At this time, we do not plan to make additional parking regulation changes to the side streets within the project area. We are still evaluating the effectiveness of side-street regulation changes in some of our other projects like the Holland Street Mobility Improvements project.
- Bus shelters can block the sidewalk and make it hard for people with visual impairments. We support some kind of shelter for buses, but that particular design can be difficult with people with disabilities.
  - Bus shelters will not be placed on the sidewalk. Because the bus stops will all be floating and thus provide a separate waiting area for passengers, any benches or shelters that are added will be installed on the waiting island and will not block the sidewalk.
- What is the regulatory guidance for spacing of crosswalks? Could there be a crosswalk closer to the bus stop at Bowdoin/Parker?

- We aim to have crossing options, at a minimum, every 500 feet. We will be adding a new crosswalk across Washington St at Perry St, which is about halfway between the existing crosswalks at Perry Park and the Argenziano School.

## Summary of feedback from Community Members

Below is a summary list of what we heard in feedback during the development of the final proposed designs.

### *Transit*

- Recognize that there is a strong push for protected bike lanes, but don't want to forget about bus riders
- Support from some who identified as transit riders for bus lane approaching Union and Dane St since it cuts through car congestion
- Some support for consolidation of bus stops to reduce bus delay, and some concern over the placement of the consolidated bus stops
- Urged to continue to do outreach to bus riders
- Interest in improving the waiting experience at bus stops with amenities like benches or shelters

### *Bike facilities*

- Enthusiastic support for protected bike lanes
- Skepticism about bus/bike lane as an option for people of all ages and abilities
- Washington Street described as an important connector to other bike facilities and key destinations like Union Square
- Right turn out of Dane Street is heavily used for both people biking and driving and needs attention
- Desire to provide safe ways to make left turns from Washington Street
- Dangerous turning conditions at Beacon Street and Washington Street

### *Pedestrian facilities*

- Concerned about sidewalk condition and walking safety issues on nearby Hawkins Street due to speeding
- Support for the increase in crosswalks proposed in the designs, with some asking for more crosswalks
- Enthusiastic support for better sidewalks, especially as it improves access for people with mobility impairments or people traveling with children or strollers
- Support for traffic calming facilities like raised crosswalks to reduce speeding vehicles, especially at key destinations such as Perry Park and Lincoln Park
- Desire for additional raised crosswalks on adjacent streets, albeit these might be outside of the scope of the project
- Advocacy for wider sidewalks when possible
- Request for yellow flashing lights at crosswalks; audible crosswalk lights
- Request for raised crosswalk at school entrance

### *Driving/Parking*

- Some support shared from people who drive – they like the clarification of bike movements and better visibility
- Concern for teacher parking options near the Argenziano
- Concern for increased frustration for people driving experiencing more congestion or being forced to go slower
- Requests for loading zones and short-term parking options near businesses
- Concern with the reduction of parking along the street
- Desire for more accessible spaces with curb ramp access

#### *Greenery*

- Desire for more trees and green space wherever possible
- Requests to explore options for more trees around bus stops to make it easier while waiting in the sun
- Advocacy to enlarge tree pits to provide more space to trees

#### *Maintenance*

- Enthusiastic support for repaving the road and fixing the sidewalks
- Reiterated need for continued maintenance to keep new protected bike lanes clear of debris and snow

#### *Speed humps*

- The City initially identified Dane Street, Calvin Street, and Perry Street as candidates for speed humps. In the survey, 74% shared that they really support installing speed humps on these streets
- Additional streets that residents asked the City to consider included Concord Ave, Newton St, Lake St, and Village St
- Some concerned about installing any speed humps as they can be uncomfortable to drive over