



City Update January 2026 PTAC Meeting



Agenda

- Traffic Commission
101



Above: New Community Path Lighting (Credit: Arup)

Traffic Commission Overview

- Established in 1978 under Massachusetts General Law under, “An Act Establishing a Traffic Commission in the City of Somerville”
- The previous City Charter gave the responsibility to the Traffic Commission to consider and approve traffic and parking regulations changes.
 - “The traffic commission may adopt, alter or repeal rules and regulations, not inconsistent with General Law as modified by this Act, relative to vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the streets of the city, and to the movement, stopping, standing or parking of vehicles on, and their exclusion from, all or any streets, ways, highways, roads and parkways under the control of the city, including rules and regulations designating any way or part thereof under such control as a through way under and subject to the provisions of Section nine of Chapter eighty-nine of the General Laws.”
- Under the new City Charter, the Traffic Commission was not addressed. Therefore, it stands to operate as it does at this time, but it can be changed by a City ordinance.

Chap. 397. AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TRAFFIC COMMISSION IN THE CITY OF SOMERVILLE.

Be it enacted, etc., as follows:

SECTION 1. There is hereby established in the city of Somerville, hereinafter referred to as the city, a traffic commission, consisting of the commissioner of public works, the chief of police or his designee, the chief engineer of the fire department or his designee, the chairman of the committee on traffic and parking of the board of aldermen and one member of the general public of the city appointed by the mayor and confirmed by the board of aldermen. The member appointed by the mayor shall serve for a term coterminous with the mayor, or until the qualification of a successor.

Traffic Commission Operations

- The Traffic Commission meets virtually on the second Thursday of the month at 5:30pm.
- The Parking Department Project Manager serves as the Staff Liaison to the Traffic Commission.
- There are 5 seats that make up the commission:
 1. Commissioner of Public Works (Chair)
 2. Representative of the Police Chief
 3. Representative of the Fire Chief
 4. Chair of the City Council's Traffic & Parking Committee
 5. Citizen-at-large, appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council
- Traffic Commission meetings are public, but it is up to the discretion of the Chair to invite public comment.
- Written public comment is always accepted and included as part of meeting materials.
- Decisions are recorded in the [City's Traffic Regulations](#).
- Decisions can be appealed through petition. These petitions go to the Traffic Board.



Above: Walnut Street

Traffic Board

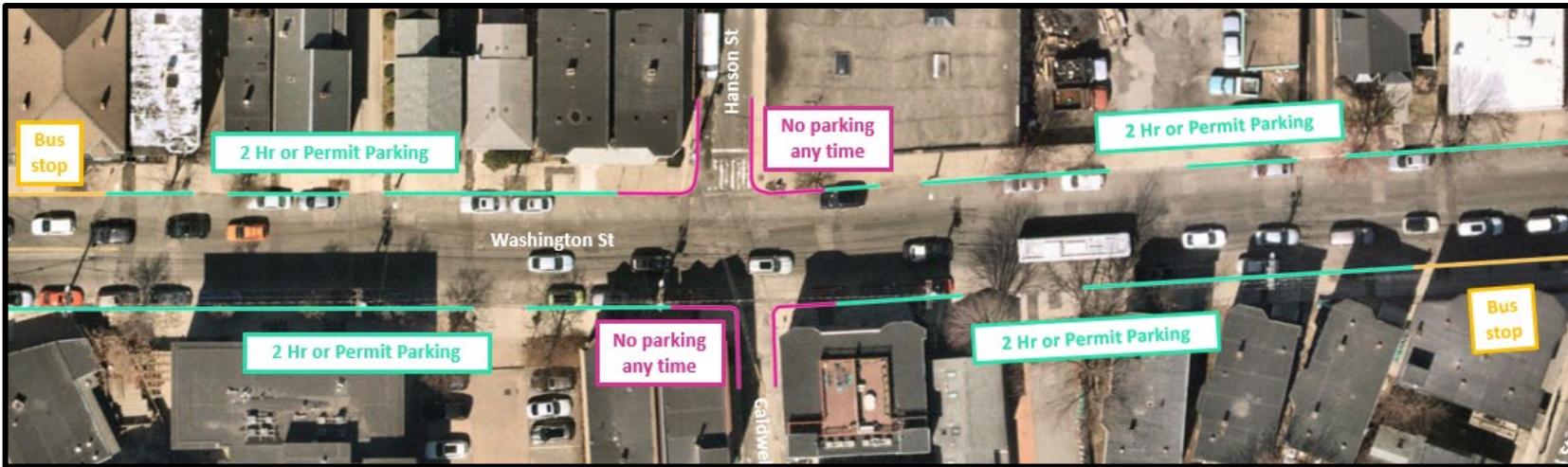
- The Traffic Board serves to hear appeals to Traffic Commission decisions.
- Upon the filing of petitions with the traffic board by not less than fifty registered voters of the city, relative to any rule or regulation proposed to be adopted, altered or repealed, and not yet in effect, the proposed action shall be suspended, and the traffic board shall hold a public hearing thereon within two weeks of the date the petitions were filed, and shall by majority vote approve or disapprove the proposed action within two weeks following the public hearing.
- Upon the filing of petitions with the traffic board by not less than fifty registered voters of the city, relative to any rule or regulation which has been adopted, altered or repealed for a period of at least thirty days, the traffic board shall hold a public hearing thereon within two weeks of the date the petitions were filed and shall, following such hearing, determine by majority vote whether to avoid the adoption, alteration or repeal of the rule or regulation.
- The Traffic Board consists of three persons, one appointed by the Mayor, one appointed by the City Council, and one voted on by the other members.

Typical Traffic Commission Agenda Items

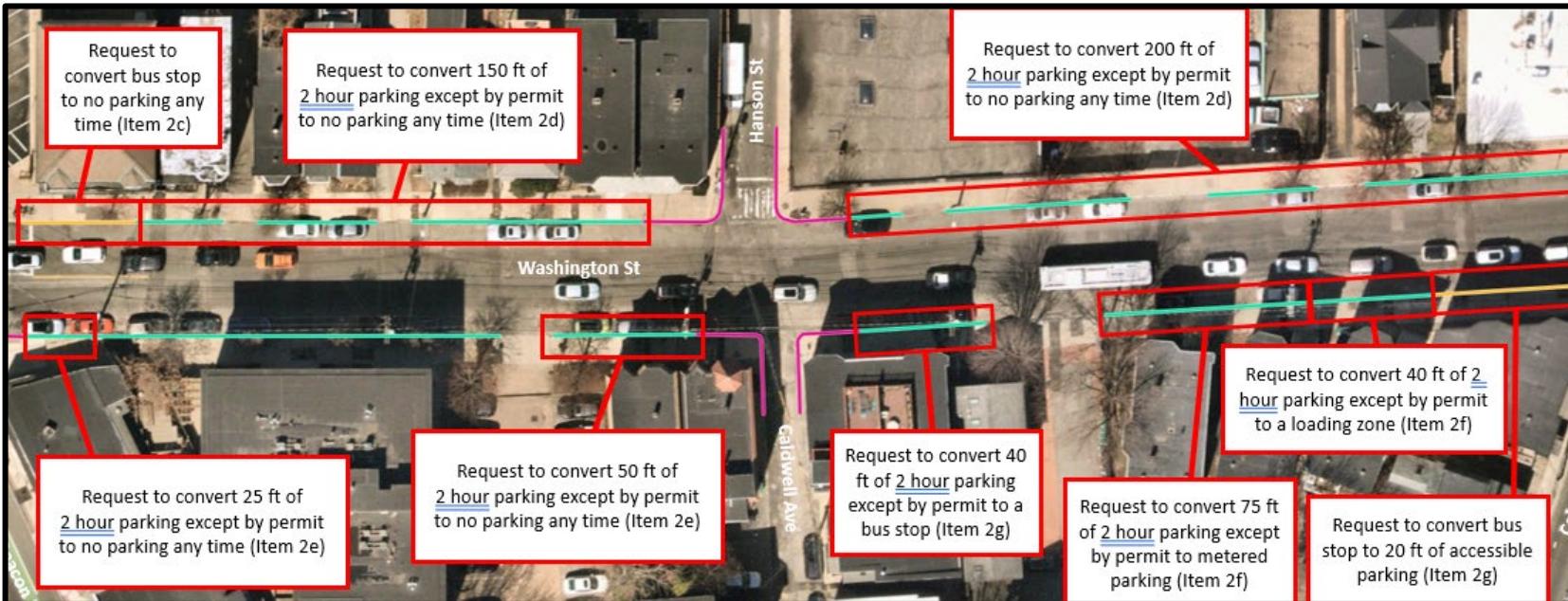
- Residential accessible parking location applications
- Business informed loading zone applications
- Fire lanes
- New Safety Zones
- Metered parking
- Changes in the directionality of a street
 - Two-way to one-way and vice versa
 - One direction to the opposite direction
- Overall parking regulation proposals for street reconstruction and quick-build projects. This can include:
 - Removal of parking to make space for bike lanes, bus stops, or pedestrian infrastructure (i.e. new crosswalks)
 - Repurposing existing spaces to mitigate the impact of parking removal



Example Redesign Projects



Example of parking regulations between Beacon Street and Calvin Street on Washington Street prior to reconstruction.



Proposed parking regulation changes to support new protected bike lanes and along Washington Street, a relocated bus stop to the south side of Washington Street at Caldwell Avenue, and a new raised intersection at Hanson Street.

Traffic Commission Constraints

- When considering street redesign projects, the Traffic Commission only has responsibility for the change in traffic regulations.
- The primary proposals that Mobility requests are parking regulation changes.
- Therefore, agenda items are written regarding regulating the curb and movement of traffic rather than approving specific new safe streets infrastructure.