



## March 2026 Meeting Minutes

Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Mayor Jake Wilson

Thursday, March 19, 2026, 6:30-8:00 PM

---

### Meeting Information

#### 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. Camden Blatchly
2. Karen Molloy
3. Zachary Yaro
4. Marc Levy
5. Nika Lea Tomicic
6. Ewan
7. [Couldn't hear name of one guest]

## Acting Secretary

Steve Mulder

## Call to Order

6:30

## Agenda

### Public Comment

1. Zachary: Asking for update on Elm St quick-build improvements that would narrow the roadway; neighbors are interested maintaining planters, led by Somerville Gardening Club. City staff appreciates the comment and will take back to their team.

### Subcommittee Updates

1. Community Events
  - a. Conducted private Assembly Square walk, considering walk audit similar to Union Square.
2. Design Review: did not meet
3. Special Projects: did not meet

### City Update: Upcoming Changes to CT2 & 85 Bus Routes

1. Part of Better Bus Network Service Changes
2. Summarized April 5 changes
  - a. 87: All trips will go to Arlington
  - b. CT2/85 consolidation along existing routes, slightly better frequency, still weekdays only
    - i. Concern: How will they make the schedule work with more stops? Current CT2 gets caught in traffic regularly. How were these decisions made; was there testing?
    - ii. Did they consider weekend service as well? They likely looked at cost and usage. The focus here continues to be frequent service for commutes to Kendall.
    - iii. City meets regularly with MBTA, including space needed, especially for ends of routes.
    - iv. 85 and 87 are both getting longer, and reliability could be affected; do they have a metric for threshold service? Not sure they have a metric.
    - v. One comment (85 rider) excited about increased service, cautiously optimistic.
    - vi. New bus lanes at Sullivan will help with reliability.
    - vii. What happens to existing floating bus stops where service is stopping? City has no current plans for 2-3 floating bus stops; possible bike parking idea.
    - viii. Guest also concerned about not running on weekend.
    - ix. Any signal priority along this route? Yes at Mystic Ave and Broadway; already exists at Inner Belt Road. Looking into more at some but not all intersections.
    - x. Thought on standardizing priority between cities? Maybe we should bring MBTA reps to this meeting; they try to work with municipalities on transit priority along routes.
    - xi. Vltor: should we advocate for something here? Possibly evaluation with Transit Matters? City isn't planning on doing this currently.

- xii. Suggestion of bus survey among Somerville residents to gauge satisfaction once these changes are in place a while. (STEP did this years ago.)

## City Update: Street Redesign Development Processes

### 1. City Presentation

- a. Process of developing changes to street design; overview of what goes into these kinds of projects
  - i. Quick-build projects (no major construction)
  - ii. Annual pavement and resurfacing projects
  - iii. Smaller interventions (e.g., speed humps)
- b. Less typical projects:
  - i. Transportation mitigation from development projects
  - ii. MBTA programs and collaborations
  - iii. Other: state projects, grants
- c. Typical community engagement campaigns: events/tools in categories of Inform, Involve, and Collaborate — see matrix in slides. Based this framework on best practices used elsewhere.
- d. Typical roles in design development: community engagement, internal partners, external partners, consultants — see slides for detailed content.
- e. Typical project timelines for quick-build (Elm-Beacon connector as example), reconstruction (western Pearl St)
- f. How they make decisions: align with city policies, weigh ideas and community feedback (and of course regulations) on top of that baseline, then work to follow best practices from partners locally and nationally.
- g. Design standards challenges: Best practices change over time, options and standards keep improving. Also need to meet operational needs (e.g., fire engines on street changes). Guidelines used but no hard and fast rules.

### 2. Questions/comments:

- a. Hearing that many projects are custom/ bespoke; how do you think about trade-offs in custom vs timelines?
  - i. Typically work on 12-18-month timeline. A more standardized approach might help accelerate timelines. Goal is to get closer to needs/goal faster with residents, businesses, etc. But also want to ensure public feedback can have an impact. Projects with fewer abutters should be able to move faster.
- b. What happens after design finishes, how does contractor selection/handoff work?
  - i. For reconstruction projects, City staff work closely with contractors all along the way, typically led by major streetscapes manager. Contractor primarily managed by Engineering dept. Mobility still involved (e.g., troubleshooting), staff members stay part of communications too.
  - ii. For quick build projects, Mobility manages construction as well, manages contractor. Still involves Engineering for pieces. Engineering trusts Mobility, built up that relationship over time.
- c. Does Mobility communicate back to community after project is done? Would be nice to close the circle.
  - i. City has been exploring this more, especially how to best evaluate the success of a project, measure before/after, but haven't established standard evaluation process yet.

- d. How can community offer thoughts earlier (Inform stage) on things like speed humps?
  - i. They look at incoming requests (KPIs from previous PTAC meeting).
- e. How are communications on construction phases and impacts managed?
  - i. Engineering has a dedicated person for the community to contact. They usually don't know details during Design, have to wait until contractor is selected. They try to host informational meeting for community when there's a long gap before construction. Contractor provides notices for direct abutters.
- f. How many contractors work with the city across projects?
  - i. Varies. Engineering is cultivating contractors so we get more bids; recent project had 4 instead of historical 1 or 2.
- g. If contractor has been problematic, do they always have to go with lowest bidder?
  - i. There are minimum quality standards, processes that allow changes.
- h. Can quick-build projects be accelerated since more changes can be made later?
  - i. Quick-build name isn't perfect because it still takes real design time.
- i. Are things like jersey barriers possible for quick-builds?
  - i. Typically not; things move around too much. Always looking for new ways of implementing.
- j. Do we know if quick-builds will impact speed of making permanent changes?
  - i. Sometimes they use quick-build when they know reconstruction won't happen anytime soon. Some quick-builds "plug the hole," some allow experimentation.
- k. Request for Engineering annual update/plan.
- l. When contractors don't clear snow as we want, what happens?
  - i. DPW spoke about this at a meeting earlier this week; post-mortem on this winter.

## Final Items

### Action Items from Meeting

1. None

### Meeting Ended

7:58