



December 2025 Meeting Minutes

Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Mayor Katjana Ballantyne

Meeting Information

Thursday, December 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=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. JT Scott (Ex Officio, City Council - At Large)
17. *Katherine White (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility)
18. *Justin Schreiber (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility)

Guests

1. Logan Brill, *Somerville resident*
2. John Callerame
3. Karen Molloy, *Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets*
4. Zachary Yaro, *Somerville resident*
5. Emily

Acting Secretary

Ted Alexander

Call to Order

6:32 p.m.

Agenda

Procedural Business (10 Minutes)

- Roll call and guest introductions
- Vote on November draft minutes
 - Alessandra moved to approve the November minutes, Mackenzie seconded, motion passed by voice vote
- Announcements
 - Deadline for new member applications has passed; working group will meet to review applications and select people to interview. Hoping to welcome four new members early next year
 - New meeting location in TAB building - PTAC members should provide feedback, if any, to Alessandra on the location and on the audiovisual connection for remote participants

Subcommittee Updates (5 Minutes)

- Community Events
 - Planning to table at Somerville Winter Farmers' Market on January 10
 - Starting to plan events for rest of 2026
- Design Review
 - Did not meet
- Special Projects
 - On hold - did not meet

Recommendations on Bus Routes 90 & 88 (20 Minutes)

- Based on scoring against criteria developed by PTAC's design review subcommittee, the highest ranking option was consolidating 88 and 90 into one route that would run to Assembly via Cross St. However, Melissa Dullea from MBTA stated that the MBTA was not supportive of this change, because it would require continued operation on Cross Street, which is difficult, and would not provide an accessible connection to the Green Line.
- Alessandra: consider proposal to keep status quo for now and ask MBTA to engage with community more before making any changes. Status quo: 90 running on Cross St and Broadway to Assembly; 88 running from Highland Ave. to Lechmere. Changes that will happen in the near future: McGrath Blvd construction and new Winter Hill School construction. Consider holding off on changes to bus routes until those changes occur. Gilman Square Neighborhood Council stated that when the 80 bus is removed as part of the bus network redesign, the Gilman Square neighborhood will lack bus service. Mobility Division staff do not have concern with keeping the status quo for now. The main disadvantages are that the MBTA will have to continue to operate on Cross St, won't achieve operational efficiencies, and will not provide more frequent service on the 90.
- Feedback from PTAC members and guests:
 - Consider shifting frequency to 90 from 88 if both routes will be kept as status quo.
 - Agree that it would make sense not to make changes in the short term, but would be better to wait until Winter Hill School and McGrath changes occur.
 - Agree with caveat that MassDOT and MBTA need to talk about the McGrath redesign and how bus service can be routed on McGrath.
 - Keeping 88 service to Lechmere is valuable because of connection to Green Line and to shopping at Twin City Plaza.
- Alessandra: motion to have Alessandra draft and send a letter to MBTA recommending preserving the status quo, considering bus service on McGrath, and considering increasing frequency on the 90; Preston seconded; motion passed by voice vote.

Recommendations on McGrath Blvd 25% Design (30 Minutes)

- Justin: presenting slides from MBTA on proposed McGrath design (from 25 percent design public hearing). At the hearing, MBTA showed its plans for the full project for the first time. Design will continue until 2027 and the plan is for construction to start by Spring 2028.
 - Justin described highlights of major design elements:
 - Narrowed road in some places, removing additional lanes at Somerville Ave and Medford/Highland.
 - Removed planned Red/Yellow/Green signal at Otis street and Cross Street, and proposed raised crossings at both intersections, with rectangular flashing beacon or HAWK beacon
 - Turning restrictions at multiple locations
 - South segment (south of Target) will be a separate project, consolidated with Squires Bridge project
 - Central segment: demolish bridge and full reconstruction
 - North segment (north of Pearl Street): less extensive changes
- Discussion of Otis Street crossing (responses from Justin):
 - Question: why can't we have a Red/Yellow/Green button-activated crossing at Otis St?
 - MUTCD specifies warrants for traffic lights: 8 factors that can justify a traffic light. Massachusetts has an amended MUTCD, most recently from 2022, and it restricts

the way that a signal can be justified only to traffic volume (vehicle volume, not pedestrian volume). Traffic volume is not sufficient on Otis Street to justify a regular traffic signal.

- Question: would it be possible to have a signal that looks like a Red/Yellow/Green signal but is activated by a button?
 - No, it would have to be a HAWK signal. However, Somerville city staff and residents have concerns about HAWKs, because they can allow pedestrians and vehicles to have a signal to proceed at the same time.
- Question: do bicycles count as vehicles for purposes of warrant?
 - Not sure, but even if they do, the volume of traffic required is a very high bar. The project team considered ways of increasing traffic volume on the side streets to meet the warrant requirements, but doing so would have other negative consequences, such as routing large volumes of traffic through small neighborhood streets.
- Question: could Otis Street be dead-ended at both sides, allowing space to build a new pedestrian bridge in the space at the ends of Otis street?
 - The project team intends to make the street-level crossing safe enough that no bridge is needed. They considered expanding the ramps at the location of the existing bridge to make them ADA - compliant, but may not have considered using the street space to build a bridge.
- Question: have they considered reducing the road to one lane at the street-level pedestrian crossings? It would be much safer to cross if only one car has to stop at the crosswalk, instead of two lanes of traffic
 - Not sure - PTAC could advocate for this.
- Question: do we have data on the number of people using the bridge now, or crossing at Otis Street?
 - The city may have this data.
 - A guest stated that a local parent did a count on a schoolday morning and counted 38 children walking across in half an hour.
- Comment: Flashing beacons often do not work: example of flashing beacon on north Mass Ave in Cambridge, near Pemberton Farms. Union Square plaza may be a better example, but it has other design elements that encourage drivers to stop.
- Comment: we could advocate for building the infrastructure for a standard Red/Yellow/Green traffic signal, so that one could easily be installed later if the regulation changes.
- Comment: consider advocating for raised crosswalk at other locations, including Pearl Street, since MassDOT has proposed a raised crosswalk at Otis St.
- Question: how wide are the sidewalks?
 - 8-10 feet in most places, as little as 6 at some points. In many locations, there is a lot more space than this between the sidewalk and the road, because there is a wide buffer area.
- Question about bike lanes at Pearl St and Virginia St
 - City asked for neighborway connection with an unmarked contraflow bike lane - this is not part of the MUTCD standard, though it is allowed by NACTO standard. Trying to avoid requiring bicycles to make multiple crossings to get to/from Foss Park and other destinations. MassDOT proposed a two-way bike lane instead of this Neighborway concept.
- Comment: consider advocating for removing median and widening sidewalks
 - Alessandra: MassDOT has said that the median is as narrow as it can be while accommodating the grade differentials at various places

- Justin: consider pointing out specific locations where median space could potentially be reallocated (between intersections)
- Comment: consider planning for future electrification of commuter rail when designing the bridge.
- Question: connection to community path near Rufo Road?
 - There is private property that would be involved in making this connection, and it's not known whether there will be a solution that will allow a connection to be built.
- Question: Cross St intersection - grade differentials requiring multiple paths for bikes and pedestrians and crosswalks offset from each other. Two-legged crosswalk.
 - Concerns about wayfinding, people crossing where there is no crosswalk rather than walking down to the next leg of the crosswalk.
- Alessandra: overall support for the project?
 - General agreement that this is a valuable project and would be an improvement.
- Letter: generally support the project; advocate for standard traffic signal at Otis St, or, failing that, improved safety features at that crossing such as a reduction to one lane in each direction; improvements to Cross Street crossing; wider sidewalks and reduction of medians; working with MBTA to consider bus service.
 - Motion by Alessandra to draft and send letter to MassDOT, seconded by Mackenzie, passed by voice vote.

Priorities for New Mayoral Administration & City Council (20 Minutes)

- PTAC administered a survey to members - 10 responses out of 15 PTAC members.
 - Top three received 6 votes each:
 - Advancing McGrath project
 - Advancing Union Sq Plaza and Streetscapes project
 - Moving forward with automated enforcement. Advocating for automated enforcement of moving vehicles at state level / continuing and expanding automated enforcement for stationary vehicles at local level.
 - 4 votes each:
 - Adding staff and capacity for Mobility Division
 - 3 votes:
 - Snow removal
 - Improving safety on community path
 - 2 votes:
 - North-south transit
- Discussion
 - Agree with sending a letter outlining these priorities, focusing on the top three.
 - Alessandra: Motion to send a letter to the new mayor, Jake Wilson, whose term will begin in January, and the City Council outlining these priorities, Ted seconded, passed by voice vote.

Other Business (5 Minutes)

- Public comment.

Final Items

Action Items from Meeting

1. Draft and send letter to MBTA re 90/88 bus routes

2. Draft and send letter to MassDOT re McGrath
3. Draft and send letter to mayor/City Council re PTAC priorities in new administration

Meeting Ended

7:38 p.m.