



September 2025 Meeting Minutes

Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

Meeting Information

Thursday, September 18, 2025, 6:30-8:00 PM

This meeting will be hybrid:

- **In-person meeting location:** [101 South Street](#), 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 Office)
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. *Mackenzie Webb
17. *JT Scott (Ex Officio, City Council - At Large)
18. *Katherine White (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility)
19. *Justin Schreiber (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility)

Guests

1. Karen Molloy (Somerville Resident, Ward 5; Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets [SASS])
2. Andy Reker (Somerville Resident, Ward 2; City of Cambridge Transit Program Manager)
3. Jordan Pagkalin (The Somerville Times)
4. Coralie Cooper (Somerville Resident, Ward 3; SASS)
5. Joel Paul (Somerville Resident)
6. Mark Levy (Somerville Resident)

Acting Secretary

Meredith Brown

Call to Order

6:32pm

Procedural Business (10 Minutes)

- Roll call and guest introductions
- Vote on August draft minutes
 - Alessandra motioned, Meredith seconded, passed unanimously
- Announcements
 - October call for acting secretary
 - Membership updates:
 - Carole and Rob have stepped down, likely another call for members in collaboration with Mobility in the future
 - Officer elections:
 - September meeting: Notification to think about interest in stepping into an officer role, reach out to current officers with interest or questions
 - October meeting: Nominations
 - November meeting: Elections
 - Union Square Walk Audit letter
 - August 28 City Council: Order that Director of Engineering respond to letter; referred to committee
 - Planning for Mobility and Engineering to come to November meeting to discuss next steps on walk audit and recommendations
 - Somerville Times reported on audit findings

Subcommittee Updates (10 Minutes)

- Community Events
 - Gilman Square festival (Sept 13) - successful tabling
 - Next upcoming tabling event (Oct 4) - Groundwork harvest festival (South St)
 - Monster Mash (October) - another opportunity to table
 - Outreach around September 29-Oct 5 - Week Without Driving - national event to raise awareness around non-drivers
 - Social media frame activity at Groundwork festival
- Design Review
 - Did not meet this month
 - Updated design for Western Pearl to be released Oct 4
- Special Projects
 - Open call for interest to lead in Rob's absence

MBTA Presentation on Automated Bus Lane Enforcement (25 Minutes)

- Kirstie Tirandazi, who joined Transit Priority at the MBTA in June 2025, presenting on the MBTA's preparations for automated bus lane and bus stop enforcement.
 - The MBTA has been working on this in earnest since January 2025, when a statewide law was passed allowing the MBTA, regional transit authorities (RTAs), and municipalities to use cameras to enforce parking in bus stops and bus lanes. The law still does not allow for automated enforcement of moving vehicles.
 - Details: [slide deck](#) and [recorded presentation](#) given to the MBTA Board of Directors in April 2025.
- Legislation
 - Chapter 363 of Acts of 2024 created MGL c. 90K

Statutory Background

Chapter 363 of the Acts of 2024 created MGL c. 90K to allow automated enforcement of bus stops and bus lanes

MBTA, RTAs and municipalities may now use cameras and camera systems to enforce motor vehicles:

1. Parking in a bus stop (\$100 fine)
2. Standing/parking in a bus lane (fines range from \$25-125)

Chapter 363 of the Acts of 2024 also expanded MGL c. 89 to add section 4E:

"No motor vehicle shall be parked, stood or caused to stand in a lane designated for the exclusive use of buses unless otherwise regulated or posted by an official traffic signal, sign or marking or at the direction of an authorized police officer."

- - MBTA moving forward with operationalizing the law - establishing fine levels, appeal procedures, warning criteria, forms/notices, reporting standards
 - Applies to all enforcing authorities (not just MBTA but also other RTAs and municipalities that opt in to establish automated camera enforcement systems)
 - Developed in collaboration with RTAs, municipalities, local transit and disability advocates
 - Revenue neutral
- Why does enforcement matter?
 - Nearly 40% of daily T riders use bus: "workhorse of transportation system"
 - Major priority: more likely to be low income, minority, no access to vehicle

- Blocked bus stops are unsafe - especially for riders with mobility devices or strollers or carts; big safety concern with disembarking in city street
- Proposed regulations
 - Definitions

703 CMR 6.00: Key Definitions

Bus Lane refers to any lane of vehicular traffic designated and marked or designated and posted by an Enforcing Authority for exclusive use of MBTA or RTA buses or school buses.

Bus Stop refers to any place designated and marked or designated and posted by an Enforcing Authority as a bus stop or bus terminal area used for loading and unloading bus passengers.

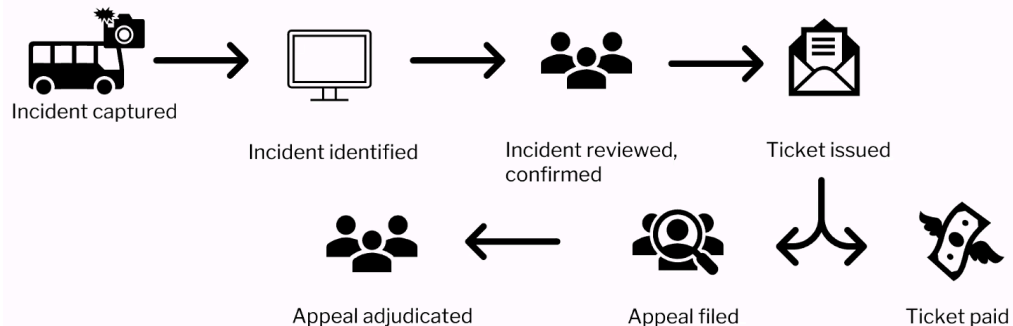
Park or Parking refers to the complete stop or standing of a vehicle, whether occupied or not, including a commercial vehicle loading or unloading, except in a posted loading or unloading zone.

Stand or Standing refers to the complete or near complete stop of an occupied motor vehicle for any amount of time for any purpose, including breaking for traffic, traffic signals, or pedestrians, or picking up or dropping off passengers.

- There are many exceptions to liability for bus lane or stop violation
 - Emergency vehicle operation or yielding, funeral processions, stolen vehicles, operator issued a citation or another violation notice (other tickets supersede - avoiding double payment), necessary for safety of passengers or pedestrians, or compliance with officially posted signal/sign/marking, complying with orders of police officer, utility or service vehicle actively responding to service call or emergency, special authorization by enforcing authority (e.g. if EZRide were officially allowed to use bus lanes), or any other necessity to comply with any other law or regulation
- Warnings
 - Issued in lieu of a fine
 - Warning issued for first offense with lifetime lookback, provided that violation did not endanger public health, security or safety, or as circumstantially appropriate for reasons of fairness
- Fines and penalties
 - Somewhat higher for commercial vehicles - set by legislature
- Data privacy
 - Very careful - in collaboration with ACLU to ensure thorough review and alignment with best practices
 - Any photos video not to be used for any purpose other than enforcement without court order
 - Not public record
 - Not usable to identify operator, passenger, vehicle contents
 - 120 day data retention policy 120 days
- Operationalization of program
 - Key features
 - There exist two types of camera enforcement: currently only moving forward with MBTA/RTA **bus mounted** cameras, not yet pursuing **wayside cameras** at stops/plazas (like the ones Somerville is piloting)

- Not a lot of overlap between the two types of services provided by vendors so this was an intentional choice to accelerate by focusing on one, rather than parallel pathing
- Ticketing process
 - All infractions centrally reported/managed, and reviewed by a person before being sent
 - Tickets sent by mail
 - Adjudication process for appeals
 - Mandatory 60 day education period before fines begin (education to continue beyond 60 day period)

How a ticket is issued and resolved



-
- Phase 1 (Fall 2025) - starting with smallest garage (Southampton Garage), and subset of buses (SL4/SL5), to kick off program with a highly controlled initial rollout (all the buses are silver - easier logistically)

Route	Stops	Daily Boardings
28	77	12,322
39	52	8,098
SL1	17	6,090
SL2	16	3,232
SL3	24	8,396
SL4	22	8,393
SL5	22	4,306
Total	189	51,615

Southampton Garage

Routes 28, 39, SL1, SL2, SL3, SL4, SL5



-
- Bus + route alignment logistics can't always be fully controlled so operations will be orchestrated on a garage level
- Roadmap for launch:
 - (complete) April 2025 - Draft regulations and Tech RFI
 - (complete) August 2025 - Technology RFP
 - Adopt regulations - Sept 24 2025
 - Data only technology pilot - Winter 2025 (test out tech live)
 - Reference to the seagulls and autonomous vehicles in the seaport - check tech in real life Boston conditions

- Soft launch on SL4/SL5 - Spring 2026
 - Program expansion 2026
 - Public education late this year / early next year in preparation for the soft launch and expansion
- Email: ktirandazi@mbta.com with any questions
- Q&A
 - Alessandra: very excited, pleased about ACLU involvement and alignment with best data privacy practices. Success metrics in other cities?
 - Boston is quite late to this, many other cities have implemented for us to learn from. Programs in other cities have been extremely successful, have more than recouped costs (though reemphasizes that this program will be revenue neutral). Another city's implementation found that mobility device ramp deployments went up 10%, indicating better support of users needing ramps. Identification of repeat offenders - roughly 80% of first offenders don't violate again, but the 20% present a challenge. People that drive for a living present a harder change management situation
 - Alessandra: only bus mounted cameras for now - Somerville has 3 locations for bus stop cameras - how is Boston thinking about working with municipalities on bus stop cameras
 - City laser focused on launching this pilot, but for key pressure points that is a conversation they expect to have, and excited to partner on the next phase
 - Ted: how do they plan to differentiate between moving and standing/parked vehicles
 - Most technical solutions involve taking a short video and having the AI compare frames to differentiate moving vs standing/parked
 - Ted: on education - how to educate the riders of Uber/Lyft as well as the drivers
 - Pretty widespread education campaign, across bus/subway system, intended to be comprehensive enough to educate broadly
 - Alessandra: If there is anything we can do to help get the word out, get in touch!
 - They plan to develop toolkits for laypeople and groups like ours to help spread the word
 - JT Scott: Crunch technical questions: these are not moving violations, legislation has probably specified that this would not hit insurance? (Correct). In the regulations, they would apply to MTA and any local municipalities pursuing their own separate enforcement. Presumably that also extends to the revenue neutrality of it (correct - this is set by legislators). Curious what the mechanism is to enforce the revenue neutrality - how to document program administration costs, and then give a remission to the Mass state transit trust fund?
 - Kirstie: we will be working that out as part of this program - legislation needs to be passed before moving on the administrative aspects in earnest
 - MBTA currently documenting all costs including staff hours on the program
 - JT: Is there still time for written comment?
 - Hearing in August where they were accepting feedback/comment and made some modifications; Weds is final version
 - Joel: Timeline for full rollout? Ticket amount/structure?
 - No official timeline; doing initial rollout first to do stress testing
 - \$25 for first offense for bus lanes, \$100 for bus stops (higher than bus lanes but lower than other city peers)

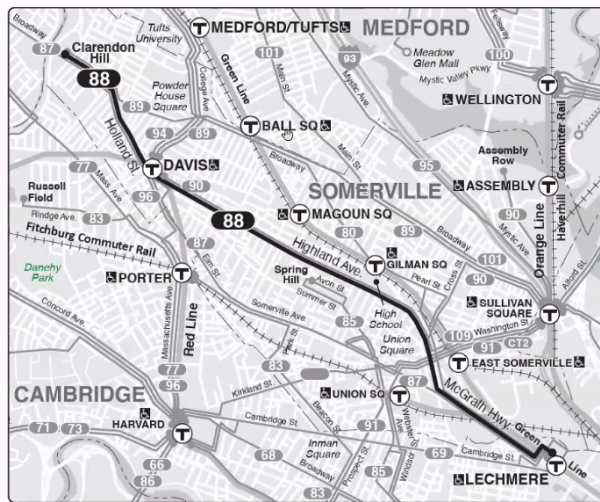
- For commercial vehicles, the counter for fine escalation restarts every 12 months, for personal vehicles resets every 6 months.
- Meredith: testing phase, anything in particular you are watching out for or truly just looking for unknown unknowns
 - That and testing accuracy
 - Example of license plate reflection in a window
 - Looking for edge cases

Discussion on Long-Term Considerations for Bus Route 90 (40 Minutes)

- Background (from agenda):
 - On June 15, the MBTA launched service changes to bus route 90 in East Somerville. The changes re-routed the 90 from Broadway, Cross St, and Tufts St onto Washington St. That same day, [PTAC sent a letter to the MBTA](#) advocating that the 90 be restored to Cross St and Broadway in the next schedule update, ensuring critical service for East Somerville families by the 2025-26 school years. There was also an outpouring of support for route restoration from community members beyond PTAC, including current students. In July, we were thrilled to learn that the 90 would be restored to Cross St and Broadway in time for fall school reopening. This route restoration has since happened.
 - However, challenges with bus route 90 remain including frequency concerns, operational difficulties on Cross St, and alignment with the MBTA's ongoing [Bus Network Redesign](#) project. There will need to be long-term solutions to these challenges to ensure the sustainability of bus service in the areas currently served by the 90.
 - At this PTAC meeting, Mobility staff will describe these challenges, potential solutions, and trade-offs to frame a discussion among committee members.
- Justin Schreiber (OSPCD Mobility) presenting
- Two routes in play here - 88 in addition to 90. Due to route overlap, there are intersecting decisions to be made

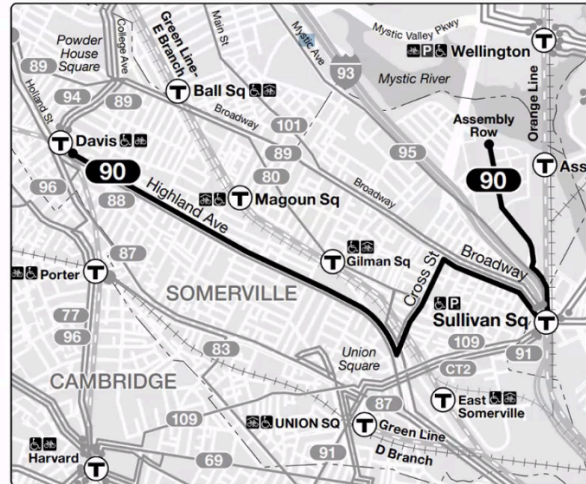
Route 88: Clarendon Hill - Lechmere

- **Span:** 5:15am-1:39am weekdays, 5:30am-1:35am Saturdays, 6:40am-1:35am Sundays
- **Connections:** Red Line & Green Line
- **Frequency:** mostly every 20-30 minutes
- **Primary service** along Highland Ave
- **Ridership:** 1770 riders/weekday
- **Busiest weekday stops** (by ons+offs): Davis – 646, Clarendon Hill – 572, Lechmere – 380
- Lechmere ridership is down by 29% Fall 2024 compared to Fall 2022 due to GLX opening

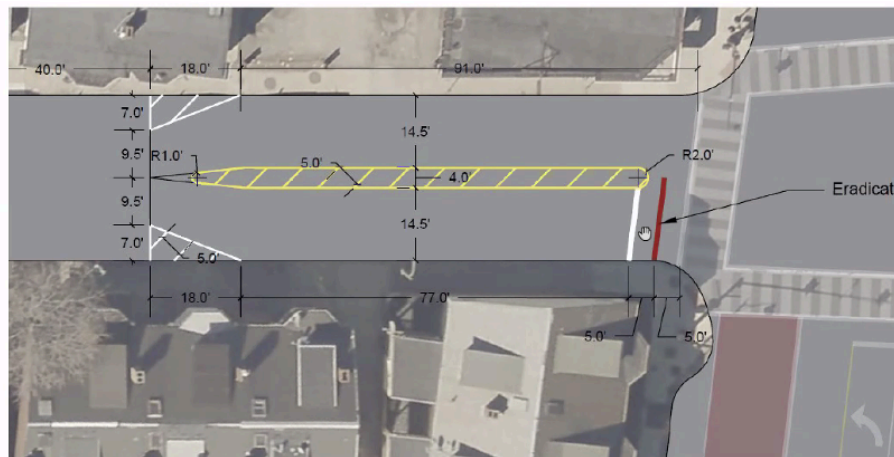


Route 90: Davis – Assembly Row

- **Span:** 6:05am-11:28pm weekdays, 7:00am-10:51pm Saturdays, 10:30am-6:56pm Sundays
- **Connections:** Red Line & Orange Line
- **Frequency:** mostly every 40-70 minutes
- **Ridership:** 647 riders/weekday
- **Busiest weekday stops** (by ons+offs): Davis – 222, Sullivan – 202, Assembly Row – 121



- Brief history of route 90 changes since 2023
 - Prior to 2023, originally ran down full length of Cross St
 - Fall 2023-Spring 2025: relocated down Tufts St to make closer connection to East Somerville (not an ideal connection, and only in outbound direction)
 - Summer 2025 - rerouted to omit Cross/Tufts due to expected challenges navigating redesigned Tufts St (not impossible, but harder) as well as existing operational challenges on Cross St, and to make a slightly closer (but still not ideal) connection to East Somerville
 - Substantial advocacy against the change - high school students, ESCS & WHEdgerly families, East Broadway business district, PTAC letter
 - June 13 - Mayor KB did a route walk with Phillip Eng and city/MBTA staff
 - MBTA agreed to return service to Cross St, but asked city to improve Cross St especially at intersection with Broadway
- Changes over the summer
 - Flex posts added to no parking areas at intersections
 - Pavement marking changes at Cross/Broadway
 - Relocated stop bar
 - Painted median to provide more turning space
 - Lengthened bus stops to meet MBTA standards (replacing appx four parking spaces)



- Aug 24: 90 bus returned to Cross St (still skipping Tufts)
- Bus network redesign

- 88/90 largely duplicative, lack sufficient frequency (esp 90), often bunch together; their routes go near GLX but all of the transfers are awkward and/or not accessible
- Southern portion of 88 is largely duplicative with GLX south of Washington St

Bus Network Redesign

• 2022 Bus Network Redesign Goals

- Consolidate the two routes for more frequent service
- Service schools and neighborhood via Cross St
- Connect to the GLX

• Complications

- Original Bus Network Redesign plan assumed 88/90 could connect with Green Line at Gilman – however School St slopes cannot provide an accessible transfer
 - GLX connection via Tufts St conflicts with conversion to a Neighborway. Tufts St is no longer an option.
- 381 average weekday ons or offs (both directions) per weekday at Lechmere on Route 88 – how to accommodate



- Bus Network Redesign still shows Cross St service, but original design assumed connection at Gilman, which is not accessible due to School St slopes. Although it can be used by many riders as a transfer point T cannot claim Gilman as an official transfer point
 - MBTA no longer considers Tufts St a viable route after conversion to neighborway
 - A lot of Somerville riders are still using Lechmere to get on the green line, how to accommodate those riders - priority for MBTA
- Bus on Cross/East Broadway may not be compatible with accessible Green Line connection
- No path forward without significant tradeoffs
 - Important community destinations on Cross/East Broadway; connects residents with the rest of the city
- Some options (not exhaustive)
 - Consolidate 88/90, keep Cross St without GLX connection
 - Consolidate 88/90, locate service on Washington St for GLX despite significant reservations from city and community
 - Do not consolidate 88/90 (does not achieve better frequency, leaves the bunching and duplicative service)
- Goal at this point: Get thoughts on priorities, main concerns, main goals for the future of the service; not looking for conclusions or actions, just preliminary thoughts and ideas to initiate drafting of letter that will be basis for final recommendations
- Q/A
 - Alessandra: Clarify what exactly makes a connection accessible to the green line?
 - Basic level: sidewalk that is flat (at least 4' wide, slope not exceeding 8 1/3% with handrails and ~5% without [Justin thinks off the top of his head]), bus able to deploy ramp, within 1000 feet of station (note: Washington St bus stops do NOT meet the 1000 feet guideline)
 - Alston St - cant fully guarantee it is totally accessible all the way to East Somerville station, but is nominally accessible, MBTA would have to do a closer look to confirm. Could be some deficiencies (e.g. southbound switchback)

- Alessandra: Listing the goals that the 90 is trying to fulfill here: (1) provide connection from East Somerville Broadway area, including the 4 schools, to rest of city; (2) provide accessible connection to GLX; (3) continue to connect to Lechmere (or another green line stop) as well as to Assembly; (4) on a reasonable frequency; (5) provide good service to SHS students
- Laura: Is it the case that we have to solve for all of these, or is a bus transfer acceptable, or are the frequencies too low for that to be viable?
 - Not sure, not sure if MBTA would accept 2 bus connection to green line, and frequency matters
- Christopher: Has there been much discussion about Gilman on the Pearl / Medford side? Is there some creative routing that could go down McGrath (is there a reason there isn't a bus on McGrath now between Highland and Broadway)?
 - Nothing is off the table to propose (though T has always expressed reservation about running buses on narrow streets like Central, concerned about hills and width, challenges to consider). The straighter the better for good bus planning
 - McGrath - no service right now, ultimately per BNR 85 will be there, one issue is southbound between Broadway and Highland/Medford - there is no sidewalk adjacent, a planted median; the T could not add bus stops there without significant construction (Blvd project could provide that but that is longer term)
 - MBTA is committed to coming back to community for a broader conversation before making additional changes
 - Justin just came from traffic commission - concern about removing the 4 parking spots
- Alessandra: following up on McGrath as a possibility - given the reconstruction project, should we refrain from recommending McGrath as a possibility given that construction would cause temporary shifts, or is that not as much of a concern?
 - Not sure
- Vitor: Wondering if Tufts St is a closed deal or if we can reopen that?
 - MBTA has said publicly that they don't see Tufts st as an option for buses at this time
 - Why? Primarily related to the narrowing of the pitch point - 12 ft wide, yield condition, not common for buses to encounter that. Project actively underway. Neighborways are not a through street, probably just not compatible with regular heavy vehicle use like a bus (though fire dept, trash trucks will still use of course)
- Alessandra: Is there an optimal connection at East Somerville or are all options suboptimal?
 - Really not made as a bus transfer connection, really far set back
- JT: I would think for having a truly accessible connection at Washington St station, the only way envisioned would be a bus station turnoff like at Davis Sq - is that under consideration? That is a LOT of real estate
 - No discussion of busway at this time
- Christopher: Elevator from high school to Gilman Sq station would make that transfer accessible. Or a public escalator ("just being difficult")
- Christopher: Also pointing out there are 4 schools in East Somerville (East Somerville School, Edgerly, Capuano, and PHA middle school.)
- Kate: Did the MBTA describe any specific deadlines, beyond just being interested in this?
 - No clarity, just not happening in immediate future and there will be public conversation
- Ted: Eastbound stop at East Somerville on Washington St - is there a reason it is so far away from green line station now?

- Primary reason: Underpass (cant stop at ramp, too low below sidewalk level). Floating bus stops were part of the GLX project. That is the closest they could come
 - There is a spot I missed where MBTA felt unsafe interactions with the two vehicle lanes merging
- Joel: Buses using Cross St instead of McGrath - MassDOT not planning bus lane because MBTA not using it, MBTA not putting bus service in because no bus lane - is there a way to work this into the McGrath plans
- JT: On the elevator - there was a proposal several years back, engineering did feasibility studies - the elevator from Gilman was incorporated into some early designs of HS, was removed with a parking garage to save costs on the high school project. When later came back to suggest elevator again, it only got about halfway up the hill (soccer field level) then series of switchbacks; projected cost over \$10 million to get halfway up the hill
- Karen: Have been thinking about this since BNR was finalized a few years ago, knew this day would come. The poor frequency of the 90 - as a rider, the bunching is hardly an issue because it is so low frequency. The elevator idea has bubbled up repeatedly because it is such an obstacle. Interesting about the routes, because the 90 satisfies the issue of the businesses on Broadway and the schools, but just heard about some seniors at Cobble Hill who liked having the 90 on Washington and used it to go grocery shopping; these routes are trying to do a lot. Eventually the routes will be combined, not happy about it unless a high priority route; Highland Ave could really use the frequency. Self fulfilling prophecy about the 90, like the 85 - nobody is taking the 90 so lets move the 90 - and then if you move it unreliably nobody will be able to use it reliably so ridership goes down
 - Yes, important to contextualize 90 ridership in terms of frequency (it has fewer riders but also runs so much less frequently)
- Ted: Could more connection to Sullivan / Orange Line replace the need for connection to Green Line?
 - Unanswered question: where are the folks getting off at Lechmere actually going? Need to get more data on that; if their goal is getting to say North Station, Orange is fine. Likely to see people doing a variety of things but answers to this could help to guide strategy
 - Looking to leverage not just MBTA data but also community member priorities. Ok to not be constrained by options presented, also ok to just wait for other things to change. BNR is effectively a zero sum game, with service being reallocated throughout the network; there will be accessibility tradeoffs when reallocating transit resources
- Alessandra: With changes on cross st, is there any frequency gain or is it not doing too much?
 - Buses operating daily, too early to tell, there will be an upcoming inspection that mobility hopes to attend as well (test bus)
 - Likely to see faster service and maybe less disruptions. Very narrow and congested street generally speaking
 - Encourage us to think about things like McGrath, is that acceptable in spirit of faster service
- Next step: consolidate ideas (Mobility happy to support a subcommittee meeting)
 - Alessandra to take first pass, Meredith to pitch in, Design Review or ad hoc meeting

Other Business (5 Minutes)

- No public comment

Final Items

Action Items from Meeting

1. Alessandra and Meredith and anyone else interested to compile and potentially meet about ideas about 90 route

Meeting Ended

8:01pm