

Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee



Annual Report 2016





2016 SOMERVILLE BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Community Representatives

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Tom Lamar, Vice Chair

Charlie Denison, Vice Chair

Alex Anderson

Emily Balkam

Alex Epstein

Ariel Horowitz (Resigned 06/16)

Enid Kumin

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Ex-Officio Members

Skye Stewart, Office of the Mayor

Matthew McLaughlin, Board of Aldermen

Stephen Carrabino, Somerville Police Department

Terence Smith, Traffic and Parking

Stanley Koty, Department of Public Works

Adam Polinski, Office of Strategic Planning and
Community Development

Jennifer Molina, Office of Strategic Planning and
Community Development (Resigned 08/16)

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Introduction

This year (2016) was a year many of us will never forget. While more and more people are bicycling in Somerville and in greater Boston, we were reminded that tragedy can easily strike our vulnerable bicycling community. Within the span of five months, three bicyclists were killed within or just outside of Somerville's municipal borders. In June, Amanda Philips was tragically doored by a parked motorist and then run over by the driver of a landscaping truck in Inman Square. Shortly afterwards, Jean Leonard was struck and killed by a train when, for unknown reasons, he biked around the lowered gates at the Park Street railroad crossing. Then, in early October, Joe Lavins was run over by the driver of a tractor trailer in Porter Square.

The deaths of these individuals were tragic and really struck a chord with many in the bicycling community. Hundreds of people attended ghost bike ceremonies to pay their respects and say their goodbyes. The deaths of Amanda and Joe hit particularly close to home because they were like many of us- everyday cyclists- who lost their lives on their way to work on sunny and what should have been carefree days. Rightfully, these

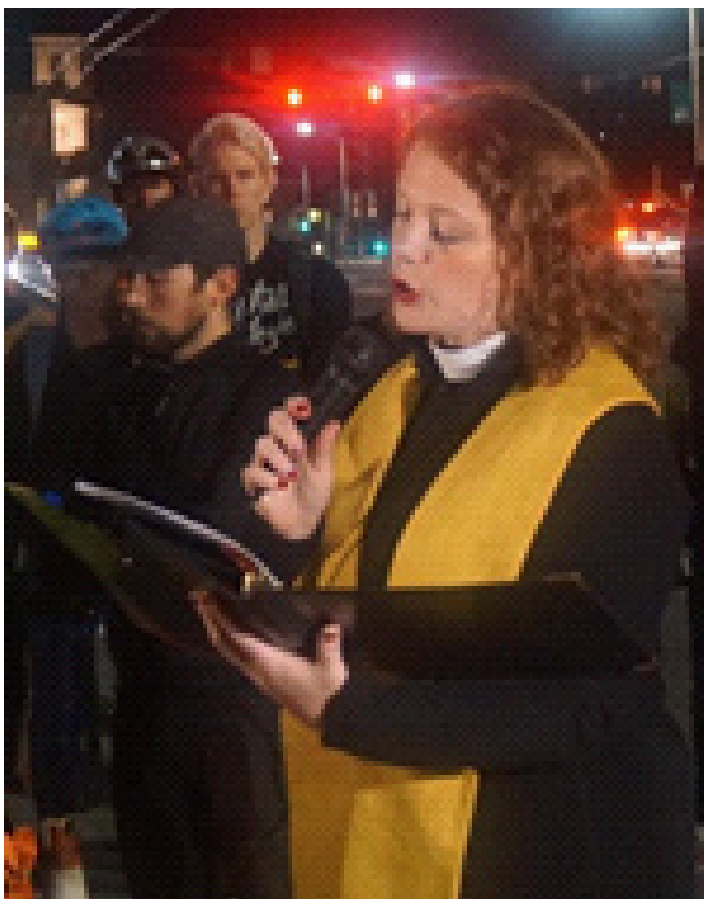
fatalities provoked anger and a loud outcry for change. Hundreds of people protested at Cambridge City Hall after Amanda and Joe were killed, demanding better infrastructure and safety measures for bicyclists. This outcry has spurred bicycle facility improvements in Inman Square and has increased pressure to make bicycle safety improvements to the notoriously dangerous Porter Square intersection. We need to realize that the same conditions that led to these deaths also exist here in Somerville, and that more of these tragedies will occur if we don't continue to improve our streets.

So, what exactly are we doing in Somerville to ensure the safety of people who bike? We continue to follow the "Five E's" of Bicycle Planning (Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering and Evaluation and Planning), working hard to promote bike safety following these tragedies. We also work hard to ensure that another "E", equity, is always part of what we do.

Focusing on Education, the Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee (SBAC) organized a bike safety discussion



panel of five experienced Boston-area bicyclists with over 100 people in attendance within days of Amanda's death. Video clips of the panel have been shared extensively on social media. In response to Joe Lavin's death, the SBAC was directly involved in co-creating the [Joe Lavins Fund for Bicycle Safety](#), a fund dedicated to education and outreach to improve safety for people who bike in urban areas around large vehicles (the fund has raised over \$9,300 as of March). The Fund's Steering Committee is chaired by the SBAC's Ken Carlson, a friend and colleague of Joe Lavin, and Alex Epstein, a national truck safety expert. In addition, many of the SBAC's 2016 Bike Talks have been related to bike safety, and the SBAC also hosted a panel discussion on how to avoid and diffuse road rage.



With respect to Encouragement, we promoted the power of bicycle transportation by co-hosting a very successful Rush Hour Challenge Event; organized several bike rides and monthly bike breakfasts; and held a well-attended bike month kick-off event at Aeronaut Brewery with over 25 bike organizations and businesses.

Regarding Enforcement, we worked closely with local resident Dr. Michael Charney and Somerville Deputy Police Chief Stephen Carrabino to promote the Dutch Reach method of safely opening car doors. We also

worked to increase awareness and understanding of bike boxes by creating a bike box handout that was distributed as part of parking permit renewals. This was followed by close coordination with the City to prepare a [bike facilities guide](#), which contained a wide variety of markings that might be seen on Somerville streets.

Since bike safety largely stems from improving bike infrastructure, our Engineering Team had a very busy year developing recommendations for improved bike facilities on Summer St, Park St, Dane St, Highland Ave, and Webster Ave. They also helped to promote the construction of the Community Path as part of the Green Line Extension.

Finally, our Evaluation and Planning Team was active in monitoring street conditions and advising the city during the reconstruction of Beacon Street. As protected bike lanes were installed, it was important to plan safe detour routes and recommend a temporary parking ban on Park and Dane streets to improve mobility during construction. The Evaluation Team also worked closely with the City on annual bicycle and pedestrian counts.

We can never focus too much on bike safety and in 2017 we will continue our efforts. We are grateful to the Mayor's Office, our hardworking Aldermen, and to the many dedicated professionals in the City (particularly in the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, Traffic and Parking, Public Works, and the Somerville Police Department) for their hard work and dedication to improving bike facilities and safety in Somerville. The changes we are beginning to see on Beacon Street, the improved interim facilities in the McGrath Highway and Target areas, the uphill bike lane on Summer Street, and the new bike lane on Highland Ave in Davis Square are a testament to this hard work. I am proud to say that the SBAC has never worked more closely with our counterparts in the City, and this has reaped great benefits for the bicycling environment in Somerville. The SBAC is a hardworking committee, and I am very thankful for the dedication of our Committee Members and the Team Leaders of the "Five E's". I am also thankful for the many volunteers who have helped out in our activities (including a very successful citywide bike count). I would appeal to the many other Somerville bicyclists to get involved with our mission to improve bicycling for everyone in our city. Here's to a happy and safe new year of bicycling and living in this great city of ours.

Ken Carlson, Chair

Accomplishments in 2016

EDUCATION

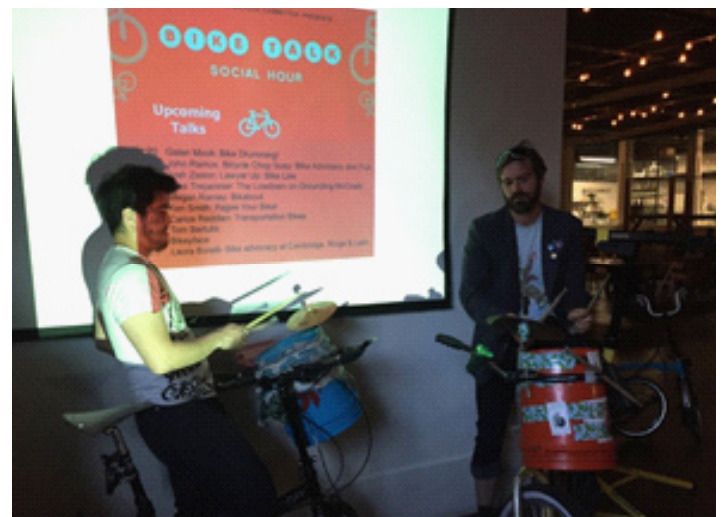
The Education team's goal is for people of all ages and abilities to feel confident and safe while biking in the City of Somerville. Our outreach efforts are aimed at all road users, including bicyclists, drivers, and pedestrians.

BIKE SAFETY PANEL

Following the tragic death in June of Amanda Phillips in Inman Square, the Bike Committee quickly collaborated with other local bicycle advocacy organizations (Boston Cyclists Union, Livable Streets Alliance, and MassBike) to organize an event to promote safe biking on our city streets. The result was Putting Your Best Wheel Forward: How to Bike Safe on Unsafe Roads, a panel discussion moderated by Ken Carlson (SBAC Chair) and Becca Wolfson (Boston Cyclists Union Executive Director). The diverse panel consisted of experienced cyclists who regularly bike in Somerville, Cambridge, Boston and surrounding cities and towns. Panelists shared tips for safely navigating the perils of urban cycling, including large trucks, inattentive drivers,

streets lacking bicycling infrastructure and the danger posed by opening car doors. Veteran cyclists both on the panel and in the audience conveyed their best tips for minimizing risks while still experiencing the joy and convenience of urban cycling.

The Boston Globe [published an article](#) about the panel discussion and Somerville Community Access Television (SCATV) [broadcast the entire panel](#), which SBAC volunteer Alex Frieden edited valuable excerpts from. Select video clips were shared on our website and through social media (see segment on [how to avoid dooring](#)).



BIKE TALK SOCIAL HOUR

Our monthly Bike Talk Social Hour began near the end of 2015 and is still going strong! One Wednesday evening each month (the first Wednesday of the month this year), cycling enthusiasts gather at Aeronaut Brewery to hear a different speaker's perspective on a biking related topic. The speaker presents for about thirty minutes and then opens up the floor for a lively question and answer period. Following each presentation, speakers, audience members, and others who happen to be at Aeronaut have time to socialize with each other.



This year's Bike Talk speakers and topics included:

January	Wenzday Jane	Participants learned about Metro Pedal Power, Wenzday's human-powered delivery business (based in Somerville!) that uses cargo bikes for "last mile" transportation.
February	Somerville Deputy Police Chief Steve Carrabino	Deputy Chief Carrabino spoke to a large crowd about what it's like to be a bicycle riding police chief and shared tips for staying safe while biking in Somerville.
March	Reverend Laura Everett	Reverend Everett, a bike commuting pastor, spoke about finding spirituality through urban cycling and read from her upcoming book, Holy Spokes: The Search for Urban Spirituality on Two Wheels.
April	Galen Mook	Galen regaled the audience with noisy tales of drum biking.
May	Jon Ramos	During Jon's talk, participants learned about his early days of bike advocacy and how he started designing and building unique bicycle trailers for libraries and businesses.
May	Josh Zisson	During a bonus Bike Month edition of Bike Talk Social Hour, Josh, a local bike lawyer, shared his expertise on what to do if you are in a bike crash and answered numerous questions from audience members.
June	Michael Trepanier	Michael, of MassDOT, filled us in on the grounding of McGrath Highway, including the history of the project and what we can expect when it's finished.
July	Megan Ramey	The creator of Bikabout told us about her business model that curates great biking experiences and shared examples of some amazing bike infrastructure across the country.
August	Ken Smith	The founder and CEO of Rejee shared everything you need to know to keep your bike safe and secure in the city.
September	Carice Reddien	Carice, a mother and owner of family friendly Somerville bike store Bicycle Belle, imparted expert advice on biking with kids.
October	Bruce Kulik	Bruce, who is co-chair of the Medford Bicycle Advisory Committee, talked about the importance of knowing how to bike safely in traffic.
November	Bekka Wright (Bikeyface)	Somerville's Bekka Wright, better known as Bikeyface, talked about how she came to start her comic series and shared some of her favorite bike comics.
December	Mike Charney	Mike shared wisdom about the "Dutch Reach," a strategy used when opening a car door to help prevent dooring.

BIKE MONTH KICKOFF

The highlight of our Bike Month Kick-off Event at Aeronaut in May was a panel discussion about how to avoid or de-escalate road rage. The Panel was moderated by Livable Streets Alliance Board Member Steve Miller and included a motorist, several bicyclists, and a pedestrian advocate. The discussion was attended by well over 100 audience members and there was lively discussion and hopefully common ground attained.

BIKE SAFETY IN THE NEWS

Members of the SBAC were interviewed several times throughout the year on bicycling related issues:


- [Somerville Cyclists Are On A Roll](#) (Somerville Scout)
- [A Primer on Cycling In Somerville](#) (Somerville Scout)
- [Somerville Cyclists Need Data To Drive Road Safety Decisions](#) (Wicked Local)


SCHOOL CONNECTIONS

Education Team member Laura Borrelli, a Somerville resident who teaches at the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School (CRLS), shared wisdom about her experience founding the CRLS Bicycle Club. Students in the club work together to promote biking to school and safe biking. The Education team has a goal of getting more Somerville High School students biking and a focus in 2017 will be collaborating with the high school to promote biking as a viable option for getting to school. If anyone knows of a Somerville High School teacher who would be willing to work with the SBAC to initiate an after-school Bicycle Advocacy Club, please contact us.


BIKE FACILITIES GUIDE


Using input from the SBAC, the City's Transportation Analyst, Adam Polinski, assembled a fantastic [bike facilities guide](#) to educate bicyclists and motorists about the different types of bike facilities and markings.



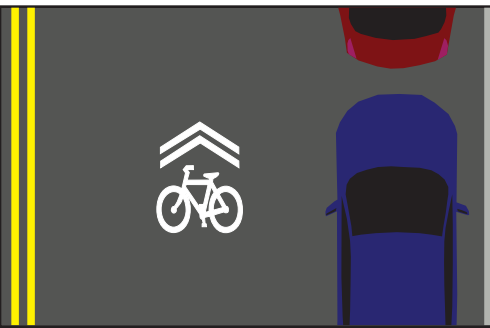


Somerville Bike Markings



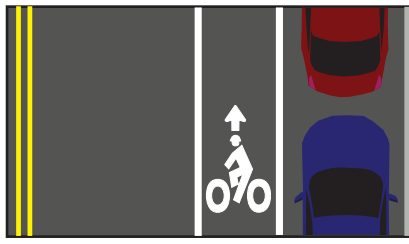


Sharrows




Sharrows remind both bicyclists and drivers that they're sharing the road. On streets without a dedicated bike lane, it's important to remain aware of other types of traffic and drive or ride in a courteous and safe way.

Bike Lanes



Bike lanes offer dedicated road space to bicyclists. Although bicyclists are allowed to ride anywhere on the street, most will opt for a bike lane if available. Vehicles can only cross over bike lanes when the lines are dashed (except when parking on the street), and must always yield to bicyclists when doing so.

Bike Boxes



Bike boxes at intersections provide a space for bicyclists to stop in front of cars. This increases safety for bicyclists turning left because they can wait ahead of vehicles at a red light and are more visible to drivers.

Safety Tip: Watch out for bicyclists! When exiting a vehicle, open your car door with the opposite hand. It's a simple move that forces you to look back and ensure that no one is coming. Also, don't forget to look in your mirrors before making a turn.

City of Somerville • Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development • Traffic and Parking • Somerville Police Department • Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee

ENCOURAGEMENT

The Encouragement team focuses on activities and efforts that celebrate and engage people who currently bike for their commutes, errands, recreation, and fun. The team also focuses on outreach to members of the community who do not currently consider bike riding as a viable option for their travels around Somerville and the surrounding neighborhoods. In this spirit, the Encouragement team organizes group rides, social activities, and public outreach by joining community events to share information about the SBAC and improvements to Somerville's bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.

In 2016, the following events were held to encourage people to ride bicycles in the Somerville community while also fostering a stronger sense of community among people who bike in the neighborhood.

WHOLE FOODS BIKE BREAKFAST

The Somerville Whole Foods located on Beacon Street has been a committed partner for multi-modal transportation in the City of Somerville for several years. The parking lot at Whole Foods includes an easily accessible bike rack. Additionally, a vending machine that provides bike-related items – replacement inner tubes, reusable water bottles, and other items – is located alongside a work stand with an air pump in the parking lot. Importantly, Whole Foods Somerville is the city's first official Bicycle Friendly Business, having been awarded silver status by the League of American Bicyclists.



For the last several years, Whole Foods has hosted a Walk-Ride Commuter Breakfast on the last Friday of the month between April and October. The SBAC has played a central role in organizing bicycle related activities at these breakfasts and is grateful to have Whole Foods as a partner. We and other bike-focused organizations table at these breakfasts and provide bike-focused conversation during the morning commute.



This year's Walk-Ride Commuter Breakfasts were held amidst a busy construction season along Beacon Street as the next phase of work began in earnest to install a protected bike lane on Beacon Street. Next year, many bike commuters will be able to arrive at Whole Food's Commuter Breakfasts via greatly improved bike facilities on Beacon Street.

BIKE MONTH KICKOFF EVENT

May is Bay State Bike Month in Massachusetts. Each year, the SBAC works to raise public awareness through campaigns on social media, group rides, and community events. This year's Bay State Bike Month started with the Somerville Open Studios Organized Bike Ride (see below) which led into the [Bay State Bike Month Kick-Off event](#) at Aeronaut Brewing Company. The event brought together the greater Boston community of bicycle advocates and commuters and bicycle riders of all levels. An organized panel discussion focused on avoiding and de-escalating road rage. Those in attendance also enjoyed live music from two bands whose members are regular bike riders and advocates. Over 25 bicycle advocacy groups and bike businesses from the greater Boston metro region joined the event to share information about their work. The event was an amazing kick-off to bike month!



SOMERVILLE OPEN STUDIOS RIDE

The [Somerville Open Studios Organized Bike Ride](#) brought together two important parts of Somerville's community identity – a vibrant art scene and exploring the city on bicycle. Each year, Somerville Open Studios organizes a weekend where local artists display their art in their studios, community centers, and homes for the public. This weekend of free art showcases hundreds of artists in Somerville. For the first time, the SBAC organized a community bike ride to highlight some of the artists around town.



4TH ANNUAL RUSH HOUR CHALLENGE

The SBAC co-organized the [4th Annual Rush Hour Challenge](#), which raises awareness about the benefits and challenges of commuting in the greater Boston community during rush hour. This year marked a significant change for the Rush Hour Challenge. The SBAC partnered with the Livable Streets Alliance, the Boston Cyclists Union, and MassBike to reach more



members of the community and bring together many of the advocacy organizations in the region. The challenge began at MassDOT's office in Downtown Boston and ended at Red Bones BBQ in Davis Square in Somerville.

The goal of the event was to highlight the benefits and challenges of each major transportation option in the Boston metro region. The official challengers included a person on their own pedal-bike, a person on a Hubway bike, a person on an electric-assist pedal-bike, a person

driving in a private car, a person using the MBTA, a person running, and a person walking. Unofficial participation from the public is always welcome, and about 15 members of the public joined the challenge. Each of the official challengers was surprised at the start of the race with a \$5 budget to pick up an item from the store on their way home, as a way of simulating a real-world errand run while commuting home. This year's challenge was also unique in that it was scheduled to lead into MassBike's annual fundraiser-party at Red Bones.



As the party got started, the challengers started to arrive. The people who arrived by electric-assist pedal-bike, personal pedal-bike, and running were the first to the party. The Hubway and MBTA commuters were not too far behind. And, the walker and private car driver arrived at approximately the same time, last but certainly not least. The event provided another reminder about the many options our neighbors have to get around town. And, that pedaling is often the quickest way to get where you're going!



SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS EVENTS

This year marked an important turning point in the progress for Beacon Street's protected bike lane. For nearly all of the warm-weather months, Beacon Street was under intense construction and faced partial and complete lane closures for extended periods of time. This made living on, commuting through, and running a business on Beacon Street more difficult than usual.

As a way to support local businesses affected by the construction, the SBAC organized a [Supporting Local Businesses](#) event. This was an informal meeting of the SBAC which was held at R.F. O'Sullivan's, a long-standing pub on Beacon Street famous for its burgers! Members of the public were encouraged to join the SBAC for dinner and a drink at R.F. O'Sullivan's. The public was also encouraged to patronize any of the other local businesses on Beacon Street. The event was a successful test of a new way to engage with the community – providing informal and casual opportunities to build a relationship between neighbors in areas that are heavily relied on by bike and pedestrian commuters.

TOUR OF SOMERVILLE RIDE

The SBAC also hosted the annual [Tour of Somerville Bike Ride](#). Each year, the SBAC organizes a fall ride to highlight some of the hallmarks of the Somerville Community while highlighting some of the area's history. This year's ride focused on showing the most popular Somerville community businesses according to Scout Somerville's [Scout's Honored list for 2016](#). The ride started at Somerville City Hall. Nearly 30 people

joined the ride through Somerville's streets. And, the group received the VIP treatment from the Somerville Police Department with three officers-on-bikes joining the ride and adding to our safety on the road.

**TOUR OF
SOMERVILLE
BIKE RIDE**

Saturday
October 29
1pm - 4pm
MEET AT CITY HALL
93 HIGHLAND AVE

Join us for a 2-hour ride through our fine city and check out some of Somerville's **BEST BUSINESSES** according to the 2016 **SCOUT'S HONORED** list. The ride will finish at **MERCHANT SQUARE**. Follow us on Facebook for more info. Ride date: Saturday November 5th.

SOMERVILLE BIKE COMMITTEE MAYOR JOSEPH CURTATONE

Throughout the ride, the group saw some of the best restaurants and bars for breakfast, brunch, lunch, and dinner; the best locations for professional needs including banking and real estate; the best spots to experience art including theaters and studios; and, the best shops for gifts, clothes, and home goods. The route took everyone from City Hall to Magoun Square and then through Ball Square into Davis Square. At each of these locations, the group stopped to see the locations of the Honorees. The group explored Davis Square by foot because of the concentration of businesses in the area that made the list. The ride then continued back towards City Hall to make it into Union Square. And, finally, the ride concluded at Aeronaut Brewery for socializing and libations!

ILLUMINATION'S BIKE TOUR

The final community ride of the year was intended to be the [Illumination's Bike Tour](#). This annual ride takes participants through the City of Somerville to highlight some of the most festive and well-lit homes and businesses during the holidays. Unfortunately, this year's ride was cancelled due to severe weather, and a snow-date was not possible due to the timing in the calendar. The SBAC looks forward to better luck with the weather next year!

ENFORCEMENT

The Enforcement team's efforts are directed at ensuring safe roads for everyone, especially vulnerable road users, with a focus on enforcing existing laws related to road use by all mode users and proposing new laws and regulations. The team acts as the liaison for and regularly coordinates with the Somerville Police Department (SPD) and Neighborhood Bicycle Officers. The team also has a goal of ensuring safety during public bicycle rides.

In 2016, the Enforcement Team strengthened our relationship with the SPD, highlighted by our close relationship with Deputy Chief Stephen Carrabino, who joined the SBAC in 2015 as an ex officio member. We also began building a relationship with our new liaison Captain Jim Donovan, who patrols and commutes by bike and is the new point person for the SBAC on enforcement issues.

We worked closely with the SPD on their increased safety efforts. Chief among these is the citywide speed limit, which was lowered from 30 mph to 25 mph in November 2016. This new speed limit includes all Somerville-owned streets unless otherwise posted. McGrath Highway and Interstate 93, for example, are not affected. The same legislature that allowed for the reduced speed limit also allowed for the creation of Safety Zones, which are areas around schools, parks, and playgrounds where the speed limit is 20 mph.

We continue to work with SPD to identify problem speed corridors and promote targeted enforcement and (together with other SBAC teams) appropriate safe bike facilities upgrades. Following engagement with SBAC, SPD also instructed their officers to clear bike lanes and the Beacon Street protected bike lane of illegally parked and standing cars, including Ubers and delivery vehicles.

We also worked with the SPD to promote the "Dutch Reach" technique (using your inner most arm and reaching across your body to open a car door) for minimizing dooring incidents. The SPD used their electronic message boards to remind motorists to not open their door in the path of a cyclist and encourage the use of the Dutch Reach, as well as to inform motorists that they may not block bike boxes.

The Enforcement Team also bolstered our relationship with the Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) team at City Hall, including the City's new Transportation Analyst, Adam Polinski, as well as Brad Rawson, Director of T&I, in meetings regarding truck safety, the Beacon Street protected bike lane, and other issues. We also worked with Traffic and Parking to add a flyer explaining bike boxes to parking permit renewals.

In addition, the SBAC engaged with SPD to solve a serious incident in Somerville where a cyclist was intentionally run over and the motorist left the scene. The cyclist sustained injuries, including a broken arm. The driver was identified and is facing arraignment in the near future on various charges including hit and run and leaving the scene of an accident.

The City also recently released a [summary of bicycle crash data](#) from 2013 to 2015.



ENGINEERING

The Engineering team's main task is to make design recommendations to create safe and convenient places to ride and park bicycles. The team reviews bicycle and roadway plans and makes recommendations to the City. To do so, the team members must stay up to date on cutting edge bike facilities and infrastructure to make sure Somerville is leading the way in innovative bike facilities.

The team is primarily project based, which parallels the process for City, developer, and/or future projects. These projects are usually defined by a street segment, intersection, or corridor. We also have team members with specific roles. Brian C. Postlewaite, P.E., is the team leader and in charge of project review. Alex Epstein and Tom Bertulis take the lead on technical documentation, and project research is tasked to Charlie Denison.

Other team members lead projects, perform field work, develop engineering assessments and document recommendations. These contributing members include the above, and also Brandon Stafford, Tom Lamar, Ian Woloschin, Mark Chase, Ken Carlson, and Andreas Wolfe.

The following is a summary of the Engineering team's 2016 projects.

HIGHLAND AVENUE

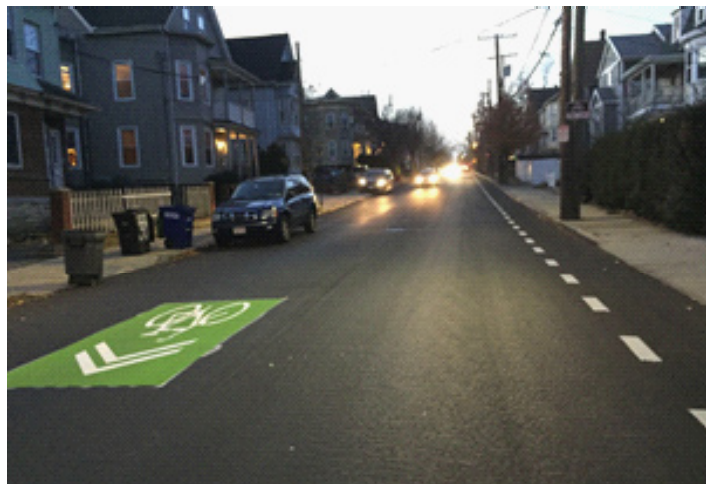
There was a strong desire to improve the bike facilities on Highland Avenue as it approaches Davis Square. The City proposed a bike facility plan on Highland Avenue from the Cutter Avenue intersection to Church Street. The Engineering Team conducted a design review and made recommendations for the project. The Highland Avenue bike lanes and bike box were installed, function well and have gotten great reviews from Davis Square area bicyclists. There is a strong desire to make additional bike facility improvements in Davis Square and we continue to look for opportunities.



Bike lane and bike box on Highland Ave in Davis Square.

SUMMER STREET

A recommendation from the Bike Committee was made to make Summer Street safer for bicyclists who after biking through Union Square proceed to climb up Spring Hill towards David Square. The recommendation was to swap the parking from the north side of the street to the south side which would enable the painting of a curb-side bike on the north side up the hill and the addition of downhill sharrows. We coordinated with the Ward 3 Alderman and reached out to Summer Street neighbors providing education for the change. We are pleased that our recommendations were implemented; this change on Summer Street has improved safety and comfort. Note that an advisory lane (striped lane) was used instead of a bike lane. This was due to the lack of sufficient road width for a solid painted bike lane. An advisory lane allows cars to ride in the lane if there are no bicyclists present. And note the large very visible sharrows to make it clear to bicyclists where they should be riding to avoid the door zone.



Advisory lane and super sharrow on Summer Street.

LOWER WEBSTER AVENUE

The SBAC has been very interested in improving bike safety on Webster Avenue. The Engineering team developed multiple designs for Webster Avenue including standard, buffered, and protected bike lanes from Prospect Street to the Cambridge City Line. The SBAC will be presenting these design options to the Mayor, city officials and Aldermen to arrive at a preferred facility.

PROJECT STRATEGIES BY CONSENSUS

The Engineering Team developed a consensus-based project priority matrix to determine priorities for SBAC-initiated projects; this tool was also used to obtain community feedback.

DANGEROUS INTERSECTION ANALYSIS

The team reviewed accident data with the help of the City's Transportation Analyst, Adam Polinski, to determine the intersections that the SBAC should address first. The result of this analysis was the corridor including Powder House Square and proceeding towards Davis Square.

MCGRATH HIGHWAY

The Engineering Team conducted a review of the McGrath Highway design plans and recommended revisions for improvement. We were very pleased to see these improvements implemented. The improvements, including green painted bike lanes on Somerville Avenue, Washington Street and Medford Street, bike boxes, and new crosswalks have made bicycling in this section of Somerville safer.



New markings at the Somerville Ave/Medford St intersection

CEDAR STREET, ELM STREET, AND MOSSLAND STREET CORRIDOR

The Engineering Team has initiated a review of this busy and important bicycling corridor, including reviewing traffic design plans and existing constraints and parking utilization. The Team intends to make recommendations for this corridor in 2017.

EVALUATION AND PLANNING

ANNUAL BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN COUNTS

In the fall, the SBAC worked with the City and numerous volunteers (thanks, volunteers!) to conduct the annual Somerville bicycle and pedestrian counts. We are still evaluating the data, but the City's hardworking Transportation Analyst, Adam Polinski, has now entered all the [bicycle and pedestrian count data](#) from 2010 to 2016.

TEMPORAL DO NOT ENTER AND TURN RESTRICTIONS

To reduce automobile cut-through traffic on residential streets, a number of Somerville streets have rush hour restrictions, with regulations such as "Do Not Enter Except Abutters 7-9AM", or "No Left Turn Except Abutters 6-10AM". However, bicyclists are safer on quiet residential streets, and should be encouraged to use such streets when possible. In 2016, Traffic & Parking approved SBAC's request for bicycle exemptions temporal restrictions on a number of streets, adding "Except Bicycles" signs at the following locations:

- Concord Avenue at Beacon Street (facilitating the Beacon Street detour)
- Tufts Street at Washington Street
- Myrtle Street at Washington Street
- Lincoln Street at Broadway
- Cherry Street at Summer Street

WINTER HILL NEIGHBORHOOD PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

In the fall, the City of Somerville released a draft of the Winter Hill Neighborhood Plan. The Evaluation & Planning Team reviewed the draft plan and submitted comments on behalf of the SBAC. The final [Winter Hill Neighborhood Plan](#), approved by the Planning Board in November, provides major bicycle infrastructure improvements.



Plans call for continuous protected bike lanes in both directions on Broadway, and a road diet. Source: Winter Hill Neighborhood Plan



Protected bike lanes on Broadway would connect to protected bike lanes on Temple Street, Fellsway West, and Mystic Avenue. In addition, a contraflow lane on Marshall Street and a neighborway along Jacques Street and Temple Road would improve biking connections on quieter streets. *Source: Winter Hill Neighborhood Plan*

IMPROVE BIKE FACILITIES DURING ROUTINE PAVING

A longstanding goal of the SBAC has been to incorporate improved bicycle facilities into routine street repaving. When a street is repaved, it provides a “blank canvas” to restripe the fresh asphalt in a new configuration, allowing an opportunity to paint new bike lanes or other facilities at a lower cost. Thanks to a collaboration between the SBAC, the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD), and the City’s Department of Engineering and Traffic & Parking, we reviewed the streets up for repaving in 2016 and identified preferred candidate streets that were important parts of the bike network and where a sufficiently long enough stretch was being repaved to add new facilities.

- **Highland Avenue (Ellington Street to College Avenue):** This stretch of Highland Avenue was an ideal candidate for adding a bike lane and narrowing other travel lanes because buses do not stop anywhere on this part of Highland Avenue and do not run on Highland Avenue west of Grove Street. This improvement was implemented, providing guidance to bicyclists as they approach the busy intersection at Davis Square. Bike boxes were also installed at the intersection.
- **Summer Street:** In order to provide a climbing lane for bicyclists from Union Square to the top of Spring Hill, the bike lane was moved to uphill side of street, and parking was moved to the downhill side. This also included a painted curb extension at the intersection of Quincy Street and Summer Street, substantially reducing crossing distances at two crosswalks.

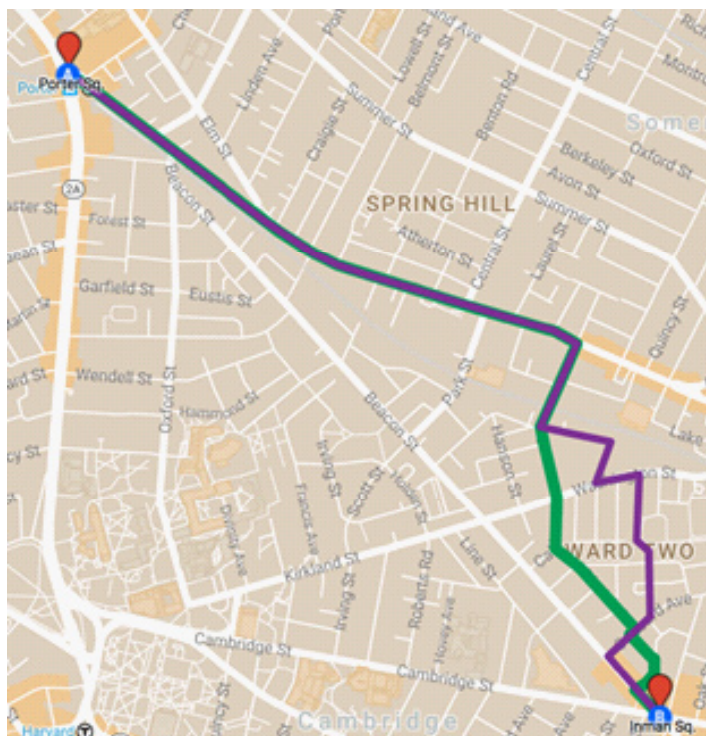
- **Dane Street (entire length):** Dane Street was identified as a strong candidate for bike lanes. At the City’s request, Toole Design Group produced a 100% design submission including climbing bike lanes over the bridge and a bike box at Somerville Avenue. However, because Dane Street served as a detour route during Beacon Street construction, repaving was rescheduled for 2017.
- **School Street (Broadway to Medford Street):** In order to signal to bicyclists and motorists that bicyclists can use the entire lane when riding, green backed shared lane markings, or “super sharrows” were placed on School Street.

SBAC looks forward to continuing this collaboration in 2017 and beyond.

BEACON STREET DETOUR

While Beacon Street was under construction, Somerville’s busiest bike route needed a detour. In March, the SBAC submitted a [recommended bike detour](#), which was approved by the City and MassDOT and used by Newport Construction.

The SBAC recommended detours with separate routes for bikes and for cars where possible, allowing people biking the benefit of quieter, safer streets.



The detour route recommended by the SBAC during Beacon Street construction.

BETTER MARKINGS IN DIFFICULT LOCATIONS

One of Evaluation & Planning's 2016 goals was to identify candidates for an advisory bike lane or a priority bike lane. Advisory bike lanes, typically implemented as a bike lane with a dashed lane, are useful on streets not wide enough to accommodate a standard bike lane. They encourage motorists to drive in the center of the roadway to give cyclists enough space, while allowing vehicles to carefully enter the bike lane if necessary to yield to oncoming traffic. Advisory bike lanes are best used on roadways with low vehicle traffic (<6000 vehicles per day) but are key links in the bicycle network.

Priority bike lanes, while similar in appearance, serve a different function. Priority bike lanes are marked as a dashed bicycle lane in the center of a standard travel lane, and are typically used on a multi-lane road. They encourage cyclists to take the lane in the rightmost lane, and encourage motorists to primarily use the leftmost lane.

In 2016, an advisory bike lane was added to Summer St from Prescott St to Belmont St, and priority bike lanes were added to Medford Street southbound where it serves as a frontage road for McGrath Highway.



Priority bike lane on Medford St, south of Somerville Ave.

Similar to shared lane markings (or "sharrows"), super sharrows are not dedicated space for bicyclists but clarify the ideal place for bicyclists to ride in the travel lane while also alerting motorists to potential bicycle traffic. Super sharrows use the same bicycle symbol as typical sharrows, but they are highlighted with a green background, making them easier to see.

COMMUNITY PATH

Together with the City and the Friends of the Community Path group, the SBAC has been continually supportive of the Community Path being extended with the Green Line Extension (GLX) from its present terminus in the center of Somerville. We were ecstatic when MassDOT and the MBTA announced in May 2014 that the entire Path extension would be constructed as part of the GLX project and when the next section of the path was opened from Cedar Street to Lowell Street.

This all changed in December 2015 when it was announced that the Green Line and Community Path may not be built at all because of potential higher construction costs. However, in April 2016, MassDOT recommended that a scaled back, lower cost GLX project continue to be designed but that the Community Path be shortened, that it terminate at Washington St., that three street connections be eliminated, and that it cross sides in the corridor twice.



Since then, the SBAC has met with the Mayor, who also supports the construction of the Community Path. Additionally, the SBAC has written to MassDOT urging and explaining that the entire off-road Community Path must be built with the Green Line Extension or it likely will never be built. The Engineering and Evaluation teams have reviewed the Friends' suggested value engineering alternatives to deliver a cost-effective Path and continuing to work with the Mayor's office to that end.

NEIGHBORWAYS



[Neighborways](#) are residential streets designed for low volumes and speeds for auto traffic, where children can play and bicycle and pedestrians are given priority. They are usually one, sometimes two blocks away from major streets and provide extended connections between neighborhoods, schools, squares, and parks. The Bike Committee has helped to support the Somerville Neighborway pilot project on Spring Hill and East Somerville. Key efforts include building a protocol for allowing two-way bike traffic on one-way residential streets and helping to evaluate the success of currently implemented Neighborways on Hudson Street, Madison, Montrose and Willoughby Street. The City was awarded a major grant from the Massachusetts Department of Transportation to expand and upgrade Neighborways in the Spring Hill and East Somerville Neighborhoods in 2017.

Priorities For 2017

BIKE SAFETY

The SBAC's highest priority for 2017 will be improving bicycle safety. While safety has always been a focus for the committee, several tragic traffic fatalities in 2016 made it clear that we have to do more. In 2017, SBAC will focus on safety more than ever, stressing all five E's of safe bike planning. One important goal for the SBAC is to work with the Board of Aldermen to get a truck safety ordinance enacted.

MOBILITY DURING AND AFTER UNION SQUARE CONSTRUCTION

Union Square will undergo significant change in 2017: Webster Avenue and Prospect Street will become two-way with bike lanes in one direction and sharrows in the other direction, Newton Street will accommodate contraflow bike traffic, Somerville Avenue will have a new east bound bike lane, and a multi-million-dollar sewer reconstruction project in Union Square will result in considerable disruption and resulting traffic re-routing. The SBAC will work with the City to ensure that people can safely bike during construction, and that once construction is completed that we will have the safest bike facilities possible.

SAFE BIKING DURING AND AFTER BEACON STREET CONSTRUCTION

Construction of Somerville's first protected bike lane on Beacon Street will continue in the spring and the project will be completed in 2017. Over the last year, SBAC worked closely with the City to provide a safe detour route during construction and successfully advocated for a temporary parking ban on Park St. The SBAC also worked closely with the City to review plans for interim winter bicycling conditions on Beacon Street, including Somerville's first use of flex posts to protect portions of the protected bicycle lane. In 2017, the bike committee will continue to advocate for safe interim conditions during Beacon St construction, and will work to ensure that the final conditions after construction are as safe as possible.

PARTNERSHIPS

In 2017, SBAC will expand on its partnerships with other governmental and advocacy groups. SBAC will work more closely with programs like Safe Routes to Schools (SRTS) and with bicycle advisory committees from neighboring municipalities. We will also continue working with the Somerville Police Department to identify and address problem areas for speeding and blocked bike lanes and to work towards creating a bike crash report template to be used by law enforcement, which will facilitate better data collection.

BIKE FACILITIES MAP

Somerville's existing bike facilities map is several years out of date, and does not always convey some information useful for planning a low stress bike route, such as streets on steep hills. A new more up to date map has been developed and the SBAC will work with the City to finalize and release the updated facilities map.

LOWER SPEED LIMITS

In 2016, Somerville's default speed limit dropped from 30 to 25 mph, following approval by the Board of Aldermen and the Traffic Commission. The law also authorized the creation of designated safety zones with a 20mph speed limit. The SBAC will work the City to create safety zones where appropriate, and integrate with the City's ongoing traffic calming. We will also work with the Somerville Police Department to suggest roads for targeted enforcement of the speed limit.

PLANNED INFRASTRUCTURE

SBAC begins 2017 with a significant amount of bike infrastructure already in the pipeline. Designs are underway for:

- Union Square Early Action
 - Prospect Street bike lane
 - Webster Avenue bike lane extension
 - Somerville Avenue eastbound bike lane
 - Newton St two-way bike facility
- Highway Safety Improvements Program (HSIP)
 - Broadway protected bike lanes and buffered bike lanes
 - Washington Street protected bike lanes and buffered bike lanes
 - Temple Street bike lanes
 - Park Street bike lanes
- Planned Resurfacing Improvements
 - Dane Street climbing bike lanes

The SBAC will work to ensure the success of these projects, as well as advancing other projects into the pipeline, such as contraflow bike lanes on School Street and Marshall Street. The SBAC will also propose additional contraflow streets and an evaluation and planning process for safer bicycle facilities for Cedar, Mossland and Elm streets. We also will continue to provide input for safe bike facilities during the Davis Square planning process.

It is our hope that as our streets and infrastructure improve, riding a bicycle in Somerville gets easier and more enjoyable for everyone who is already riding. It also creates an important opportunity to get new members of our community on a bike to experience everything that our growing bicycle infrastructure has to offer. The SBAC will continue to create opportunities to engage with community members through outreach events and rides that place all of the great elements of our city at the center while showing that a great way to experience those things is on a bike! We also hope to work more closely with the public school system and Somerville High School in particular to build stronger relationships with the youth and families of Somerville.

Here's to safe and enjoyable bicycling in Somerville in 2017 and beyond!

How to Get Involved in the SBAC

ATTEND OUR MONTHLY MEETINGS

Members of the public are welcomed to attend the monthly committee meetings, which take place on the third Tuesday of the month from 6:30-8:30 p.m. As of April 2017, the meetings will take place in the Academy Room at the Somerville Police Station, 220 Washington St. The meetings cover a variety of topics important to bike safety, education, policy, and infrastructure. Agendas are posted on the SBAC Facebook page and on the [City of Somerville's Bicycle Committee web page](#). In 2016, we had 28 different guests attend our meetings. Two of those guests became members of the Committee and many became involved in Committee activities.

JOIN THE COMMITTEE

Members of the public can become members of the Committee if there are open positions. To become a member, the interested candidate generally needs to attend six meetings, get involved in a Team, and demonstrate active interest in improving the state of bicycle transportation in Somerville.

JOIN A TEAM

A very simple way to get involved is to join one of the five Teams that are organized around the "Five E's" of bicycle advocacy and planning.

- **Education** - Focused on educating all road users with respect to bike safety
- **Encouragement** - Focused on encouraging everyone to bike through organizing events and activities
- **Enforcement** - Coordinating with the Somerville Police Department and others to propose and enforce existing bicycle related laws
- **Engineering** - Focused on providing detailed engineering solutions to our make our streets more bike friendly
- **Evaluation and Planning** - Focused on evaluating existing bicycle conditions and proposing new ideas

Our teams meet in between the monthly Committee meetings. If you are interested in joining a Team, come to a monthly meeting and express interest, or send an email to info@somervillebikes.org.

VOLUNTEER

If you are interested in volunteering with any of our events or rides, let us know by emailing info@somervillebikes.org.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Visit us at our monthly bike breakfasts - Held at Whole Foods on Beacon Street, the last Friday of the month from April to October
- Visit our website - somervillebikes.org
- Email us - Info@somervillebikes.org
- Subscribe to our Monthly Newsletter – [Somerville Bike News](#)
- Like us on Facebook- [Somerville Bicycle Committee](#)
- Follow us on Twitter- [@Somervillebike](#)