



## October 2025 Meeting Minutes

### Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

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### Meeting Information

Thursday October 16, 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=aWpoL2FtaUh3aGdVbHNRWUJmeDRNQQT09>  
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. Meredith Brown
4. \*Laura Evans
5. \*Christopher Ferry
6. \*Preston Gutelius
7. \*Satoko Hirai (Digital Communications Office)
8. \*Brenda Marvin (Secretary)
9. Steven Mulder
10. \*Barbara Myers

11. Bianca Norkunas
12. \*Vitor Pamplona (Vice Chair)
13. Zach Rosenberg
14. \*Alessandra Seiter (Chair)
15. \*Mackenzie Webb
16. J.T. Scott (Ex Officio, City Council, Ward 2)
17. \*Katherine White (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility)
18. \*Justin Schreiber (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility)

## Guests

1. Kris Carter, *Chief Possibility Officer at MassDOT*
2. Christian MilNeil, *Editor In Chief of StreetsblogMASS*
3. Karen Molloy, *Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets (SASS)*
4. Jordan, *Community Member*

## Acting Secretary

Laura Evans

## Call to Order

6:31

## Agenda

### Procedural Business (5 Minutes)

- Roll call and guest introductions
- Vote on September draft minutes - Unanimous vote
- Announcements
  - Call for new members - ideally, 2-5 new more
  - Brenda, Vitor, Preston (maybe) interested in helping to interview new members
  - Group bus ride with Community Events - 90, 88 routes, next Wednesday, more details to come

### Subcommittee Updates (5 Minutes)

- Community Events
  - Planned group bus ride to understand routes
  - Monster Mash 2-6, tabling
  - Possible winter events: tabling at winter farmer's market
- Design Review
  - Discussed Western Pearl (see later item)
- Special Projects
  - Did not meet

### Discussion on Autonomous Vehicles with MassDOT

- Kris Carter, MassDOT

- Waymo is not driving autonomously in MA - cars in summer 2025 were mapping
- Motional is the only permitted AV company in MA (in Boston only), but required to have a safety driver
- Various levels of automation, from driver assist to robotaxis
- Why AVs? Possibly: safety, efficiency, infrastructure
- Without good public policy, the opposite of all those things could happen
- Different states have different levels of regulation
- History of regulation in MA from 2016-2025 - most testing happening in Boston Seaport so far
- Current process: Application reviewed by MassDOT, testing plan reviewed by MassDOT and roadway owners (municipalities), MOA signed by roadway owners
- No bills through the State House yet to allow vehicles without safety driver - unclear when or if we will see new law at the state or federal level
- MassDOT coordinating discussions between municipalities and peers in other states
- Slides have a number of resources to keep up with journalists and academics working in this area
- Discussion: what are we looking for in AV regulation?
- Question: what does it mean to have consideration for first responders?
  - Some whitepapers from first responder working groups and what they're seeing - AVs can't follow hand signals when humans are directing traffic at special events or funerals, for example
- Question: where are the MA proposals from and why? Is MassDOT considering proposing its own legislation?
  - MassDOT has set up the testing framework, passing their learnings up to the Governor to consider for legislation
- Question: is MassDOT thinking about how to use this technology in public services, for example on buses?
  - MassDOT isn't doing this, but RIPTA has tried it
- Question: one of the promises is that it will reduce VMT, but that was the same promise with Uber/Lyft and it didn't happen. Do we have data on this from other states?
  - Need to be shared vehicles to get any of those things
- Question: machine readable signs?
  - Most of the AV companies are focusing on reading existing signs

## Review of Western Pearl Street 80% Design

- Previously reviewed these plans in June 2025
  - Concerns included speeding, cut throughs, sidewalk conditions
  - Supported concept 1
  - Advocated for additional traffic calming, raised crosswalks, bike and ped pedestrians, neighborways
- City presents latest designs
  - More detailed version of concept 1 with some updates from feedback
  - Slower intersections, more raised features
  - Bike lane is partially two way and partially one way
  - Additional loading zones and accessible parking spaces
  - Sixteen new trees
  - Pearl at Walnut - will pilot changing the light to a flashing red (full red can be summoned by button or approaching emergency vehicle)
- Design Review met and discussed this new design

- General approval
- Like the raised intersection, the new signal pattern, more trees
- Question: why bike path at street level versus sidewalk level?
  - Cost saving to not have to do full depth reconstruction everywhere
- Question: why is the yellow line only present in some places?
  - Want it near intersections and near lateral shifts, but it can be traffic calming not to have it
- Question: Some of these tactile delimiters are in really bad shape where they already exist
  - The ones on Summer are getting bumped by the plow but we have more room here
- Email Mobility or the committee if you have other comments
- Mobility would like to hear opinions on the signal change in particular

## Officer Nominations

- Chair
  - Alessandra
- Vice Chair
  - Vitor
- Secretary
  - Brenda
- Digital Communications Officer
  - Satoko will be stepping down
  - No nominations yet

## Discussion on Community Path Safety Improvements

- City presents on safety concerns raised by users
  - Averaging 3300 pedestrians per day in 2024
  - Most common concerns about conflict between faster and slower users of the path
  - Considering both short term and long term improvements
  - Collecting feedback from users and soliciting ideas of possible interventions
  - Near term solutions: next spring; long term: depends on funding
  - Possible tools: adding two or four way stops at intersections, adding speed humps or raised crosswalks, additional signage to communicate rules, bollards, signals, barriers, tactile pavements, pavement markings
- Barriers may be a problem with the volume of traffic on the Community Path
  - Especially for cargo bikes, adaptive bikes
  - Flexible bollards would be more forgiving
- Signage seems to enforce norms on other trails
- Tactile markings are of interest, especially around stations, as well as reminders that these should be slow zones
- Overhead to signal you're in a station area
- Playfulness in markings as a signal you're in the community
- A sense of place encourages slowing down

## Other Business

None

## Final Items

### Action Items from Meeting

1. Review signal changes on Pearl at Walnut at a future meeting

### Meeting Ended

8:03