

June 2026 Meeting Minutes

Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Mayor Jake Wilson

Thursday, June 18, 2026, 6:30-8:00PM

Meeting Information

Members

* = present

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|--------------------------------|--|
| 1. Ted Alexander* | 13. Steven Mulder* |
| 2. Ginny Alverson* | 14. Barbara Myers* |
| 3. Meredith Brown | 15. Vitor Pamplona (Vice Chair)* |
| 4. Rachel Chiquoine* | 16. Zach Rosenberg |
| 5. Laura Evans | 17. Andrew Rosenfeld* |
| 6. Christopher Ferry* | 18. Alessandra Seiter (Chair)* |
| 7. Susan Foley* | 19. Mackenzie Webb |
| 8. Christopher Friend* | 20. Ben Ewen-Campen (Ex Officio, Ward 3
City Councilor) |
| 9. Preston Gutelius* | 21. Katherine White (Ex Officio, OSPCD
Mobility) |
| 10. Satoko Hirai | 22. Justin Schreiber (Ex Officio, OSPCD
Mobility)* |
| 11. Sebastian Lopes-Filho* | |
| 12. Brenda Marvin (Secretary)* | |

Guests

1. Viola Augustin (Mobility Division)
2. Adam Polinski (Mobility Division)
3. Karen Molloy (Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets)
4. Marc Levy
5. Derrick Rice
6. Logan Brill
7. Tom Gilbert

Acting Secretary

Rachel Chiquoine

Call to Order

6:33 PM

Agenda

Procedural Business (10 Minutes)

- Member roll call
- Vote on May draft minutes -Approved
- Announcements
 - Two opportunities to draft letters on following topics:
 - City of Somerville budget - needs to be written by next Monday 6/22.
 - State legislative bill in Senate - 'an act to enhance safe use of mobility devices', i.e. Ride Safe Act. Regulates various micromobility modes based on operating speeds. Does not enact several key Commission recommendations such as increased funding and automated camera enforcement.
 - Preston volunteers

Public Comment (5 Minutes)

- Derrick R.: In the last meeting, we reviewed Magoun Square improvements. One element that is not clear in renderings is that that intersection is on an incline, which may affect intersection designs. A roundabout may be awkward on a hill.
 - Adam P. responds, the City is aware of incline from design perspective. The project consultant Kittelson does not believe this is a problem. Will consider as proceed to 75% design.
 - Alessandra shares, PTAC will plan to do a community walk through the study area in fall 2026.

Subcommittee Updates (5 Minutes)

- Community Events
 - Decided to postpone Broadway-Magoun community walk until the next phase of engagement.
 - Discussed logistics for walk audit in Assembly Square; more details forthcoming. Have route options; considering timeframe in late July/early August (July 20-August 7). Currently reaching out to partnering organizations.
 - Discussed several tabling opportunities such as farmers markets, but no events confirmed.
- Design Review - waited until Somerville Ave agenda item.
- Special Projects

Review Letter on Bus Network Redesign Proposed Amendments (15 min)

- The MBTA is [proposing 11 updates to the Bus Network Redesign](#). Updates with potential impacts to Somerville include Proposal 8: Add Weekend Service on Route 85, and Proposal 2: Improve Medford Access.
 - Several proposed amendments serve Somerville.

- The MBTA is seeking public feedback on these proposals through the summer. All are welcome to [join a virtual public meeting on June 15 at 6PM](#), and to submit comments to betterbusproject@mbta.com.
 - Comment period runs through August 5.
- Alessandra shares on screen the draft letter Ted and Andrew drafted, on the proposed updates. There are 2 routes directly affecting Somerville.
- First is Route 85; PTAC generally agrees with adding weekend service. The letter identifies benefits to users, such as employees at universities or Assembly Square. The letter also suggests extending operating hours of route for additional evening service.
- Second is Routes 80, 94, and 96 - Medford access. The MBTA presented 3 non-mutually exclusive options in the June 15 virtual meeting; it is possible to combine elements of the three options.
 - One option is to restore service of Route 80 to Pearl Street (currently scheduled to be cut). The current BNR would combine Route 80 with a route to Burlington, which would make a much longer trip and may affect reliability of service.
 - The letter lists factors for the MBTA to consider, such as reliability of service, value of increased frequency, and considering future changes and current unmet needs (e.g., accessible rides from Gilman Square to Green line station).
- Alessandra asks if others have comments on the letter.
 - Chris Friend suggests not using duplication of Green line service as a reason for proposed changes.
 - Alessandra responds, the MBTA planned the Green line with the understanding that there would be an accessible connection to Gilman station (e.g., elevator), which was not built and therefore Gilman is not an accessible station. Gilman residents have expressed concern about being able to use their closest station.
 - Justin says, have heard from Gilman residents that this is not a duplication of service. The City finished reconstruction on Pearl Street; in that outreach, Pearl Street Park residents were concerned about losing connection to the Green Line.
 - Justin adds, the City is planning to build a 900 student school on Sycamore Street.
 - Vitor says the MBTA does not provide enough detail for the amendments, so we don't know the frequency of the routes in each option.
 - Ted says in the June 15 meeting, MBTA discussed the option of keeping 94 or rerouting 80 to Burlington; headways of 30 minutes or less.
 - Vitor says the Route 80 decision depends on frequency of buses. If headways are short between 80 buses, it would be ok.
 - Sebastian adds, when he rides the 80 bus, it does not seem busy (in comparison to other routes) - only 3-4 other riders. Consider the number of riders in our recommendation.
- Alessandra asks for a vote on whether to keep the bullet of restoring service of Route 80 to Gilman Square.
 - In favor of keeping bullet point: 9
 - Take bullet point out: 1
 - Committee will keep the bullet in.
- Logan (guest) is generally in favor of the letter. Suggests to make sure the letter is not too negative on extending Route 80 to Burlington. An extension is good if also maintaining the frequency. He agrees buses are more accessible than the Green line in the Gilman Square area.
- Tom Gilbert seconds the concerns with Pearl Street Park residence and making sure there are accessible options.
 - Alessandra suggests adding this to the letter.

- Tom G. asks, has there been discussion with MBTA to make these routes accessible, in general regarding transfers from bus to train? For example, several buses do not directly stop at Green line stops; riders have to walk from bus stop to T stop.
 - Alessandra says accessible Green line stops is out of scope for this immediate conversation but is a topic PTAC may want to discuss in the future.
- Karen Molloy says Route 80 also services East Cambridge, bringing people from Cambridge into Somerville. Additionally, she points out for Route 85 service, suggests to mention that people also work in the Longwood area and need to travel home to Somerville at night.
 - Ted and Andrew agree with this amendment.
- Alessandra motions to finalize this letter with minor changes as discussed, then submit the letter to the MBTA. Ted seconds. No opposition, motion is passed.

Somerville Ave Quick Build Safety Improvements Project Concept Design Review (35 Minutes)

- Earlier this month, the City of Somerville released concept designs for the [Somerville Avenue Quick Build Safety Improvements Project](#). As part of the implementation of the [Somerville Bicycle Network Plan](#), the City aims to increase safety for people traveling on Somerville Avenue between Elm Street and Bow Street. As part of the project, the City aims to create protected bike lanes in both directions, improve the visibility of people using crosswalks, enhance bus rider experience, and update parking regulations.
- Viola Augustin (Project Manager) presented a brief overview of the project and walked through the concept design.
 - This is phase 2 of engagement. There was an open house last Tuesday to present the ~30% concept design. This project picks up from Somerville Ave/Elm Street intersection to Bow Street.
 - It is a quick build, i.e., focused on protected bike lanes, flex posts, crosswalks, removing parking, bus stop changes, traffic signal changes, and changes to parking regulations. This study does not include new crosswalks, planters, pavement or sidewalk repaving, adding raised crosswalks, new lighting, new stonework, etc.
 - The timeline is summer 2025 to summer 2027. Last ,officially opened community outreach design feedback phase; next is final design development through fall 2026. In winter 2026, the City will begin the contracting documentation and bidding process.
 - For parking regulations, there are currently 117 spaces along the corridor. The concept design would remove 33 spaces for a new total of 84 parking spaces. One reason for reducing parking is the City is updating accessibility for bus stops so that the bus can be parallel to the curb for ramp-users.
 - For bus stops, the stops with the most people using them are near Lowell Street, Central Street/Conway Park, and Market Basket.
 - The City is proposing to move the westbound School Street stop due to close spacing to the next stop. Also proposing to remove 594 Somerville Ave westbound and eastbound stops (near Yafa). Removing these stops allow for more even spacing between bus stops.
 - Proposing to change location of eastbound Lowell St stop to be after the intersection; due to a new left turning lane from Somerville Ave onto Lowell St.
 - Ted A. asks about removing the bus stop where the new floating island bus stop is at 594 Somerville Ave.-could this create some confusion for people waiting at that stop? Viola

answers, might use appropriate signage to say the bus stop is not operative; also considering how to reuse that space. That current stop has low ridership.

- Susan F. asks, which stop are you removing close to Market Basket? Viola answers there are 2 stops about 300 feet apart at School and Church streets. The bus stop remaining will be close to the crosswalk.
- Viola also notes that the current eastbound bus stop by Market Basket is not accessible, so they are moving it to be in front of Market Basket and be fully accessible, which will result in loss of parking.
- Vitor asks if any bus stops are floating bus stops. Viola answers, not as a part of a quick build project. Vitor asks about floating bus stops in Assembly. Viola answers, there may be issues with winter weather maintenance; she doesn't know who is doing snow clearing at Assembly and how that floating stop has held up.
- Brenda says it's a shame to lose parking spots near Market Basket. Viola says there is a gain on westbound parking with removing the School Street bus stop, but not enough to offset the other parking space loss.
- Viola then continues the presentation about traffic signal changes at signalized intersections. The goals are to make intersections effective and safe for all road users. Viola directs people to look at the posters, presentation, and recording on the website for full details.
 - Granite, Dane, and Somerville Ave - to allow cyclists to make a left turn onto Dane.
 - Option A - two stage has an all-ways pedestrian crossing phase.
 - Option B - vehicle separation separates all vehicular movements from pedestrian movements. Bicycles turning right or left in Phases A or D would have to yield to pedestrians crossing.
 - At signalized intersections, pedestrian green lights are currently automatic. The City is considering changing back to push buttons, which would help to not slow down bus operations.
- Opportunities to share feedback include pop-ups on 6/26 and 6/30, as well as the survey is open until July 10.
- Design Review (Vitor, Preston, Rachel) report-out on review of Somerville Ave corridor improvements:
 - In general agreement about consolidation of bus stops.
 - Lowell St - left turning lane is OK; keep ped signal as automated. Wondering if potential for centerline hardening of left turn from Somerville Ave to Lowell Street.
 - Rachel notes concern that left-turning vehicles onto Lowell Street may run red light (when there is red left arrow but green straight), putting pedestrians crossing Lowell Street at risk.
 - Beech St - prefer Option A, which allows for safer left turns from the ice rink driveway. Concerns about down-stream effects of right-turn-only driveway option at Central Street left turn.
 - Park Street - pick-up/drop-off hazard for bike lane in front of Cambria Hotel - could we use low concrete barriers to harden the bike lane (for example, like City of Cambridge Brattle Street bike lane)? Also curious about adding a crosswalk across Somerville on the left end of the intersection. Prefer Option A.
 - Sidewalk in UPS/Dunkin shopping center - cars will park on the sidewalk when all parking spaces are filled.
 - Dane/Granite: Option B due to limitation of ped/bike and vehicle conflicts.

- Susan asks, is there data on whether pedestrians jaywalk more when automated versus push button? Adam hypothesizes, yes, it's possible people might cross while waiting for automated recall. But the City has not studied this question.
- Preston asks, is it possible for the City to change signal to a yielding signal that indicates cars should yield to pedestrians, at St. Anthony crossing? That intersection is currently a push-button. Justin thinks have this at College and Morrison - a flashing yellow signal that turns RED when a pedestrian presses the button.
 - Susan points out would want to have a sound to make the signal accessible.
 - Chris shares, there is lower driver compliance from a flashing yellow>red, compared to a green to red.
- Derrick says most dangerous moment at Lowell Street is when the signal turns green, because left-turning vehicles jump the light to turn left ahead of straight-bound cars in the other direction.
 - For Dane Street, option B has a 100 second cycle length, which is too long and encourages jaywalking.
 - He also shares that it is a bummer to lose that new bump-out bus stop in front of new building, across from Yafa, when it was a stop the community negotiated very hard for. That is the only raised crosswalk in the vicinity.

Union Square Transit Signal Priority (TSP) Project (20 Minutes)

- Transit signal priority (TSP) refers to methods of improving service and reducing delay for transit vehicles at intersections controlled by traffic signals. Methods for allowing transit vehicles through intersections sooner include extending a green light, shortening a red light, reordering the phases, and providing transit vehicles with dedicated phases. TSP methods usually require specialized hardware to allow the transit vehicle and signal controller to detect one another.
- With the MBTA as part of their [Transit Priority program](#), the City of Somerville is working on implementing TSP in Union Square and on Broadway, Highland Ave, Washington St, and Pearl St. The Union Square TSP project is further along and will benefit bus routes 85, 87, 91, and 109.
- Adam presented a plan for TSP in Union Square.
 - It includes both traffic signals and a short segment of bus lane on Prospect Street from Oak St to Webster Avenue.
 - TSP strategies include (from MBTA's Bus Priority Toolkit):
 - Green extension to lengthen the bus's phase beyond its typical maximum to allow the bus to get through on a green
 - Red truncation shortened a non-bus phase to allow the bus's phase to start sooner
 - Green reallocation shortens the bus's phase if it is not expected to arrive on green, then moves remaining green time to a different part of the cycle.
 - Phase insertion activates a bus-only phase that allows the bus to advance through the intersection while all other traffic is stopped.
 - Phase reservice allows a phase that accommodates a bus turn to happen at one of two different possible points of the cycle.
 - Prospect St bus lane will be a queue jump (similar to the existing bus lane on Washington St at Webster Ave). Takes advantage of the phase insertion strategy to give the bus its own dedicated time to proceed through the intersection.
 - Green extension and red truncation of up to 20 seconds will also be permitted during a given signal cycle to better align with the bus's expected arrival time.
 - Upgrading to have traffic cameras (not for enforcement) to use to detect traffic, buses, bikes, pedestrians at the squares.

- Adam outlines several scenarios where the bus is helped by the TSP strategies.
 - Scenario 1: Bus arrives on a red with a few cars ahead of it. The bus pulls into the queue jump lane, gets up to the stop line, and then receives a green from the transit signal. The bus has saved some time at this intersection, and then is also more likely to make it through the next intersection on a green because it skipped several vehicles.
 - Scenario 2: The bus is approaching on a green and therefore didn't need to use the bus lane, but the signal is going to turn yellow before the bus can get through. The green extension function is activated and allows the bus to make it through on green instead of having to wait for a full signal cycle.
 - Scenario 3: Bus arrives on red during a period when traffic is heavy on Prospect St and it can't get into the bus lane. Webster Ave traffic is light, however, and the new camera detection equipment is able to see this and end the Webster Ave phase more quickly so that Prospect St can get a green sooner. TSP may not be needed/activated in this scenario.
- Alessandra says this recommendation was a part of the Union Square Walk Audit.
 - Another finding from that walk audit is how long it takes to cross the intersection of Somerville Ave and Prospect street. Does this TSP remediate that? Adam says yes, the cycle would be capped at 120 seconds and would run faster compared to currently.
- Christopher Ferry says this is recreating engineering solutions for emergency vehicles. There is a lot of measuring that has already been studied and could be reused for buses. Do police/emergency services have an additional override system? Adam says yes, there is a line-of-sight system that all responders use (shoots an infrared beam at signals). The TSP system is going to be GPS-based and responders will get this equipment also. It should benefit law enforcement and first responders, as line-of-sight is limited by the roadway curve in approaching the intersection.
- Preston asks, does green extension affect the entire cycle time? Adam says, during peak hours there is a set cycle time (120s) running at all 3 intersections - in that situation, the green extension takes from other phases. During free operation at non-peak hours, it may change phase lengths.

Final Items

Action Items from Meeting

1. Preston and Alessandra will draft a letter on the pending state micromobility legislation

Meeting Ended

8:05