

PTAC DECEMBER MEETING

Thursday, December 19, 2024





AGENDA

- Procedural business (10 min)
- Subcommittee updates (15 min)
- Report-back on 10/28 meeting with McGrath Blvd project team (40 min)
- Reflection on PTAC's work in 2024 & planning for 2025 (20 min)
- Other business / Public comment (5 min)



PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

6:30 – 6:40PM

- Roll call & guest introductions
- Vote on November draft minutes
- Email from Mayor's Office on committee reappointment process (Mobility is looking into it)



SUBCOMMITTEE UPDATES

6:40 – 6:55PM

- Community Events
- Design Review
- Special Projects



REPORT-BACK ON 10/28 MEETING WITH MCGRATH PROJECT TEAM

6:55 – 7:35PM

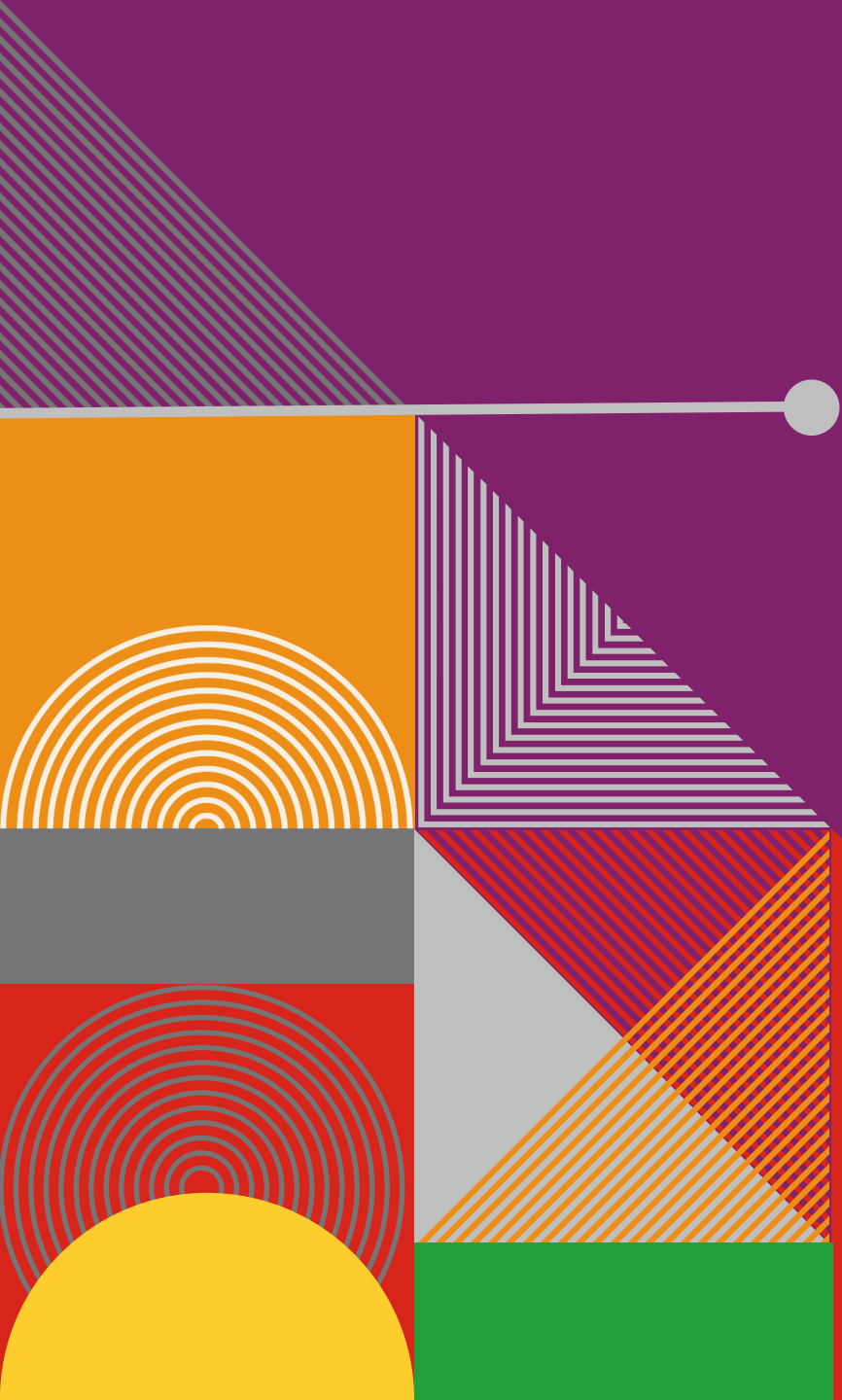
- With Karen Molloy (McGrath Coalition & Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets)
- Can't share photos of in-progress designs yet

BACKGROUND

- **February 13, 2024:** [Last public meeting for McGrath Blvd project](#), concept design presented
- **Spring / Summer 2024:** Community advocacy organized by SASS
 - May 14, 2024: [McGrath Coalition letter](#) signed by 19 organizations and 25 individuals, requested meeting with MassDOT leadership
 - June 21, 2024: [PTAC letter](#) (aligned with McGrath Coalition)
- **October 28, 2024:** Meeting with MassDOT's McGrath project team on in-progress designs at SPL
 - MassDOT staff (~7, including McGrath project manager Chris Cameron & Bowman designers)
 - Somerville Mobility (Brad & Justin)
 - Elected officials (Senator Pat Jehlen, Rep. Mike Connolly)
 - Local advocates (Karen Molloy, Mark Chase, Aili Contini-Field, Karl Alexander, Alessandra)

WHAT WE ADVOCATED

Topic	PTAC	McGrath Coalition
Road width	Max 3 travel lanes w/ ped refuges (4 if 2 were bus lanes)	Narrow & shift lanes to one side of ROW
Median	Replace w/ ped refuges, reallocate space to edges	Narrow, reallocate space to edges
Crossings	Ped refuges	Traffic calming measures, eliminate highway-like designs
Sidewalks	Wide (>12 ft), well-lit, amenities	Maximize human-scale uses
Otis Street Pedestrian Overpass	Ideally crossing would be safe enough at grade but if not, overpass should stay	Should only be eliminated once road is narrowed & safe crossings are in place
Bus infrastructure	More bus service & center lanes	Stronger bus-priority elements
Green space	Plenty on edges	Plenty on edges
Housing & other development	Use excess land from narrowed width for housing	Free up land wherever possible for housing
Bike infrastructure	Supportive, want clear markings & accessibility features	Ensure continuous travel & safe crossings, connect to other paths

An abstract geometric design on the left side of the slide. It features a vertical stack of colored squares: orange, grey, red, and green. The orange square contains white concentric semi-circles. The red square contains red concentric semi-circles. A yellow semi-circle is at the bottom of the red square. To the right of these squares is a grey triangle with diagonal lines, and a red triangle with diagonal lines. A grey line with a dot extends from the top of the orange square towards the right.

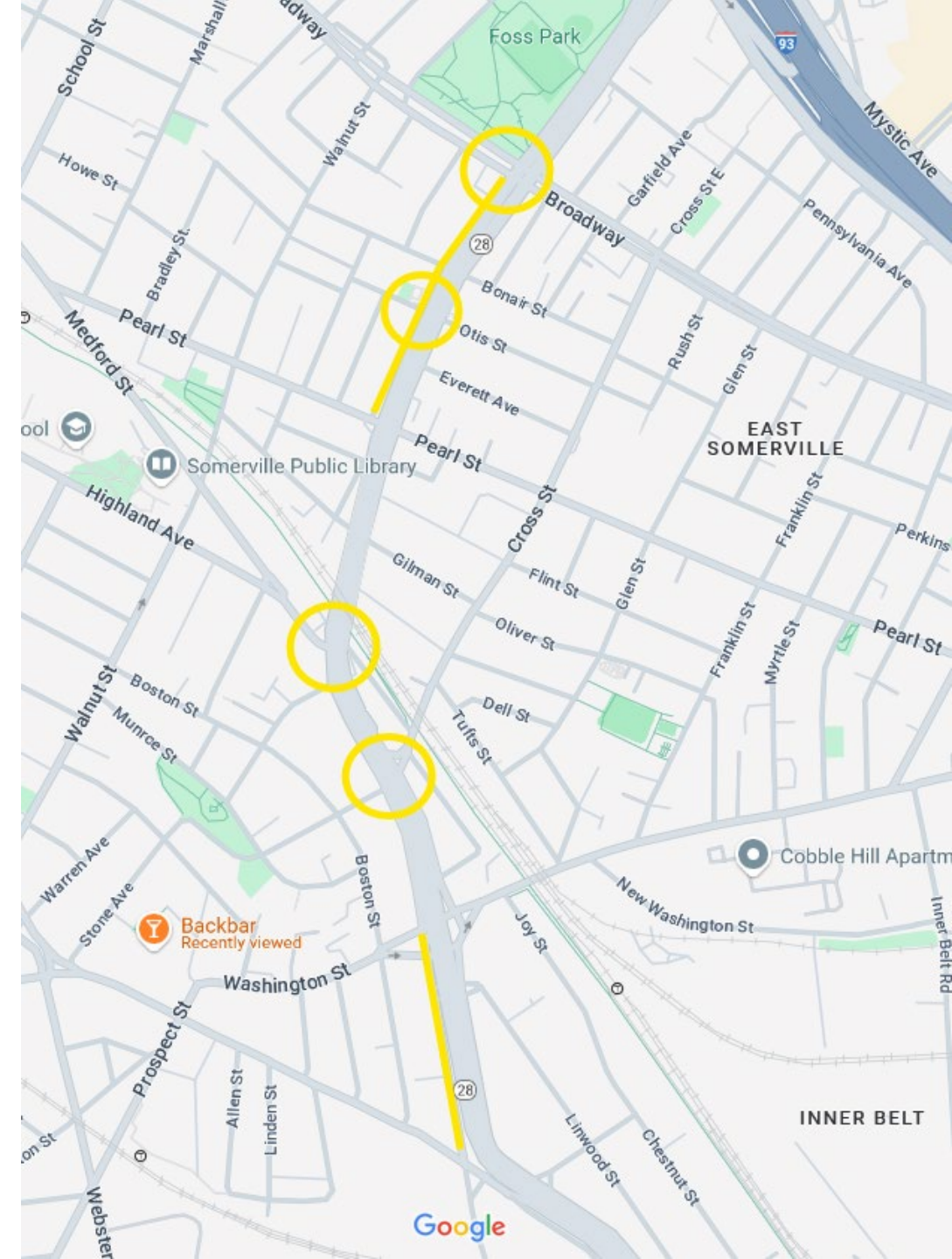
OCTOBER 28 MEETING SUMMARY

MAJOR UPDATES

- **Road width** reduced from 6 to 5 lanes
 - Likely the narrowest we can hope for
 - Right-turn lanes allow for protected pedestrian signal phases
 - Center lanes could be turned into bus lanes in the future
- **Median** is retained to prevent unauthorized left turns
 - Designs show 8 ft at narrowest and 20 ft at intersections
 - The longer the median, the longer the crossing times
 - City's goal is to keep median as narrow as possible to maximize tree planting space on edges
- **Sidewalks** will be 8-10 ft, not including space for plantings and other amenities
- **Target speed** (speed limit) and design speed (usually higher) not yet set, advocacy goal is 25 MPH
- **Slip lane removed** from Somerville Ave onto Medford St, opening up even more land around future Milk Square
- **Poplar St** (in Brickbottom) is slated to be a Neighborway & lanes are reduced where it intersects McGrath

AREAS OF CONCERN

- **Otis St:** Closest intersection north is Broadway, which is planned for minimal traffic calming interventions since it's the end of the project area
 - Possibility for raised crossing? Against MassDOT policy but has happened before (Kensington Connector by I-93)
 - Goal for RYG signal with pedestrian phase to regularly stop traffic
 - Will have to work with contractors to determine feasibility of maintaining footbridge during construction
- **Cross St:** Currently unsignalized but pedestrians will need to cross two lanes of traffic
- **Frontage roads** (south of Washington St & between Pearl St / Broadway): Use for Neighborway-like streets? Need to ensure traffic calming when cars enter (speed humps and other gateway treatments)
- **Medford St:** Cyclists expected to turn left onto northbound McGrath in two phases



NEXT STEPS / TIMELINE

- **Mid-Winter 2024/2025:** Project team will hold another public meeting as designs near 25%
 - Should plan to write another advocacy letter shortly after this
- **Summer 2025:** Design Public Hearing with 25% designs
 - Difficult to make major design changes after this point
- **2027-2028:** Goal for start of construction
- **2031-2032:** Goal for McGrath Blvd completion



REFLECTION ON PTAC'S WORK IN 2024 & PLANNING FOR 2025

7:35 – 7:55PM

2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Welcomed 8 new members!
 - 2 (Brenda & Satoko) serving as Officers
 - 1 (Rob) serving as subcommittee lead
- Restructured subcommittees
 - Community Events, Design Review, Special Projects
- 4 letters
 - Continued rate of 1 letter/3 months (consistent since 2022)
 - Continued funding for Transit Benefits Program, West Broadway concept design, McGrath Blvd concept design, Elm Street Parking Pilot
- Reviewed / provided feedback on 6 projects
 - McGrath Blvd
 - Davis Square Commercial Area Plan (including Signal Improvements)
 - West Broadway Reconstruction
 - Elm St Parking Pilot
 - Tufts Street Reconstruction / Neighborway
 - Western Pearl Reconstruction

2024 ACCOMPLISHMENTS (CONTINUED)

- 5 teams of invited speakers (not incl. Mobility ex officio members)
 - **Somerville Engineering:** 5-year repaving plan process
 - **Students from Carole's Harvard GSD Course:** Ped/cyclist project presentations
 - **Adam Polinski (Mobility):** Traffic signals for pedestrians and transit
 - **Sgt. Mike McCarey (SPD):** Municipal Road Safety Grant and SPD's approach to traffic safety
 - **Eric Weisman (DPW):** Snow clearing for pedestrians and transit
- 129 subscribers to monthly newsletter
- Became official co-organizer of Streetwise event series (with SBAC & SASS)
- 8 events
 - 5 tablings
 - Bike Month Kick-Off (April 28)
 - Carnaval (June 2)
 - Union Square Farmers Market (Aug. 10)
 - SomerStreets Monster Mash (Oct. 20)
 - Winter Farmers Market (Dec. 14)
 - 2 walks
 - West Broadway (April 23)
 - Western Pearl St (Oct. 21)
 - 1 gathering
 - New member social (July 22)

2023 Goal	Priority Level	Progress
Onboard new committee members	High	Done
Restructure subcommittees	High	Done
Engage on school mobility	High	Not pursued
Engage on enforcement	High	Met with SPD, identified schedule for feedback on MRS grants
Monitor Parking & Curb Use Study	Medium	No updates
Monitor Bus Network Redesign	Medium	Phase 1 launched (86 → 109 in Somerville)
Monitor Snow Clearing Pilot	Medium	Met with DPW
Monitor No Turn on Red installation	Medium	Not pursued
Engage on Safe Streets Ordinance	Medium	Done, ordinance passed in June 2024
Engage on extending Green Line	Low	Not pursued
Rubric for projects/plans	Low	Not pursued
Engage on trash/recycling sidewalk clearing	Low	Not pursued



GOALS FOR 2025?



OTHER BUSINESS / PUBLIC COMMENT

7:55 – 8:00PM