

Somerville Bicycle Advisory Council
Thursday, February 6, 2025

Attendees:

Tom Lamar
Lena Webb
Ted Feldman
Adrienne Agarwal
Kat Benesh
Alex Frieden
Katharine Lange
Paul Morgan
Amanda Reichel
Ian Woloschin

Not in Attendance:

Gregory Ely
Maria Salim

Ex Officio:

Councilor Willie Burnley, Jr.
Viola Augustin (mobility)
Greg Hanafin (mobility)

Other Attendees:

Rishika Dhawan (mobility)
Jonathan Mitchell from Ward 2

AGENDA:

Approval of January minutes:
Amanda moves, Ted seconds.
Voted: approved unanimously

Outreach events:

Somerville Bike Kitchen Winter Workshop series (Rim Brakes this Sunday, Wheels & Frames next Saturday!)

Discussion:

Community Path moped/delivery traffic: Councilor Burnley is considering proposing an ordinance in Somerville limiting mopeds/motorized delivery drivers, inspired by Boston's recent ordinance.

- Although mopeds are already prohibited, they still are present on the path.
- Goal is to keep all users safe

Upcoming SBAC elections: for Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. These elections happen each year, as required by our bylaws. Elections will happen in April.

Roles of positions:

Chair: presents agenda, runs the meeting, coordinates with Mobility Division

Vice Chair: steps in when needed

Secretary: takes minutes, makes sure they're finalized, make sure there are acting secretaries if need be

The officers typically meet with Mobility Division staff one week before the full meeting for ~30 min.

Subteam updates:

Encouragement & Outreach: Kat, Amanda, Adrienne, and Paul.

- First conversation went well, set goals:
 - 1 tabling event per quarter, and attend Streetwise talks once a month as well to establish a presence.
 - Got on the tabling list for the Winter Farmer's Market for next year, Adrienne will try to connect with summer farmer's markets.
 - Created an internal calendar.
 - Intending to do social media work, possibly guided group bike ride.
 - Wants to support leader of Illuminations tour.
 - Amanda will try collaborating with Safe Routes to School. Group is interested in the potential of collaborating on a traffic garden so people can learn to navigate streets safely in a controlled environment.

Question from public: Argenziano school students often put their bikes against fences rather than lock them up to racks. Does the city have plans to increase those?

- Mobility: city has recently sent new bike racks to the school. Unsure where nor when they will be installed.
- Ian: where will the new bike racks be installed?
- Mobility: uncertain
- Alex: There's an ongoing request for a Blue Bikes station by Lincoln Park. Alex reached out to Katie White suggesting Lincoln Park as a priority site.
- Mobility: no capacity to install new Blue Bike stations right now, but do have a running list of requested Blue Bike stations, including Lincoln Park.

Question from Mobility: what will the subject of tabling be?

- Kat: We'd like a map from the city of the Somerville bike network to show people the biking options.

Question from Adrienne: can we table at Streetwise?

Tom, Paul: yes, we have to connect with Ken.

Engineering & Eval: been meeting for a while.

- Discussed changing meeting time.
- Left turns on Webster: Ted & Tom found a MassDOT plan to replace the bridge over the railroad tracks. Would like to learn more about that plan.
- This group would like to do more evaluation, and perhaps collaborate with the Encouragement & Outreach team, like for public feedback on bike plans.
- Perhaps the city can use alternatives to bollards, like planters.
- Interested in feedback from the group in general

Question from the public: what left turn from Webster?

- Tom: the left turn lane on Webster (southbound) turning onto Prospect.
- Public: the left turn lane on Prospect onto Somerville Ave is also lightly used.

- Public: that intersection bridge has also been under construction for years. Is there an end date? MassDOT staff on the site have not given a date.

Topic from Katharine: sticky intersection on Medford St (northbound) with vehicle right turn lane on McGrath. When turning vehicles have a red light, cyclist has to unsafely weave through traffic. When turning vehicles have a green light, cyclist has to wait for vehicles to cross through bike lane.

- SBAC [submitted letter](#) in 2021 on this situation.
- There are a few designs in that area would totally change this intersection, so improvements may wait for those projects.

Topic from Ian: another sticky intersection on Western Washington, right turn on to Dane St. Difficult to see if there's a cyclist coming because of the bus stop. If driver pauses to look back for a cyclist, oncoming turning vehicles will take that pause as their cue to go ahead on to Dane. Suggestion: signal phase the cycle track there to protect cyclists & motorists.

- Powderhouse Circle, while greatly improved, is still confusing for motorists.

Mobility suggestion: eval team members should engage with cyclists of all ages and abilities to reflect the reality of people's experiences, since we're trying to design a city that works for all street users.

Engagement: Lena.

- Taken stock of our website (somervillebikes.org). It's out of date, though does still receive some public questions/comments.
- Might not have the same purpose as it used to since the city has upped their communications, including newsletter and social media.
- Created a Bluesky account.
- Consider making an official page on the City website, though it would be harder to make updates there.

City Updates:

Upcoming events:

Council on Aging Board Meeting tomorrow Feb 7

Maffa Way/Mystic Ave bridge replacements meeting Feb 26 6pm

Legal Questions:

Conflict of Interest Law - this committee is bound by this law

Open Meeting Law - this committee is bound by this law. Members are not allowed to deliberate outside of this meeting if you reach quorum (9 out of 16 active members). A public meeting cannot happen without quorum. Meeting minutes are required each meeting.

2024 Key Performance Indicators:

- *Annual Bike Count:* data from this year showed that average counts were lower than 2023, but higher than 2022. Long term trend in the annual bike count is increasing steadily.
- *Blue Bikes:* Systemwide ridership is increasing (4.5 million trips total), as are trips originating in Somerville (250,000 trips)
- *Blue Bikes by month:* Somerville set ridership records for each month of the year.
- *Blue Bikes by type:* slightly more than 25% of trips systemwide and originating in Somerville were ebikes.
- *Crashes:* number of crashes decreased in 2024, with 623 total crashes. Second year in a row with no fatal crashes. Downward trend.
 - Ridership going up, crashes going down!
- *Strategies:* Somerville built more than 100 traffic calming features in 2024, significantly more than 2023. The top strategies were speed humps and curb extensions.
 - Refreshed 254 faded crosswalks, added 46 new crosswalks.
 - Installed 2.2 miles of protected bike lanes. General trend of bike lane infrastructure is steadily increasing.
 - Completed a major project on Washington Street
 - Councilor Burnley: thanks to the city for tying the city to the national crosswalk standards as part of the Safe Streets Ordinance. Report of implementation of Safe Streets is coming in March.
 - 101 community outreach events in 2024.

Public question: any data on non-peak hour biking?

- *Mobility:* yes we do, at certain locations, but not sure if they're part of the KPI. We do 2 counts at certain intersections to glean some of the off-hour counts, but no annual program at the same location outside of peak hours. Volunteer counts is a huge community effort.

Tom adjourns the meeting.