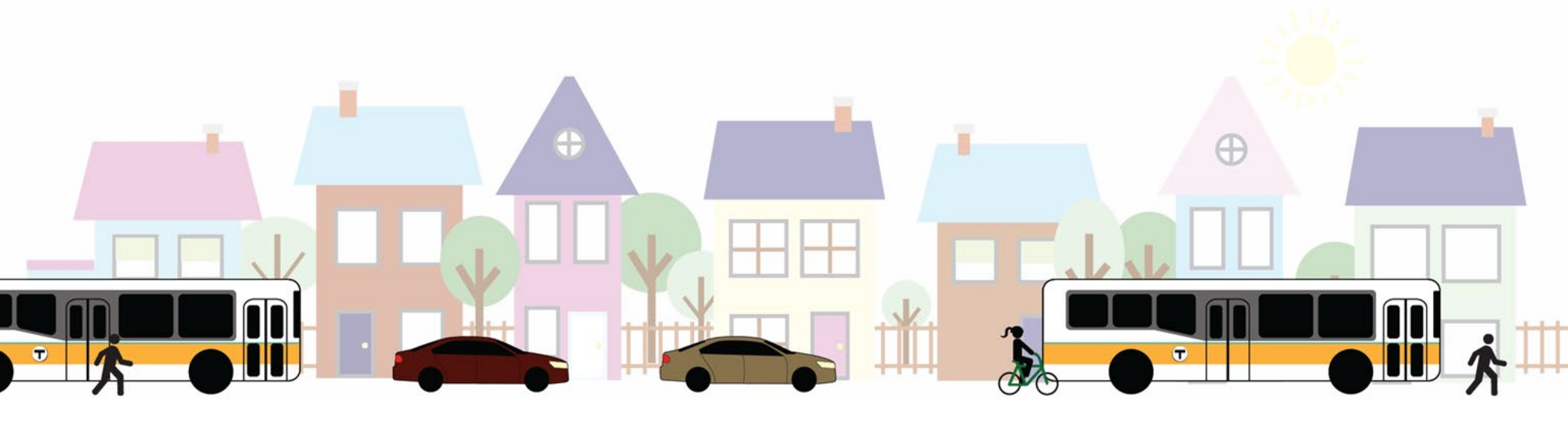


City Update
March 2026 PTAC Meeting

Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee

Agenda

- Spring 2026 Better Bus Network Service Changes
- Street Design Development

Spring 2026 Better Bus Network Service Changes

- Starting April 5, 2026, the MBTA is making Better Bus Network service changes on the following routes: CT2, 40, 50, 85, 87, and 350.
  - We will focus on changes in Somervile to routes CT2, 85, and 87.

- Complete details, schedules, and links to route pages can be found at: https://www.mbta.com/service-changes/spring-2026-better-bus-network-service-changes

- **Route 87 changes:**
  - All Route 87 trips will travel between Lechmere and Arlington Center. The route pattern that ends at Clarendon Hill will be discontinued.
  - This change provides more service in Arlington on weekday evenings, Saturday evenings, and Sundays.

Spring 2026 Better Bus Network Service Changes

- **Routes CT2 and 85 will be consolidated into the new Route 85, with service extending to Assembly Square.**
- The new Route 85 will follow the existing CT2 and 85 routes between Ruggles and Sullivan Square and will add service at 20 stops not served by the CT2.
- **Service will continue to run weekdays only**. Hours will extend slightly to 5:30 AM – 8:30 PM.
- **Buses will arrive more frequently:** every 15 – 25 minutes at peak times (7 – 9 AM and 4 – 6:30 PM) and every 30 – 45 minutes at off-peak times.
- Service between Bow St and Spring Hill, which was paused for construction in 2023, will be discontinued permanently.
- In Somerville, these currently served stops will no longer be served by Route 85
  - Somerville Ave @ Hawkins St
  - Bow St @ Warren Ave
  - 51 Bow St
- All existing CT2 stops will be served by the new Route 85.

Street Design Development Processes

Mobility Street Design - Typical Projects


Grand Union Boulevard

Quick-build projects

- Changes to the street that can be made without major construction.
- Improvements can include paint on the street, signage, and flex posts.


Washington Street

Annual pavement and resurfacing projects

- We work with Engineering to redesign streets as part of the City's Pavement and Sidewalk Management Program.
- Improvements include raised crosswalks or intersections, new or enhanced bike lanes, floating bus stops with more amenities, speed humps, and enhanced trees wells/more trees.


Concord Avenue

Smaller Interventions

- The City undertakes several smaller projects with targeted safety interventions in mind.
- This work includes annual speed hump identification and implementation and strategic intersection improvements

We also work on a small number of major capital projects that are paired with subsurface and sewer work, but we are still developing typical processes and schedules for these projects.

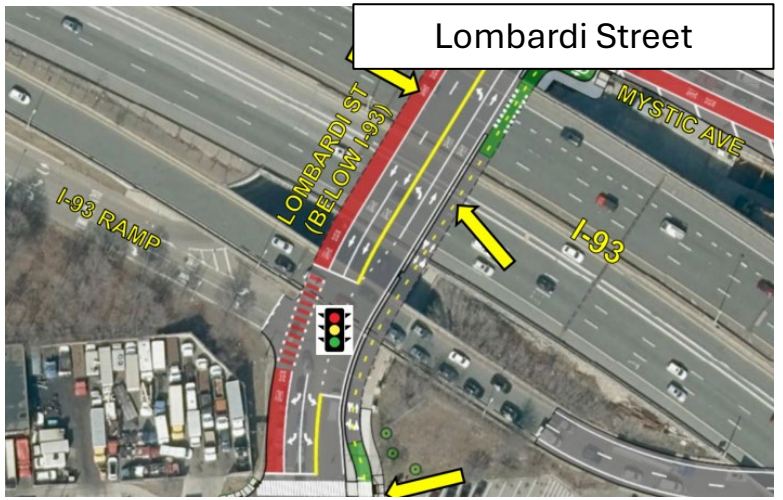
Mobility Street Design – *Less* Typical Projects

Transportation Mitigation from Development Projects

- Changes required by by Planning Board approvals.
- Staff make recommendations to Planning Board based on analysis of transportation impacts.
- Can include quick-build as well as construction projects.
- Typically adjacent to development sites or at nearby intersection where impacts occur.

MBTA Programs & Collaborations

- Include transit elements such as bus stop improvements, bus lanes, and transit signal priority.
- Originate from MBTA programs to make improvements system-wide (ex. Bus Stop Amenities Program), to invest in Better Bus Network (ex. Washington Street Bus Lanes), or related to large Capital Projects (ex. Washington St RRFB and floating bus stops.)



Other – State projects, Grants

- MassDOT has some programs that design and construct transportation improvements on local streets.
- MassDOT's own projects sometimes make changes on local streets and require local coordination.
- A variety of state and federal grant programs provide funding opportunities for local projects that may not have other pathways to implementation.

Mobility Street Design - Typical Community Engagement Campaigns

Community Engagement Campaign	Community Engagement Tools	Example projects
Inform: Communicate and provide updates on the purpose, scope, timeline, opportunities, and solutions of the intervention.	• Communication materials (flyers, brochures, posters, emails, newsletters, social media) • Targeted community member outreach as needed	• Annual Speed Hump Implementation • Somerville Avenue at Central Street Intersection Improvement • Middlesex Avenue Quick-Build Protected Bike Lanes
Involve: Hear public transportation related concerns, provide opportunity for public input, and share with public how input influenced decision making.	• Communication Tools (flyers, brochures, posters, emails, newsletters, social media) • Street Outreach Pop-Ups • Virtual/In-person Open House • Community and stakeholder meetings • Surveys • Block walking • Walk audits • Public Input Maps • Community Engagement Reports	• Glen & Otis Street Neighborway • Bow Street at Walnut Street Intersection Improvement
Collaborate: Hear public transportation related concerns, provide opportunity for public input, share with public how input influenced decision making, provide different design options, and gather public preference for final designs/directions	• Communication materials (flyers, brochures, posters, emails, newsletters, social media) • Street Outreach Pop-Ups • Virtual/In-person Open House • Community and stakeholder meetings • Surveys • Block walking • Walk audits • Public Input Maps • Visioning Workshops/ Creative design games • Focus groups • Community Engagement Reports	• Western Washington Mobility Improvements • Tufts Street Reconstruction • West Broadway Reconstruction • Broadway Magoun Reconstruction • Elm-Beacon Connector • Somerville Avenue Quick Build Improvements

Typical Roles in Design Development

- Mobility often prepares concept designs in-house and often relies on an external consultants to develop final engineering designs
  - If the project involves construction, we always secure an engineering consultant.
  - If a quick-build project is relatively not complex, we may do the work in-house. This has primarily been for projects like Grand Union Boulevard and Middlesex Avenue where you didn't have to contend with narrow street widths or any traffic changes.
- Mobility staff serve as the main point of contact gathering feedback from the public, internal partners and external partners (if applicable).
- At the end of design development, the Engineering consultant stamps the construction documents.
  - Part of this responsibility is to ensure that the design complies with all standard regulations). like the MUTCD, PROWAG and ADA

Community Engagement

- Residents
- Frequent users of the street
- Small businesses – owners and workers
- Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee
- Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Commission for Persons with Disabilities
- Community Organizations – Youth Orgs, Main Street Orgs, Affordable Housing Developments, Neighborhood Councils

Internal Partners

- Engineering Division
- Parking Department
- Public Space and Urban Forestry
- Fire Department
- Department of Public Works
- Economic Development (if in a commercial area)
- Traffic Commission (at the final stage)

External Partners

- MBTA – if involves bus routes
- MassDOT – if involves a state roadway
- DCR – if involves a parkway
- City of Cambridge – if touches the border
- City of Medford – if touches the border
- City of Boston – if touches the border

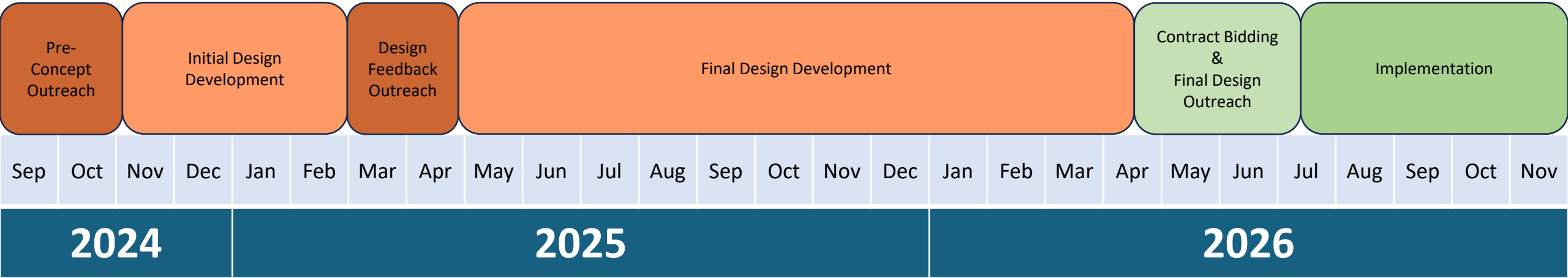
Consultants

- Engineering – Construction, Traffic Signals, Pavement Markings

Street Design Development – Quick-Build

- For a typical quick-build street redesign project, we often have **2 major community engagement phases** before we finalize design and follow a “Collaborate” style community engagement campaign plan.
- We also might secure an Engineering Consultant to take the designs from Concept to Final and ensure that we are meeting national and state standards around topics like accessibility and traffic policy in addition to developing implementation plans, cost estimates, and specs.
- Community feedback is core to how we develop designs, and then we iterate on community ideas within the bounds of the Right of Way and standard practices with our internal and external partners to work towards final designs.
- Lastly, the City’s Traffic Commission votes on any curb regulation changes. Following Traffic Commission approval, a project is put out to bid to secure a contractor and implement the work.

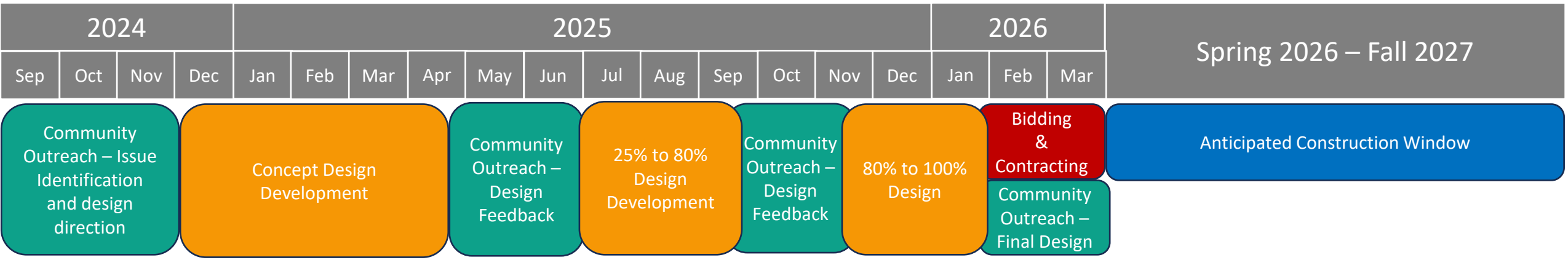
Quick-Build Project Timeline Example – Elm-Beacon Connector



Street Design Development – Reconstruction

- For a typical street reconstruction project, we often have **3 major community engagement phases** before we finalize design and follow a “Collaborate” style community engagement campaign plan.
- We secure an Engineering Consultant to take the designs from Concept to Final and ensure that we are meeting national and state standards around topics like accessibility and traffic policy in addition to developing construction plans, cost estimates and specs.
- Community feedback is core to how we develop designs, and then we iterate on community ideas within the bounds of the Right of Way and standard practices with our internal and external partners to work towards final designs.
- Lastly, the City’s Traffic Commission votes on any curb regulation changes. Following Traffic Commission approval, a project is put out to bid to secure a contractor and implement the work.

<u>Reconstruction Project Timeline Example – Western Pearl Street</u>



How do we make decisions?

- We select projects and establish their scope based on official City of Somerville policy, including the Vision Zero Action Plan, the Climate Forward Plan, the Bicycle Network Plan and the Safe Streets Ordinance
  - We plan and conduct community engagement campaigns to inform specific design directions.
  - We aim to focus on what we learn in community engagement and develop solutions that increase safety and encourage more use of sustainable transportation options.

- We then weigh design ideas and community feedback with regulations that we must follow:
  - Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD)
  - Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
  - Public Right of Way Accessibility Guidelines (PROWAG)

- We work to follow best practices from our partners locally and nationally
  - National Association of Transportation Officials (NACTO)
  - Emerging best practices around Fire Truck operations developed with the Fire Department
  - Engineering standards / guidelines
  - DPW standards / guidelines
  - Parking Department standards / guidelines
  - Public Space and Urban Forestry standards / guidelines
  - Existing and New MBTA Guidance
    - Bus Stop Design (2025)
    - Transit Signal Priority Specifications (2024)
    - Bus Network Redesign Recommendations

- There is no formula for making any specific design decision.

Design Standards Challenges

- Standards and best practices change over time
- We need to meet operational needs.
- Regulations & Guidelines may only provide the minimum standard, not the preferred design.