



April 2025 Meeting Minutes

Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

Meeting Information

Thursday, April 17, 2025, 6:30-8:00 PM

This meeting will be hybrid:

- **In-person meeting location:** 101 South St., Somerville, MA 02143
- **Zoom info to join remotely via computers, tablets, and smartphones:**
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89181225932?pwd=aWpoL2FtaUh3aGdVbHNRWUJmeDRNQOT09>
Passcode: 152274
Or join by phone:
Dial (for higher quality, dial a number based on your current location):
US: +1 646 558 8656
Webinar ID: 891 8122 5932
Passcode: 152274
International numbers available: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/kcVy69ROJG>

Members

* = present

1. Ted Alexander*
2. Ginny Alverson
3. Caroline Bodager
4. Meredith Brown
5. Laura Evans*
6. Christopher Ferry*
7. Preston Gutelius*
8. Satoko Hirai (Digital Communications Officer)*
9. Brenda Marvin (Secretary)*
10. Steven Mulder*

11. Barbara Myers*
12. Bianca Norkunas
13. Vitor Pamplona (Vice Chair)*
14. Zach Rosenberg
15. Alessandra Seiter (Chair)*
16. Robert Stanzel
17. Carole Voulgaris
18. Will Mbah (Ex Officio, City Council - At Large)
19. Katherine White (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility)*
20. Justin Schreiber (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility)*

Guests

None

Acting Secretary

Christopher Ferry

Call to Order

6:32 PM

Agenda

Procedural Business

1. February & March Minutes were accepted
2. Meeting with Sgt. McCarey to discuss Municipal Road Safety Grant - scheduled for Thursday, April 24, 7:00-8:00PM
3. Meeting w/ MBTA on automated bus lane enforcement - date TBD
4. Informal discussion of enforcement and differences of opinion within PTAC
 - a. Alessandra proposed a social meeting to discuss different views of enforcement policies
 - b. The city staff confirmed that having a quorum of the committee meet for a social occasion with policy discussion is acceptable under the Open Meetings law as long as no action is taken

Subcommittee Updates

1. Design Review - did not meet in past month
2. Special Projects - committee on hold
3. Community Events
 - a. Union Square walk audit - Tuesday, April 29, 6:00-8:00PM, Union Square MBTA Station (50 Prospect St)
 - b. Bay State Bike Month Kick-Off Presented By Cambridge Bicycle Safety, Sunday, May 04, 2025 at 1:00-4:00 PM, Aeronaut Brewing (14 Tyler St, Somerville)

Review Latest McGrath Blvd Design

1. 3/25 Public Meeting held by DOT - showing integrated design comments from the public

2. Goal for PTAC is a new letter to DOT Project Team - before summer
3. McGrath project divided into 3 sections w/ the largest effort being the removal of the viaduct in the central portion
4. General changes or response to requests for changes
 - a. Raised crosswalks - limited to cross streets only, possible limitation of federal grants
 - b. Frontage roads - being kept, DOT does not want residential driveways onto McGrath Blvd
 - c. Median - narrowed but kept, needed to prevent left turns across the blvd, 8-10 ft in most areas, 20 ft at Washington St.
5. McGrath @ Somerville Ave. & Medford St.
 - a. Removed slip lane connecting Medford St, & Somerville Ave.
 - i. Allows for new green space adject to current Target parking lot
 - ii. City hopes for an active civic space, DOT may plant grass
 - iii. Limited exits from Target parking lot
 - b. Banned left turn from McGrath NB onto Medford St.
 - c. Narrowed Poplar St.
 - d. McGrath still 6 lanes wide at intersection
6. McGrath @ Washington
 - a. Keeping wide media in McGrath - MBTA wants room for a future left turn lane for a future bus route
 - b. Keeping frontage road on west side - private driveway access
 - c. Fewer lanes for Washington St.
7. McGrath @ Highland & Medford
 - a. Removed 1 lane from McGrath NB turning onto Highland
 - b. Flex posts to separate bike-lane from car-lanes on truss bridge over railroad - more permanent structures being researched
 - c. Medford St to be "T"ed into Highland - Intersection re-built by DOT but controlled by City
8. McGrath @ Otis/Cremin Playground
 - a. Current footbridge to be demolished
 - b. An ADA-compliant footbridge would eat into playground area on the west side and preclude any green space on the east side - replacing ramps w/ elevators would require high maintenance costs and 4 total elevators (2 on each side)
 - c. Proposing at-grade crossing - fully signalized (not HAWK or hybrid/flashing light)
 - d. Passive green space proposed for east side of crossing
 - e. Vertical changes to road-bed limited by Federal standards
9. General Reactions - Issues for Letter
 - a. Median - can room be left for a future bus lane?
 - b. Bus stop amenities
 - i. rain shelter, bench
 - ii. trash & recycling
 - iii. elevated/elevating platforms
 - iv. solar power - info boards, lights, USB charging
 - v. emergency box (campus blue light style)
 - vi. Space of adjacent Blue Bikes station
 - c. Narrow vehicle lanes - propose 10 ft vs. current 11 ft
 - d. Otis St. pedestrian bridge to be maintained through construction until at-grade crossing completed
 - e. Target speed limit - 25 mph to "knit McGrath back into the street-scape"

- f. General feeling that new designs are an improvement, but the wide right-of-way still feels like a highway. Can more land be given back for productive use, not just transportation?
- g. Alessandra to make first draft of response letter to be reviewed by full PTAC at May meeting

Webster Ave. Bridge Replacement

- 1. 75% Design - construction expected to start in winter
- 2. Only 1 public meeting (in March)
- 3. Replacement bridge and "T" off of Newton St on both sides
- 4. Concerns that new bridge will not leave space for any future expansion of Green Line
 - a. MA DOT says new bridge is narrower, but not narrower than nearby Prospect bridge
 - b. MBTA signed-off on design
 - c. Wider ROW could be used for commuter rail repairs or improvements, not just Green Line
- 5. Alessandra to draft letter to DOT from PTAC
 - a. 3 issues:
 - i. Width of bridge for rail ROW
 - ii. Lack of public engagement
 - iii. Opportunity to widen sidewalks
 - b. Full committee OK with Alessandra sending letter w/o additional review

Elm-Beacon Connector Traffic Signal Phasing

- 1. Carry-over questions from last meeting
 - a. Mossland dead-end on north end because then end is wider and allows more room for cars to turn around
- 2. Elm St @ Cedar & Mossland
 - a. Minimal changes to signals
 - b. Combined exclusive Pedestrian & bike phase will allow for reduced cycle time
 - c. Bicycle signals and signs should not to yield to pedestrians
 - i. Concerns about SB bike conflict w/ pedestrians crossing Mossland, can bike lane be directed to middle of Mossland, not at the curb?
 - ii. Concerns about bikes turning onto Elm conflicting with pedestrians crossing Elm
 - d. PTAC suggests removing any pedestrian signal cross Mossland - always approved to cross
 - e. Design does not expect bicycles "salmoning" (contra-flow) NB on Cedar
- 3. Elm St @ Somerville Ave.
 - a. Can pedestrian phases be re-ordered to be adjacent allowing pedestrians to cross multiple portions of the intersection w/o waiting?
 - b. Concerns about WB slip lane speeds
 - i. Slip lane design limited by bus use
 - ii. 95% of traffic WB uses slip lane instead of right turn at intersection
 - iii. "T" off slip lane so it is a turn to move from slip lane onto Elm
- 4. Somerville Ave @ Beacon St
 - a. Cameras at Mossland and Adalaide to only activate turns from those streets when cars of bikes present
 - b. NB bike traffic from Beacon unlikely to follow markings to swerve right to stay in bike lane to turn left onto Somerville Ave.

Final Items

Action Items from Meeting

1. First draft of response letter on McGrath - Alessandra
2. Full writing and distribution of letter on Webster Ave - Alessandra
3. Meeting with Sgt. McCarey to discuss Municipal Road Safety Grant - Thursday, April 24, 7:00-8:00PM
4. Union Square walk audit - Tuesday, April 29, 6:00-8:00PM
5. Bay State Bike Month Kick-Off Presented By Cambridge Bicycle Safety, Sunday, May 04, 2025 at 1:00-4:00 PM

Meeting Ended

8:15