

BYLAWS
of the
PEDESTRIAN & TRANSIT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
of the City of Somerville, Massachusetts

ARTICLE I. PURPOSE, MISSION, PRINCIPLES, & HISTORY

Section I. Purpose

These Bylaws create a framework for the operation of the Somerville Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee (the “Committee”). These Bylaws define the Committee’s mission and principles, areas of work, meeting procedures, member roles and responsibilities, subcommittee work, and Officer election procedures and duties.

Section II. Mission Statement

The Committee advocates for the residents of Somerville and City Staff in order to improve the safety, effectiveness, sustainability, and equity of the pedestrian and public transit experience.

Section III. Principles

The work of the Committee shall be dedicated to the following core principles:

1. Expanding access to, and the accessibility of, walking and public transportation in Somerville, such as by advocating for safe pedestrian routes to essential services and plowed streets after snowfall.
2. Increasing safe use of all modes of transportation in Somerville, particularly for the benefit of pedestrians and transit users, such as by advocating for traffic calming measures and safe crossings.
3. Promoting walking and taking public transit as regular modes of transportation in Somerville, such as through public education and engagement.
4. Making walking and riding transit in Somerville a more pleasant experience for all, such as by advocating for sidewalk paving and increased bus frequency.

5. Evaluating and improving the performance of pedestrian and public transportation systems in and around Somerville, including by working with the City's Mobility Division and monitoring MBTA service quality.
6. Advocating for the incorporation of an equity lens in all decisions made about pedestrian and public transit systems in Somerville, including through fair and equitable transit fares.
7. Increasing the sustainability of pedestrian and public transportation systems in Somerville, such as by advocating for green infrastructure and sufficient funding streams.
8. Creating connectedness between isolated neighborhoods, such as by advocating for expansion of pedestrian and transit infrastructure throughout Environmental Justice Communities and Communities of Concern.

Section IV. History

The Committee was established in 2020 as part of the City of Somerville's [Vision Zero Action Plan](#), which forms the basis of the City's commitment to multi-modal road safety. Prior to 2020, the Committee's formation was spurred by a series of devastating pedestrian crashes and subsequent community advocacy. In 2019, Allison Donovan was killed while crossing Powder House Boulevard. That same year, Cheryl Richards and Kevin Dumont were killed at the intersection of Mystic Avenue and Shore Drive. In response, [293 community members submitted a petition to the City Council](#) calling for action. The third recommendation (of eleven) was to "create a permanent City-staffed Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee by June 2019." This recommendation was inspired by the work of the informal Pedestrian/Transit Resident Advocates Meeting, which met monthly from January 2018 to Spring 2019 under the leadership of former At-Large City Councilor Stephanie Hirsch. The Vision Zero Action Plan officially codified this recommendation.

ARTICLE II. COMMITTEE WORK

Section I. Essential Elements of Committee Work

The work of the Committee shall include the following essential elements of a walkable and transit-friendly community, which can be used to create an organizational structure for subcommittee work, if deemed appropriate by the Committee:

1. Equity and Accessibility
2. Engineering and Evaluation
3. Education and Engagement
4. Policy and Enforcement

Section II. Subcommittees

Each Committee member has the option to participate in the activities of one (1) or more subcommittees, which shall take on tasks and projects outside of regular monthly meetings. Each subcommittee shall be organized by a Lead, who shall have the option of attending Officer meetings and may change at any point depending on the needs and interests of subcommittee members. Subcommittees may not reach Committee quorum during their meetings. Subcommittees shall regularly report back to the Committee on their work, including at monthly Committee meetings. All deliberation and decisions on issues related to subcommittees' work shall occur during the Committee's regular monthly meetings.

The Committee shall organize itself into the following subcommittees:

1. Community Events
 - a. Shall plan community walks and tabling opportunities.
 - b. Shall explore new venues for community engagement based on member interest and bandwidth.
2. Design Review
 - a. Shall review designs for street reconstruction, quick-build, and other projects with a focus on pedestrian and transit experience.
 - b. Shall write feedback and/or support letters, as appropriate.

While the specific work of each subcommittee shall be flexible to the leadership and collaboration of its Committee members, each subcommittee shall be responsible for keeping the Committee apprised of its work by:

1. Notifying the Committee of its upcoming meetings as far in advance as possible, and providing an agenda and information on how to join the meeting.
2. Summarizing each subcommittee meeting for the full Committee at regular meetings.
3. Strategizing with the Officers about the subcommittee's direction and goals.

Any Committee member can propose the creation of a new subcommittee, provided there is a Committee member willing to serve as the new Subcommittee Lead. The creation of a new subcommittee shall be subject to a vote by a simple majority of the members present at a regular Committee meeting.

ARTICLE III. MEMBER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Section I. Membership

The Committee shall include no fewer than 14 community representatives who live in Somerville and take an active interest in pedestrian and transit issues in Somerville. The Committee, in collaboration with City Staff, shall periodically solicit applications for membership through an open call and submit their recommendations for appointment to the Mayor.

Outside of application cycles, any member of the public may apply to become a member of the Committee through the following process:

1. Attend a minimum of six (8) regular Committee meetings in a two-year period.
2. Actively participate in and contribute to the Committee's mission through events, planning, research, and/or outreach.
3. Declare interest in becoming a member at a monthly Committee meeting and obtain the Committee's endorsement through a simple majority vote. The Committee shall submit any recommendation for appointment to the Mayor.
4. Write a letter to the Mayor expressing interest in becoming a Committee member and detailing any relevant experience.
5. If appointed by the Mayor, work with the Chair to onboard into Committee business.

Section II. Member Service

Members are asked to serve for a minimum of two years. Any vacancy shall be filled by Mayoral appointment for the balance of the unexpired term, taking into account any Committee recommendations for appointment.

Participation requirements shall be reviewed periodically throughout the year, and members may receive periodic email reminders or check-ins regarding their participation so that they have an opportunity to confirm whether they are meeting the requirements.

Each December, the Officers shall conduct an official review of participation for the calendar year. Members who have met the applicable participation requirements shall remain on the Committee. Members who have not met the applicable participation requirements shall cycle off the Committee, subject to the provisions of Section III regarding accommodations and continued service while new members are appointed.

Section III. Member Participation Standards

Members are expected to actively participate in the work of the Committee. Participation requirements shall be evaluated based on the portion of the calendar year during which a member serves.

1. **Committee Meetings Attendance.** For each full calendar year of service, a member is expected to attend eight (8) Committee meetings. For a partial calendar year of service, the expected number of meetings shall be adjusted to a minimum of three-quarters (3/4) of the meetings that occurred during the member's active service.
2. **Acting Secretary.** The requirement to serve as Acting Secretary and record Committee meeting minutes, shall be evaluated every two (2) years. Members are expected to serve at least one time during that period. Officers and Subcommittee Leads have the option of being excused from this duty.
3. **Community Engagement & Advocacy Letters.** Members are expected to participate in at least one (1) public engagement or advocacy letter activity per year, should such activities occur. Participation in such activities shall be evaluated annually. If a member has served 6 months or less, this requirement is waived. Officers and Subcommittee Leads have the option of being excused from this duty.

Section IV. Accommodations

Any member may request an accommodation to any of the participation requirements through a conversation with the Committee Officers and the Mobility Division.

Accommodations may be considered based on the circumstances and may modify or waive an applicable participation requirement.

Section V. Continued Service

If a member is not in good standing based on the participation standards detailed in Section III and has not requested accommodation from the Committee Officers and/or Mobility Division, the member will be deemed to have resigned. The member may continue serving at the discretion of the Committee Officers and Mobility Division until new members are appointed.

Section VI. Ex Officio Members

Two Ex Officio members shall serve on the Committee, including one representative from the Somerville City Council and at least one representative from the Mobility Division of the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD). Ex Officio members shall make themselves available as needed throughout the year to respond to requests and inquiries by Committee members. They are encouraged to attend at least one (1) regular Committee meeting per year to coordinate with Committee members on relevant issues.

Section VII. OSPCD Staff Support

The OSPCD Ex Officio member(s) shall facilitate Committee activities by maintaining connections between City staff and Committee members. The OSPCD Ex Officio member(s)' responsibilities shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Organizing logistics for meeting spaces and other meeting needs.
2. Posting meeting information publicly to meet Massachusetts Open Meeting Law requirements.
3. Updating Committee members on City activities related to pedestrian and transit issues.
4. Organizing meetings with other City staff as requested or needed.

ARTICLE IV. OFFICER ELECTIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Section I. Officers

Members shall annually elect four (4) officers by a majority of the quorum: Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary, and (optionally) Digital Communications Officer.

Section II. Officers Roles and Responsibilities

1. Chair

- a. The Chair shall be the primary representative of the Committee and is responsible for facilitating meetings, organizing a Committee work program including subcommittee structure, managing external relationships with the public and City staff, and overseeing Committee communication, including the writing and signing of official Committee correspondence.
- b. The Chair, in collaboration with the other Officers and OSPCD Ex Officio member(s), shall prepare the agenda for each regular Committee meeting and share it with the Committee at least one (1) week prior to the meeting. The OSPCD Ex Officio member(s) shall publicly post each agenda to the City's website at least two (2) days prior to the meeting. The agenda shall include a description of each topic planned for discussion, including any relevant background information and whether a vote is expected.
- c. The Chair shall run Committee meetings following Robert's Rules of Order.
- d. The Chair shall review and edit draft meeting minutes and other Committee documents.
- e. The Chair, in collaboration with the other Officers, shall create an Annual Report subject to Committee review and available to the public.

2. Vice Chair

- a. The Vice Chair shall coordinate with and assist the Chair in fulfilling their duties, and shall be prepared to take over the Chair's duties in the event that the Chair is not present.
- b. The Vice Chair shall make considerable contributions to the Committee, taking on substantial roles and responsibilities as agreed upon with the other Officers.

- c. The Vice Chair shall assist in reviewing and editing draft meeting minutes and other committee documents.

3. Secretary

- a. The Secretary shall be ultimately responsible for managing meeting minutes and attendance records. The taking of meeting minutes may be designated to a rotating Acting Secretary, as detailed in Article III, Section III.3 of these Bylaws.
- b. The Secretary shall organize an Acting Secretary sign up schedule, whereby members of the Committee will take turns recording meeting minutes, including maintaining a record of members, Ex Officio members, and guests in attendance, and reviewing/editing draft minutes. The Secretary shall ensure that Acting Secretaries fulfill their duties and assist in reviewing and editing draft minutes.
- c. The Secretary shall be prepared to run meetings in the event that the Chair and Vice Chair are not present.

4. Digital Communications Officer (*Optional Role*)

- a. The Digital Communications Officer shall be responsible for digital communications with the public, collaborating with the other Officers and Subcommittee Leads to maintain the Committee's page on the City's website, send a monthly newsletter, create promotional materials for community events including descriptions for OSPCD Ex Officio members to post on the City's website, and manage social media accounts as appropriate.
- b. The Digital Communications Officer shall be prepared to run meetings in the event that the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary are not present.

ARTICLE V. ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE PROCEDURES

Section I. Meeting Procedures

Regular Committee meetings shall be held following Robert's Rules of Order. Meeting times and locations can be changed subject to Committee member approval by simple majority. Monthly meetings cannot take place without a quorum, defined as a simple majority of Committee members present in-person and online.

Section II. Voting

Voting may only occur at regular meetings when there is a quorum, defined as a simple majority of Committee members present in-person and online. Voting may not occur at a subcommittee meeting.

Section III. Annual Report

The Committee shall render to the Mayor, City Council, and Director of Mobility an Annual Report of its activities including but not limited to community events, project recommendations, and subcommittee activities.

Section IV. Communications with the Community

The Committee may create public communications that represent the Committee's interests or opinions (e.g., letters). Such communications shall be approved by a simple majority vote of the members present at a regular Committee meeting, and signed by the Chair. Committee members are free to communicate their personal views to the public, the press, or to the government. In doing so, however, they must make it clear that they are not speaking for the Committee.

Section V. Compensation

The members of the Committee shall serve without compensation, but may be allowed expenses with the approval of the Mayor and subject to appropriation by the City Council.

Section VI. Committee Opinions

The committee may express its opinion on any matter related to pedestrian or transit issues in Somerville through a simple majority vote of the members present at a regular

Committee meeting. These opinions may address matters at any level of specificity, from general policy questions to specific decisions related to individual locations or projects, and may be expressed in any form. The exception is that an opinion of the Committee may not take the form of a Resolution unless the Committee has approved it through the process set out in Article V, Section VII of these Bylaws. Opinions can be addressed to, and include recommendations for, the Mayor, City Council, City departments, State agencies, or other entities as the Committee considers to be appropriate.

Section VII. Committee Resolutions

The Committee may adopt formal Resolutions on matters related to pedestrian or transit issues in Somerville through the following process, to be initiated by one or more members of the Committee (the “Sponsor”):

1. The Sponsor obtains authorization from the Committee by simple majority vote of the members present at a regular Committee meeting to research and investigate a specific policy issue on behalf of the Committee and develop a draft Resolution.
2. At a subsequent regular Committee meeting, the Sponsor presents results from the initial research for discussion and solicits suggestions from Committee members of stakeholders who should be consulted for additional information and views on the issue.
3. The Sponsor consults with stakeholder groups as appropriate, drafts a Resolution, and submits the draft Resolution to the Committee along with a brief summary of the research undertaken and comments, if any, received from stakeholders.
4. At a subsequent regular Committee meeting, the Committee deliberates on the draft Resolution and votes either to approve the Resolution or to refer the Resolution to a subcommittee for revision in accordance with the Committee’s discussion of the draft Resolution.