

Somerville



Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee

City Hall, 93 Highland Ave, Somerville, MA
02143

Phone: (617) 625-6600 Ext. 2500

TTY: (617) 666-0001

Fax: (617) 625-0722

www.somervillema.gov/ptac

January 2026 Meeting Minutes

Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Mayor Jake Wilson

Meeting Information

Thursday, January 22, 2026, 6:30-8:00 PM

This meeting will be hybrid:

- **In-person meeting location:** 169 Holland St., Somerville, MA 02143.
- **Zoom info to join remotely via computers, tablets, and smartphones:**
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89181225932?pwd=aWpoL2FtaUh3aGdVbHNRWUJmeDRNQTO9>
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
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. Ben Ewen-Campen (Ex Officio, Ward 3 City Councilor)
17. Katherine White (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility) *
18. Justin Schreiber (Ex Officio, OSPCD Mobility) *

Guests

1. Jackie Stagnari, *Project Manager, Parking Department, City of Somerville*
2. 3 members of the Riders Transportation Access Group (RTAG)
3. Emily Urbanski, *Somerville resident*
4. Susan Foley, *Somerville resident*
5. Nick Mellis, *Somerville resident*
6. Logan Brill, *Somerville resident*
7. Sebastian Lopes-Filho, *Somerville resident*
8. Karen Molloy, *Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets (SASS)*

Acting Secretary

Zach Rosenberg

Call to Order

6:30pm

Procedural Business

- Reminder to sign up for rotation as a meeting minute taker
- New members
 - 4 available slots
 - Ad-hoc committee
 - Over 20 applications
 - Interviewed 12
 - Aim to debrief this week, fill those slots next month
 - Depending on schedule and sign off from the mayor
 - No official cap on members, but official floor of 14
- Reminder of our member requirements
 - Attend 8 meetings at minimum
 - Must table at least once a year
 - Serve as acting secretary
 - Review if you will be able to meet those requirements this year
 - Call is closed for new members, but meetings are open to the public

Subcommittee Updates

- Community events met
 - Debriefed on winter tabling event, had a lot of engagement

- Planning schedule for 2026
- Next event: lunar new year, Feb 14th, tabling with mobility
- Planning community walk in magoun area, possibly May
- Tentative walk audit in assembly sq later

Agenda

Presentation on the Traffic Commission (30 Minutes)

- The [Traffic Commission](#) is the regulatory body that oversees all traffic regulations in the City of Somerville. Its authority is based on enabling legislation from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' General Laws and the City of Somerville Charter. The Commission is chaired by the Commissioner of Public Works, with other members including a representative of the Police Chief, a representative of the Fire Chief, the Chair of the City Council's Subcommittee on Traffic & Parking, and a citizen-at-large appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council. The Parking Department is the custodian of the records and regulations, and meetings are attended by the Director of Parking, Parking Clerk, Commission Secretary, and other City staff as necessary. Commission meetings are held monthly and open to the public.
- At this PTAC meeting, Mobility staff will present on the Traffic Commission and its responsibilities. The presentation is meant to provide PTAC members and the public a better understanding of the Commission and its role in transportation-related decision-making in Somerville.
- Traffic commission 101
 - Detailed notes in city presentation

Are there any examples of times where the TC does not approve proposals?

- City went to the TC with a 2 way bike proposal that would remove 5 parking spots. At the time there were 2 nos and 2 yeses, so that did not pass
- Mobility will bring it back as part of Pearl St.
- In this case, goal was to do quick build in 2025, but was pushed back

Mobility is taking a strategy of doing more of a pre-meeting for projects, prior to voting. To allow time for questions and comments and reduce some of that pressure.

Are there any general criteria that TC is supposed to follow?

- No specific language about what they must consider or how to make decisions

Where do bus stops come in to play in relation to the TC, including interaction with MBTA and system accessibility?

- TC only votes on bus stops in relation to the size and amount of parking that's required for the bus stop. It is not involved in the specific design of the bus stop.

Comments on bike safety related to bus stops - to be held to public comment.

How often does the traffic board convene?

- The board didn't convene for around 10 years - had to be recreated for petitions

- Last time was likely 2023, recently heard 3 petitions
- Petitions require 50 registered voters
- But there are members who would be ready

Is there a definition of what a vehicle is, and has it changed?

- Believe it is defined as a motor vehicle. There is a definition in Massachusetts general law for what a vehicle is. Pretty sure TC can regulate bikes as vehicles as well

There are sometimes timing conflicts with TC and city council, any work on that?

- Has been raised as an issue, there will be a conversation about that.

Is there consistency to the questions/concerns the TC raises?

- Heavily dependent on locations that are being discussed.
- Often professional lenses - fire and police re fire truck access, enforcement, sanitation/plow access
- Dependent on personal and professional experience
- In specific cases
 - Often fairly straightforward for accessible parking, fire lanes
 - Some questions on loading zones sometimes, depending on time, business and resident location
 - Always helps when mobility presents on their process and details

Who tends to take concerns to traffic commission? Different types bring different items?

- Businesses apply through a form that is reviewed by the city before bringing it up to the TC. If the city doesn't sponsor it, often doesn't go into the agenda
- Agenda items are at the discretion on the chair
- Right now, items need to be sponsored by the city or council members to make it on the agenda.
- For accessible spaces, ADA coordinator must be involved
- Fire chief requests fire lanes

Does the TC or parking dept make decisions on rates for permits/meters?

- No, there are two separate fee structures - in the hands of city and

Question on how ADA compliance is enforced?

- Street design goes through a few different departments that review design and ADA compliance
- PTAC works with members and residents to advocate for safety improvements to the city

There are a number of areas that need review on ada compliance that were brought up

Reflections on Snow Clearing & Advocacy Opportunities (30 Minutes)

- In March 2025, [PTAC sent a letter](#) to former Mayor Ballantyne – as well as DPW, Mobility, ISD, and City Council – advocating for improvements to the City's snow-clearing operations. We advocated for regulating snow and ice differently, implementing stronger snow regulations, shifting the [Sidewalk Snow Clearing Pilot](#) from a focus on enforcement to clearance, improving public education and outreach, and increasing enforcement capacity among other recommendations.

- In November 2025, PTAC's Chair and Vice Chair met with DPW and Mobility staff to follow up on these recommendations and learn more about the City's snow-clearing operations.
- At this PTAC meeting, the Chair and Vice Chair will report back from the November meeting. This will lead into a committee discussion on experiences with snow clearing this season, and opportunities for continued advocacy.

DPW meeting notes

- Asked about the biggest challenges around snow clearing, and what would be needed to meet those?
- Could advocate for an update to the city ordinance on snow clearing - could look at stricter regulation, or progressive fine structures
- Discussed potential of moving from more enforcement to snow clearing. Would likely take a frontage tax to pay for clearing
- Challenges: exhaustion during large storms
- More staff and contractors - always need contractors for larger storms
- Also difficult to hire, some job openings might have license requirements that could be relaxed to make hiring easier
- Seems like there could be greater enforcement of sidewalk clearing if there were more ISD staff
- Interested in doing a push on communication and clear instructions about what is required for snow clearing
- Idea to have folks help on enforcement

Additional advocacy possibilities

- Recommend revisions to snow clearing ordinance - collaborate with PTAC council ex-officio
- Speak with Mayor Wilson during office hours
- Meeting with ISD if we feel like that would be useful

Comments/questions

- Had a few folks come over during tabling to talk about the difficulty this winter - especially with the warmer melting then turning to solid ice which is very difficult. Members interested to see us do more advocacy on this issue
- Fining and punishing doesn't really solve the issue of the sidewalks being safe
- There was a person dressed as a snowman shoveling - is there a way to increase engagement or make shoveling more fun/interesting for folks. Could there be youth engagement with HS/tufts folks?
- Could we pay teenagers to help shovel?
- There is a teen shoveling programs that pairs students up with folks who need snow clearing for a relatively low rate
- Need to get the word out that small snowstorms are still important to clear, because the sidewalks turn into ice
- City employees can volunteer for snow clearing - can we open that up to residents?
- How many snow farms does DPW have access to to dump snow?
 - Really rely on vacant properties on lots to dump snow
 - Advocating for a machine that melts the snow, but that would be a large investment
- How many sidewalk plows does the city have?
 - Unsure but we can ask DPW
 - But the superintendent was saying that our sidewalks do require a lot of hand work because of the variation

- There are a few sidewalks that you can run a plow on - Broadway is one.
- We should provide more clarity about how curb cuts and wheelchair ramps need to be cleared by residents for folks to use - even if the sidewalks are cleared sometimes the ramps aren't
- Ordinance was clarified more recently that folks do need to clear wheelchair ramps
- There is a bigger opportunity for the City to coordinate between the MBTA
- Who is responsible for clearing MBTA stops?
 - MBTA is responsible for clearing major routes
 - At the direction of the dpw commissioner, the city clears bus stops
 - DPW pre-treats bus stops as well prior to storms
 - MBTA does clear MBTA property, around stations
- Lot of areas where there might be houses or commercial property under construction - and often those sidewalks are left uncleared even if everything around is. Not sure if we have any ideas to help the situation. For commercial they may just take the fine
- Instead of focusing the snow clearing pilot on specific areas, could we focus on specific known problem builds?
- Could we look at progressive fines - higher fines if they continue to not clear? Or reimbursement for someone to come shovel?
- What are parking control officers doing during winter/snow emergency/
 - They do tend to be busy during winter
 - Do enforcement during snow emergencies
- Are there privileges we can connect - if you don't clear your sidewalks, you can't get a parking pass?
- Members often see that non-residential sidewalks are not as well cleared
- Advocate for campaign stressing the importance of clearing, especially for steep or dangerous street
- There are a lot of reasons that folks may not clear - travel, sickness, etc. so it might be better to focus on non-punative measures. Look at better resources for folks to get shoveling
- Lowering the threshold for when snow clearing is required (or directed up to them) on bus stops
- Who runs the teen shoveling programs?
 - Parks Dept possibly, but unsure.
 - Can we get some high level data about how many folks make use of it, teens
 - Note: The applications for homeowners seems pretty onerous for what they are, might be a barrier for use.

Other Business (5 Minutes)

- Public comment.
 - Advocates working with system wide accessibility are hearing that projects are not running through the MBTA programs and other for ADA - we should be doing more to advocate for better communication
 - Who owns the Clarendon busway?
 - City has also done some digging on this because it's also unclear to them who who owns this. Staff to follow up by email with more detailed info

Meeting Ended

8: 35pm