

July 2026 Meeting Minutes

Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

Mayor Jake Wilson

Thursday, July 23, 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 Chiquione | 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. Karen Molloy, *Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets (SASS)*
2. Tom, *Riders' Transportation Access Group (RTAG)*
3. Ewan
4. Anonymous in-person guest

Acting Secretary

Ted Alexander

Call to Order

6:30

Agenda

Procedural Business

1. June minutes. Alessandra moved to approve the June minutes, Mackenzie seconded, passed by voice vote.

Public Comment

1. Tom (member of RTAG). Comment regarding last month's meeting: bus stop in front of Market Basket on Somerville Ave. Bus stops not spaced appropriately, with two stops very close together, and it makes sense to address that. At School St. in front of Market Basket, it is correct that there is not enough space for the bus to pull to the curb. If we're going to move this stop to Church St, how will this affect the distance from that stop to Carlton St.? Would the Carlton St stop need to be removed? The bus stop at Church St. needs better lighting and crosswalks. For the bus stop in front of the Tufts Administration building, Tom suggests adding safety fences. The city should collaborate better with the MBTA about the bus turnaround at Clarendon Hill. Also, improvements are needed to the bus stops at Simpson Ave. and Jay St. Tom would like to have more opportunities to provide public comment and to walk around the area with the city engineer.

Subcommittee Updates

1. Community Events. Met in July to go over the Assembly Square walk audit plan, then met up to walk the routes. Modified the routes based on the walk, to avoid obstacles from ongoing construction. Walk audit will be Tuesday, August 4, 6-8 p.m., meeting on Foley St. at the green shipping container. Collaborating with Assembly Connect, Groundwork Somerville, and Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets.
2. Design review. Did not meet.

Draft Letter Honoring Louisa Gag

1. Alessandra: Louisa Gag was a pillar of the safe streets community and a transportation planner for the City of Boston, and she was killed by a person driving a truck earlier this month. The letter responds to a call for action from speakers at the vigil held for Louisa at Boston City Hall on July 16, and it asks city and state officials to (a) recommit to Vision Zero, (b) pass Safety Camera enforcement legislation at the state level this session, and (c) introduce legislation to strengthen truck-safety requirements. The letter is addressed to Mayor Wilson, the City Council, and the state Senator and Representatives representing Somerville.
2. Discussion: Preston mentioned that the safety camera legislation may be included in either the House or Senate economic development bills, which would affect how it could potentially be enacted. Alessandra said she would check before sending the letter about whether an edit is needed to address this.
3. Susan asked about the addressees. Alessandra agreed to add the candidates running for these elected positions as cc's to the letter.
4. Tom (guest): camera enforcement has been controversial because people say that it reports false information in some cases. People with visual impairments can't rely on cars stopping at traffic signals. Deaths like Louisa's are unacceptable.
5. Alessandra moved to send the letter, with adjustments as needed to address the status of pending legislation. Barbara seconded. Passed by voice vote.

Ride Safe Act

6. Preston: A bill pending in the House includes some provisions of the proposed Ride Safe Act regarding small electric vehicles (mopeds vs. ebikes vs. scooters vs. assisted mobility devices) and other pedestrian safety issues, but these provisions are not in the Senate version of the bill. There will be a reconciliation process between the House and Senate, and Preston will be monitoring the proposed legislation and will draft an advocacy letter for PTAC to consider at a future meeting.

Somerville Ave. Quick Build Improvements

7. Justin: Three key issues for this project: (a) bus stop consolidation, (b) signal options for Dane St. and Park St. intersections, (c) pedestrian phase options (automatic vs. recall).
 - a. Bus stops: two issues: bus stops are too close together, and several bus stops are too short, preventing the bus from being able to pull against the curb.
 - i. Discussion: Alessandra: on westbound stop at Spring St. and Somerville Ave.: this was recently upgraded as part of the new building that is currently empty. Has the city considered the relationship with the developer when removing this stop? And could this be revisited?
 - ii. Justin: I don't expect this to be an issue. I believe the developer would not object to removing this stop. We could revisit this, but it would be better to make a decision once.
 - iii. Rachel: It is important to keep the stop at Lowell because it is next to the underpass.
 - iv. Susan: How would these stop changes affect people shopping at Market Basket? People are carrying heavy groceries or pushing carts, and should not have to walk far.
 - v. Justin: the new stop is either the same distance from the Market Basket or possibly slightly closer. The bigger change is that currently, the bus can't get to the curb because of the short cutout, and that will be improved in the new design.
 - vi. Susan: Is there a place to sit or shelter?
 - vii. Yes, there is a bench at the westbound stop at Church St.
 - viii. Brenda: not sure about the idea of removing the stop with the shelter at Spring Street.
 - ix. Ted: Agree that keeping the Spring Street Stop should be considered because there is new infrastructure there, even though it is not the ideal location for a stop. Has eliminating the stop at Loring St been considered?
 - x. Justin: The thought is that the Loring St. stop would absorb some of the traffic from the School St stop that will be eliminated.
 - xi. Sebastian: Loring St. is the closest stop to Somernova, which is a popular destination.
 - xii. Mackenzie: Support consolidating stops to speed up the buses
 - xiii. Justin: From Central St to Lowell St is about 1400 feet, which is near the upper limit of what the MBTA recommends.
 - xiv. Ted: Propose keeping the concept plan, with the addition of one stop in the westbound direction at Spring St.
 - xv. Mackenzie: Can bus shelters be moved?
 - xvi. Justin: The old ones cannot, but the new ones like the one at Spring St. are surface mounted and could potentially be used elsewhere. Probably not in this project area, because there are no other floating bus stops in this project.

- xvii. Alessandra: Motion to recommend keeping Spring St stop and otherwise agreeing with the concept plan for bus stop consolidation. Ted seconded. Passed by voice vote.
- b. Proposed signal changes at Dane St. Two options for vehicle, bicycle, and pedestrian signals, shown on slides.
 - i. Rachel: In option A, concern about having a protected left vehicle green signal with a walk sign at the same time. This looks dangerous, especially with the sight lines being blocked by buildings close to the intersection.
 - ii. Mackenzie: agree with concern about concurrent signals.
 - iii. Preston: Prefer option B. Provides more time for people to cross (including people crossing without a specific pedestrian signal).
 - iv. Justin: Would you prefer an all-walk phase over the two-phase option?
 - v. Rachel: Option B provides twice as much time for pedestrians to cross with the signal
 - vi. Vitor: Why can't there be a single phase for bicycles and pedestrians?
 - vii. Justin: The MUTCD doesn't allow for direct T conflicts between bikes and pedestrians. A turning conflict is OK, but not one where bicycles are going straight and pedestrians are crossing in front of them at the same time.
 - viii. Justin: Assuming everyone is following the rules, there is more waiting time for everyone in Option B.
 - ix. Preston: Why are Phase A and Phase D in Option B shorter than the all-walk phase in Option A, when the crossing distances are the same. We could save a few seconds by going with Option B but shortening these phases slightly.
 - x. Sebastian: The crossing in Phase A is shorter than the crossing in Phase D, but the proposed signal length is longer - why?
 - xi. Susan: What risk are we looking at? Considering the risks for pedestrians and bicycles, including the fact that people will not always comply.
 - xii. Justin: There are always tradeoffs with signal timing. There is an argument to be made that the all-walk phase is the safest option. However, Walk Boston recommends concurrent signals as safer, because people don't comply with the signals if they have to wait, so it's safer to provide a faster way to cross in compliance.
 - xiii. Susan: Any sense of who lives in this neighborhood - who the bikers and pedestrians are?
 - xiv. Rachel: One principle is that avoiding vehicle collisions with pedestrians is more important than avoiding bicycle collisions with pedestrians because the risk is so much higher. Concern about having concurrent signal across Dane street because of the specific geometry of that intersection.
 - xv. Brenda: the stop line on Dane St. is far back from the intersection, which could create visibility issues.
 - xvi. Steve: Is there research showing that consistency matters? People learn through consistency, so it could be dangerous to have these signals be different from other signals in the neighborhood.
 - xvii. Rachel: consider making the signals similar at Dane and Park for consistency
 - xviii. Alessandra: Are people concerned with conflicts between people walking and biking? I am not concerned about this and think it may be a good idea to normalize the idea of pedestrians and bicycles crossing at the same time.

- xix. Susan: In my experience, I feel safe with a biker who knows what they are doing, but there are a lot of bikers out there who are not behaving as expected. Education is needed.
- xx. Barbara: For me, the terror is cars, and I'm not afraid of bikes.
- xxi. Vitor: I'm concerned about bikers on the community path, but not here.
- xxii. Christopher: Agree. On the road and at intersections, it is generally ok, but there are conflicts with separated bike paths and bus stops.
- xxiii. Laura: Agree. Generally when I am crossing the intersection
- xxiv. Preston: Is there a major cost difference, and will there be signs telling bikes to yield to pedestrians?
- xxv. Justin: Not sure about the signs. Option B would require new infrastructure
- xxvi. Ted: Agree with Preston about the need for a sign. Also, non-bike vehicles that use bike lanes and signals, like electric unicycles, mopeds, etc. can be dangerous or at least feel dangerous and uncomfortable.
- xxvii. Brenda: There's a sign on Mass Ave in Cambridge near Porter Square telling bikes to yield to pedestrians, so this should be possible here.
- xxviii. Alessandra: leaning toward Option B. Soft recommendation from committee for Option B.
- xxix. Rachel: and if Option A is selected, consider eliminating the concurrent phase across Dane Street in Phase B.
- c. Signals: Pedestrian Phase at Lowell/Sacramento
 - i. Justin: Considering changing this to push-button signal instead of automatic (recall). Push button option can reduce waiting time.
 - ii. Rachel: proposal for left turn signal for cars onto Lowell. Would there be a pedestrian signal across Lowell if that is implemented?
 - iii. Justin: project poster says that adding a blinking yellow or pedestrian phase are options.
 - iv. Rachel: This makes a difference because currently pedestrians can cross Lowell at any time, but would that change to require them to push a button?
 - v. Alessandra: there is a high volume of pedestrians at this intersection. If there is a high volume, it makes sense to have a dedicated phase. For low volume crossings, it makes sense to have a push button.
 - vi. Ted: not sure this intersection has enough pedestrian volume to have it on recall.
 - vii. Justin: at peak hour, the count was 73 people crossing at the busiest time, roughly one person per minute.
 - viii. Ginny: bicycles are not audible. I feel much safer with traffic I can hear than traffic I can't.
 - ix. Susan: Is there data on what is safer (push-button vs. recall)?
 - x. Justin: I'm not aware of data on safety. Part of the issue is that there will be two new high-frequency bus routes on this street, and therefore a need to keep traffic flowing.
 - xi. Brenda, Mackenzie: agree with push button option
 - xii. Rachel: disagree
 - xiii. Preston: could there be video detection for pedestrians here?
 - xiv. Justin: not sure if this will be possible at this intersection.
 - xv. Alessandra: show of hands on automatic vs. push button for Lowell at Somerville Ave. Some ambivalence, but general agreement that push-button is better at this location.

Meeting Ended

8:06PM