

Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (PTAC)

2025 Annual Report



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Committee Members

Community Representatives

Ted Alexander

Ginny Alverson

Meredith Brown

Laura Evans

Christopher Ferry

Preston Gutelius

Satoko Hirai

Brenda Marvin (*Secretary*)

Steven Mulder

Barbara Myers

Bianca Norkunas

Vitor Pamplona (*Vice Chair*)

Zach Rosenberg

Alessandra Seiter (*Chair*)

Mackenzie Webb

Ex Officio

Justin Schreiber (*OSPCD Mobility*)

Katherine White (*OSPCD Mobility*)

Ben Ewen-Campen (*City Council, Ward 3*)

Subcommittees

Community Events

Design Review

Special Projects

Letter from the Chair

We're in an amazing moment for transportation in Somerville. Over the past 15 years the number of Somerville community members choosing to walk has grown, especially among families with school-age children. At the same time, reported crashes in Somerville have significantly decreased. Crucially, our city has now gone three years without losing a community member in a crash. These trends align with the city's impressive programs in traffic calming, safety-focused pavement markings, and sidewalk reconstructions. Our city is steadily becoming safer and more walkable, thanks to a world-class Mobility Division and critical partners in IAM Engineering, Parking, and DPW. We also stand at the precipice of a generation-defining project: the transformation of McGrath Highway into a grade-level boulevard that is safe and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities using all modes.

The state of transit in Somerville is more ambiguous. Last year, bus ridership remained significantly below pre-pandemic rates across the MBTA system. Many of Somerville's 14 bus routes served less than 60% of their 2019 ridership, though ridership did increase by 10% in 2025. This heartening metric signals that despite system-wide challenges, the City's continued investments in bus-priority infrastructure are moving us in the right direction. Additionally, Red Line boardings at Davis saw a 26% increase since 2024. If these developments continue, Somerville can deliver on its promise of effectively serving the transit-dependent community members and making transit a competitive option for all.

For PTAC, 2025 was our most active, engaged, and successful year since our formation in 2020. We wrote more advocacy letters, gave feedback on more projects, engaged with more community members, and accomplished more committee goals than in any previous year. More important than our outputs was our impact. We refocused attention on Union Square and secured short- and long-term improvements to the area, ensured that bus routes 90 and 88 continued to serve Somerville's school population and East Somerville community members, and shaped key improvements to the design of McGrath Boulevard. It's clear we have a talented, mobilized, and ambitious group of committee members, which I feel humbled to lead. I'm so excited to see what we can accomplish in 2026, in concert with Somerville's vibrant safe streets community.

With warmth and solidarity,

Alessandra Seiter

PTAC Chair

Key Takeaways

- PTAC's advocacy led to significant improvements in infrastructure, transit service, and project designs, particularly in Union Square, on bus routes 90 and 88, and as part of the McGrath Boulevard project.
- PTAC wrote 6 advocacy letters and provided feedback on 9 projects in 2025, representing increases in advocacy and project review from 2024 and 2023.
- PTAC engaged with an estimated 700 community members across the 10 events we hosted or participated in, averaging almost one event per month in 2025. Our event total is consistent with previous years but our engagement level significantly increased, thanks primarily to our Union Square Walk Audit (April) and Streetwise: Transportation Trivia event (November).
- PTAC welcomed 40 unique guests to our monthly committee meetings in 2025, consistent with our yearly range of guests in 2024 and 2023.
- PTAC accomplished 56% of committee goals (up by 14% since 2024) and made progress on 33% (up by 25% since 2024).

Areas of Activity

Focus Areas & Achievements

Union Square Walk Audit

In April 2025, PTAC hosted our first walk audit. A walk audit is a community-led “assessment of how safe, accessible, comfortable, and inviting it is to walk in a defined area” ([WalkMassachusetts](#)). While PTAC has long collaborated with Mobility staff to host community walks in areas the City has immediate plans to redesign, we wanted to pursue a walk audit to generate attention and momentum in an area not slated for short-term improvements. We chose Union Square because it’s [one of the top two busiest pedestrian areas citywide](#) and [five high-crash roads intersect there](#) – creating a high likelihood for danger to people walking. Additionally, the entirety of Union Square is an [environmental justice community](#), and the area is beloved by Somerville residents. Our goals with the walk audit were to identify opportunities to make Union Square safer and more comfortable for people walking in the short-term, and to inform the next stages of the long-range [Union Square Plaza and Streetscapes](#) project.

PTAC was thrilled to collaborate on the walk audit with a coalition of community organizations: [Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets \(SASS\)](#), [Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities \(SCPD\)](#), [Groundwork Somerville](#), and [Union Square Main Streets \(USMS\)](#). With the coalition we honed our walking routes and materials, secured a team of volunteers to lead each route, and promoted the event widely. Additionally, youth members of the Groundwork Somerville Green Team measured the heat index, air quality, and noise levels in Union Square to enhance observations made on the walk audit.

60 community members joined the walk audit, splitting into three groups to embark on different walking routes through the square. Each route followed the path a real community member might take through the area, and included three to four stopping points where participants completed checklists to record their assessments of various elements of walkability including sidewalk quality, crosswalk, safety, signal timing, and amenities.

After the walk audit we:

- Synthesized participant observations from the walk audit into a [comprehensive report](#).
 - The report included 5 high-level recommendations for the entirety of Union Square, 25 short-term recommendations (including 9 priority action items), and 11 long-term recommendations for integration into the next phase of the Union Square Plaza and Streetscapes project.
 - The report was shared with former Mayor Ballantyne, Mobility staff, and City Councilors with appropriate geographic jurisdiction.
 - From the report, we secured a [City Council order](#) supporting our recommendations and received [coverage in *The Somerville Times*](#).
- Created a publicly available [Walk Audit Toolkit](#) to support fellow community members in hosting their own walk audits.
- With Mobility staff, presented at the December [WalkMassachusetts Network Call](#) on the walk audit planning process and the value of walk audits as a community engagement tool ([event recording](#), [presentation slides](#)).

In November, City staff across several departments including Mobility, Public Space and Urban Forestry, Engineering, and DPW [responded to PTAC's walk audit report with concrete action items](#). Some are currently under planning or implementation, several are slated for short-term implementation, some were incorporated into Phase 1 of the Union Square Plaza and Streetscapes project (with [Phase 1 design set to begin in 2026](#)), some were incorporated into later phases of the project, and two were not taken up. A detailed list of recommendations and next steps is available in [PTAC's December newsletter](#).

Advocacy on Bus Routes 90 & 88

In June 2025, the MBTA re-routed the 90's bus service in East Somerville from Broadway and Cross St onto Washington St. This change was made to facilitate the 90's eventual consolidation with the 88 under the [Bus Network Redesign](#), alleviate operational difficulties on Cross St, and provide an accessible connection to the Green Line at East Somerville.

PTAC – along with a large number of fellow community members, including students and families – [advocated that the 90 be restored to its previous route](#). This advocacy focused on the plan's worsened service for East Somerville residents, small businesses, and school communities – particularly the Winter Hill families displaced to Edgerly Education Center since 2023. In September, the MBTA reinstated service on Broadway and Cross St in time for the start of the new school year.

Shortly after service was reinstated, PTAC began carefully considering the future of bus routes 90 and 88. We held five committee discussions, weighed several service options against a set of relevant criteria, and hosted committee review rides of both buses. In December, PTAC aligned on the recommendation that the MBTA maintain status quo service on the 90 and 88 until at least 2032. At that point, two fundamental changes are expected to have taken place in the service area: the construction of a new school at the former Winter Hill site and the transformation of McGrath Highway into a multimodal boulevard. We also aligned on the recommendation that until then, the MBTA should collaborate with Somerville staff and community members to holistically re-evaluate bus service needs in East Somerville and Gilman Square.

PTAC recognized that these recommendations keep in place the segments of the 90 and 88 that are duplicative of one another and the Green Line, and does not allow the MBTA to avoid operational difficulties on Cross St. However, we believed this scenario would best serve Somerville community members of all ages and abilities for the time being.

McGrath Boulevard Advocacy

The [McGrath Boulevard project](#), led by MassDOT, has been in progress since 2013 when the State released its landmark [Grounding McGrath study](#). The vision of the McGrath Boulevard project is to transform one of the most dangerous corridors in Somerville into an at-grade boulevard that is safe and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities using all modes. This transformation will prevent countless deaths and injuries, reconnect East Somerville and Brickbottom with the rest of the city, improve community health outcomes, and advance municipal and statewide climate goals.

PTAC has consistently engaged on this project since February 2024, when MassDOT [released its concept design](#). In June 2024, [PTAC provided feedback](#) on this initial concept design along with a [coalition of 19 local organizations](#). In October 2024, PTAC reviewed the in-progress design with a small group of advocates, elected officials, and City staff. In March 2025, MassDOT released an [updated concept design](#). The updated design incorporated much of the feedback in our comment letter, reducing the number of motor vehicle lanes from six to four, proposing careful treatment of Otis Street including full signalization, and promising amenity-rich bus stops along the corridor.

In July 2025, [it was confirmed](#) that the McGrath Boulevard project would retain its \$43 million construction grant from the federal Reconnecting Communities program, despite widespread cancellation of federal funding under the Trump Administration. In November 2025, PTAC again reviewed in-progress designs with a small group of local advocates, elected officials, and City staff. The next month, MassDOT released a [25% design for McGrath Boulevard](#). This latest design represented another iteration of deliberate and pathbreaking changes based on community goals and concerns, including those articulated by PTAC. An additional motor vehicle travel lane was removed, several slip lanes were removed, the Broadway intersection was fully integrated into the project, and raised crossings were proposed at Otis Street and Cross Street – the first time raised crossings had ever been proposed on a major state-owned arterial.

Shortly after the 25% design release, [PTAC aligned on a set of remaining recommendations](#). We felt strongly that the full signalization at Otis Street should be reinstated rather than replaced with RRFBs or HAWK beacons. We also felt strongly that the target speed should be set to 25 MPH – the citywide speed limit – rather than 30 MPH.

In terms of next steps, MassDOT expects to advance the design to 75% in 2026 and to 100% in 2027. Construction is expected to begin in Fall 2027 and conclude by 2032.

Letters

In 2025 PTAC wrote six advocacy letters, averaging one letter every two months. This represents an increase in our advocacy frequency, up from one letter every three months in 2024 and 2023. PTAC devoted significant time and analysis to these letters including independent research, subcommittee work, committee discussions, and stakeholder engagement. Progress has been made in all areas, including several concrete design and service improvements that will make it safer, more convenient, and more comfortable to walk and take transit in Somerville. Three of these letters represent PTAC's 2025 focus areas, detailed above.

1. [Improvements to Snow Clearing Processes](#) (March 25, 2025)
2. [Webster Avenue Bridge Replacement Project](#) (May 3, 2025)
3. [McGrath Boulevard Updated Concept Design](#) (May 16, 2025)
4. [Western Pearl Street Reconstruction Concept Design Options](#) (June 12, 2025)
5. [Service Changes to MBTA Bus Route 90](#) (June 15, 2025)
6. [Union Square Walk Audit Findings & Recommendations](#) (August 21, 2025)

Project Review

PTAC reviewed and gave feedback on 9 projects in 2025. This represents an increase in our project engagement, up from 5-6 projects reviewed in 2024 and 2023. As with our advocacy letters, PTAC's engagement on city and regional projects led to real design and service improvements for people walking and taking transit in Somerville.

1. [McGrath Boulevard](#) (MassDOT)
 - a. Reviewed updated concept design at [April meeting](#).
 - b. Finalized advocacy letter at [May meeting](#).
 - c. Reviewed 25% design and identified as priority for new mayoral administration at [December meeting](#).
2. [Union Square Plaza and Streetscapes](#) (City of Somerville)
 - a. Hosted [walk audit](#) in April.
 - b. Finalized walk audit recommendations at [August meeting](#).
 - c. Discussed City responses and next steps at [November meeting](#).
 - d. Identified as priority for new mayoral administration at [December meeting](#).
3. Services Changes to Bus Routes 90 and 88 (MBTA)
 - a. Discussed changes with MBTA at [May meeting](#).
 - b. Discussed advocacy letter at [June meeting](#).
 - c. Discussed long-term service considerations at [September meeting](#) and [November meeting](#).
 - d. Aligned on long-term recommendations at [December meeting](#).
4. [Community Path Safety Improvements](#) (City of Somerville)
 - a. Discussed project at [October meeting](#).
 - b. Identified as secondary priority for new mayoral administration at [December meeting](#).
5. [Western Pearl Street Reconstruction](#) (City of Somerville)
 - a. Reviewed concept design at [May meeting](#).
 - b. Aligned on recommendations at [June meeting](#).
 - c. Reviewed 80% design at [October meeting](#).
6. [Elm-Beacon Connector](#) (City of Somerville)
 - a. Reviewed concept design at [March meeting](#).
 - b. Reviewed signal phasing at [April meeting](#).

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7. [Somerville Avenue Quick-Build](#) (City of Somerville)
 - a. Discussed project at [July meeting](#).
 - b. Hosted [community walk](#) in July.
 8. [Webster Avenue Bridge Replacement](#) (MassDOT)
 - a. Reviewed 75% design at [April 2025 meeting](#).
 9. [Maffa Way / Mystic Ave Bridge Replacements](#) (MassDOT)
 - a. Discussed at [February meeting](#).

Meeting Engagement

PTAC welcomed over 40 unique guests to our monthly committee meetings in 2025. This is consistent with our yearly range of 30-60 guests in 2024 and 2023. This year's guests included fellow Somerville residents, safe streets and environmental justice advocates, City staff, transportation planners, elected officials, journalists, and students. Several of these guests gave presentations at PTAC's invitation, including:

1. **January:** Repeal of mandatory parking minimums in zoning code.
 - a. Brad Rawson, *Director, Mobility Division, City of Somerville*
2. **February:** Mobility Division 2024 Key Performance Indicators.
 - a. Kate White, *Transportation Planner for Outreach & Engagement, Mobility Division, City of Somerville*
3. **March:** Progress on [Citywide Parking & Curb Use Study](#).
 - a. Jackie Stagnari, *Project Manager, Parking Department, City of Somerville*
4. **May & November:** Service changes to bus routes 90 and 88.
 - a. Melissa Dullea, *Senior Director of Service Planning, MBTA*
 - b. Miles Howard, *Service Planner for Charlestown Garage, MBTA*
 - c. Tara Kamal Ahmadi, *Service Planner, MBTA*
5. **July:** New bus stop shelters and transit signal priority (TSP) plans.
 - a. Justin Schreiber, *Senior Transportation Planner, Mobility Division, City of Somerville*
6. **August:** Engaging Somerville youth on street safety.
 - a. Kate White, *Transportation Planner for Outreach & Engagement, Mobility Division, City of Somerville*
 - b. Kenzie Ballard, *Director of Climate Resiliency and Community Engagement, Groundwork Somerville*
 - c. Isa Membreno, *Green Team, Groundwork Somerville*
 - d. Yadhira Santos, *Green Team, Groundwork Somerville*
7. **September:** Automated bus lane enforcement.
 - a. Kirstie Tirandazi, *Project Manager for Transit Priority, MBTA*
8. **October:** Autonomous vehicles in Massachusetts.
 - a. Kris Carter, *Chief Possibility Officer, MassDOT*

Events

PTAC hosted or participated in 10 events in 2025, averaging almost one event per month. This is consistent with our annual averages in 2024 and 2023. Across events, PTAC engaged with an estimated 700 community members.

Community Walks & Walk Audits

As detailed above, this year PTAC hosted our first walk audit with 60 community members in attendance. We also held a more traditional community walk, welcoming 20 neighbors to explore Somerville Avenue and offer feedback to inform the area's quick-build project.

1. **April:** Union Square Walk Audit ([event details](#), [final report](#), [City response](#))
2. **July:** Somerville Avenue Community Walk ([event details](#), [project details](#))

Tabling

PTAC tabled with Mobility staff and independently throughout the year. At the tables, we invited community members to share where they walked and took transit in Somerville, make pedestrian- and transit-themed buttons, sign up for our newsletter, review copies of our latest advocacy letters, and take postcards with information on how to continue engaging with pedestrian and transit issues in the city. PTAC engaged with 30-100 community members at each tabling event.

1. **April:** [Civic Day](#)
2. **May:** [Bay State Bike Month Kickoff](#)
3. **June:** [Carnaval](#)
4. **September:** [Gilman Square Arts & Music Festival](#)
5. **October:** [Groundwork Harvest Festival](#)
6. **October:** [SomerStreets: Monster Mash](#)

Other Events

1. **July:** Committee gathering to discuss varying views on enforcement (6 participants).
2. **November:** [Streetwise: Transportation Trivia](#) (over 200 participants filling two whole areas at Aeronaut Brewing Company!).

Progress on 2025 Goals

2025 saw the accomplishment of 5 of PTAC’s goals, progress on 3, and no movement on one. We owe gratitude to the many individuals and teams who helped turn these projects and conversations into reality.

2025 Goal	Progress
Engage on school mobility	Pursued through 90/88 bus route advocacy (May-December)
Engage on Community Path safety	Pursued through engagement on Community Path Safety Improvements project (October)
Align on enforcement priorities	Pursued through meeting engagement (January), member survey (February), informal gathering (July), and new mayoral priorities (December)
Engage on bus shelter improvements	Pursued through meeting engagement (January & July)
Re-engage on Citywide Parking & Curb Use Study	Pursued through meeting engagement (January & March)
Re-engage on Green Line station area improvements	Partially pursued through Union Square Walk Audit (April, August, & November)
Re-engage on north-south transit service	Partially pursued through McGrath Boulevard recommendations (April, May, & December)
Host retrospectives on completed projects	Work begun through creation of project tracker
Re-engage on No Turn on Red sign installation progress	Not pursued

Looking Ahead to 2026

PTAC is looking forward to another year of work alongside Mobility and the many advocacy groups that call Somerville home. Our priorities for 2026 include:

- Monitoring progress on Union Square Walk Audit recommendations.
- Engaging on the next design iterations for McGrath Boulevard.
- Monitoring the continued roll-out of the Bus Network Redesign, including by engaging with the MBTA, Mobility staff, and community members in East Somerville and Gilman Square to holistically evaluate transit needs in the area.
- Engaging with Mayor Wilson and Somerville's State Delegation to advance automated enforcement of moving vehicles.
- Continuing to advocate for and collaborate on creative opportunities for improvements to sidewalk snow clearing.
- Engaging on emerging issues related to school mobility.
- Hosting additional walk audits in strategic areas, such as Assembly Square and/or Davis Square.
- Maintaining our 2025 levels of community engagement.

How to Get Involved

Join PTAC

PTAC periodically solicits applications for membership and submits recommendations for appointment to the Mayor. Additionally, community members may apply to join Somerville PTAC through the following process:

- Attend a minimum of six monthly committee meetings in a two-year period, and actively participate in other committee activities.
- Declare interest in becoming a member at a monthly committee meeting and obtain the endorsement of the current membership through a simple majority vote. The current membership will submit their recommendation for appointment to the Mayor.
- Write a letter to the Mayor, expressing interest in becoming a member and detailing any relevant experience.
- If appointed by the Mayor, work with the PTAC Chair to onboard into committee business.

Make Your Voice Heard

- Attend a monthly PTAC meeting, (usually) held on the third Thursday of each month, 6:30 - 8:00 pm. Meetings are held in hybrid format). If you'd like to attend a meeting and need accessibility accommodations or have other questions/concerns, email transportation@somervillema.gov.
- Stay up-to-date on committee meetings, advocacy work, and community events with the monthly [PTAC newsletter](#).
- Stay informed about pedestrian and transit happenings in Somerville with the monthly [Mobility Division newsletter](#).
- Sign up for email notifications about City Council meetings through [Legistar](#).
- Give feedback on City projects and plans on [SomerVoice](#).
- Request a specific improvement or report a problem via [Somerville 311](#).