

Somerville



Pedestrian & Transit Advisory Committee

2020 Annual Report



MBTA bus Wikiwand



Somerville Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee

Community Representatives

Zach Rosenberg, Chair

Ginny Alverson, Vice Chair

Audrey Orenstein, Secretary

Ted Alexander

Emma Blaxter (retired)

Jessica Bellow

Georgy Cohen (retired)

Laura Evans

Jessica Ferguson

Rauvin Johl

Paola Massoli

Vitor Pamplona

Julia Toof

Emily Vides

Ex-Officio Members

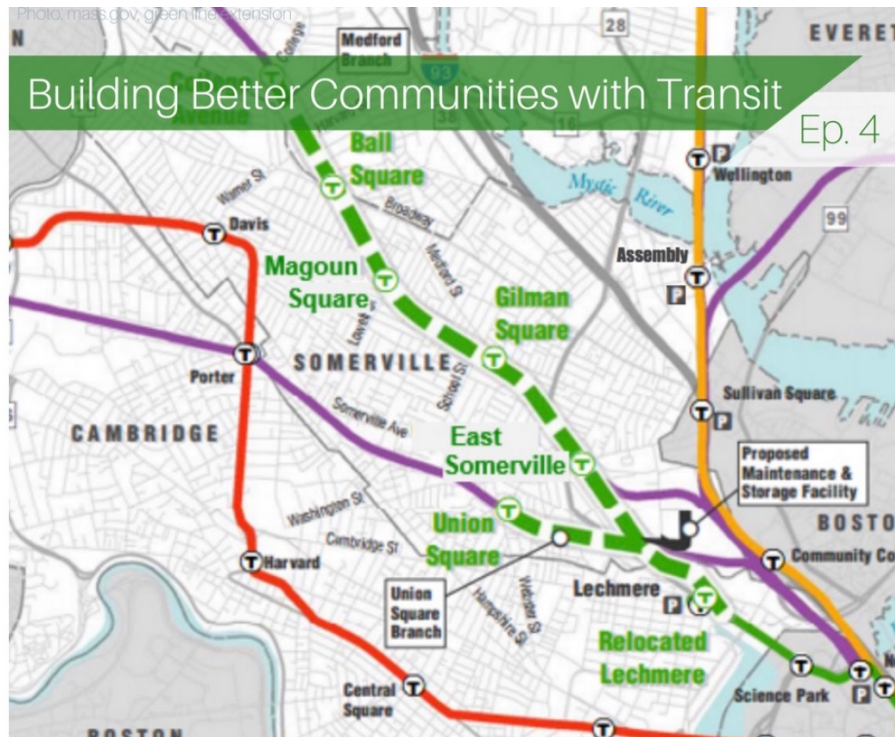
Katjana Ballantyne,
City Council

Alexandra Kleyman,
Mobility Division, OSPCD

Justin Schreiber,
Mobility Division, OSPCD

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[mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov), Green Line Extension

Letter from The Chair

When our Committee held its inaugural meeting in January of 2020, we certainly did not know what a challenging year we had ahead of us. In spite of the hardships that everyone has faced, I have been greatly impressed by a dedicated and passionate group of people who have remained invested in working together to create a better Somerville.

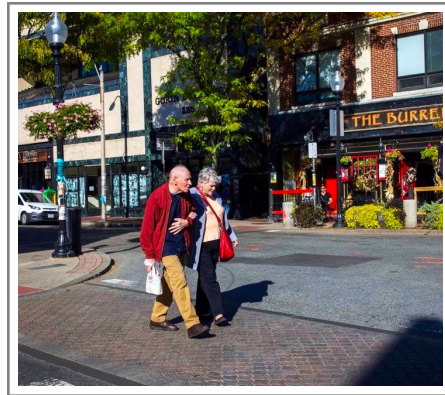
Our committee met just twice before transitioning to remote meetings to continue our work. Our first project was a joint letter with the Somerville Bicycle Committee to support of the Shared Streets program. This new program helped to calm traffic around the City, and attempted to lower vehicle speeds on paths to essential destinations, such as grocery stores. The idea of reclaiming streets as spaces for people, especially in the era of social distancing, fell directly in line with our beliefs that we should have a safer and more pedestrian friendly Somerville.

We also supported rapid street changes to support Bus routes vital to Somerville's environmental justice communities. While some people were able to work from home, it was important that we give priority on our streets to our residents working essential jobs, who depend on transit service every day. Implementing bus lanes improves bus speeds and reduces crowding. We've made recommendations on traffic calming, bump outs, and bus only lanes.

We focused on the elements of Somerville's Vision Zero Action Plan. We were devastated when one of our community members was killed by a motorist while walking on our streets this year.

“

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The Boston Globe

Continuing to advise safe, pedestrian friendly design has been our biggest priority.

Since we are a new committee, we have spent a lot of time learning. We have learned the basics of how a committee can effectively run, while also diving deep into details of pedestrian and transit related issues. For example, the City found that after the implementation of the Broadway bus lane there was a 36% increase in weekday ridership as well as a reduction in speeding. By continuing to work with the City to make effective changes like this, we will be able to drastically improve both the safety and quality of life for all residents of Somerville.

I would like to thank our ex-officio members and partners in the Administration, and in our City Government. Special thanks to City Councilor Katjana Ballantyne, who has regularly attended our meetings and provided invaluable advice and support for our work.

This report highlights some of the work we've done this year and give an idea of our goals for the coming year. I would again like to thank our members and everyone who has been involved with PTAC. It has been an honor to serve as its first Chair and I look forward to continuing to work with this great group of people.

Engineering & Evaluation Subcommittee



[trulia.com](https://www.trulia.com)

The goal of the Engineering & Evaluation subcommittee is to serve as a space to delve deeper into specific projects as recommended by the Committee, or to propose and discuss ideas that can improve safety and mobility outside of the projects the city is working on. Tasks include:

- Reviewing and providing feedback on the City's current and pending projects.
- Proposing and seeking popular support for Committee-driven long-term projects to improve pedestrian and transit experience in the city.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, the subcommittee's initial focus was on making recommendations to the City and whole Committee regarding the Shared Street initiative. After the subcommittee's inaugural meeting in June 2020, the subcommittee made recommendations to the City on its Shared Streets plan:

- (1) prioritizing small business integration into the shared street network;
- (2) coordinating with the City's Health and Safety reopening plans;
- (3) clarifying traffic calming measures;
- (4) collecting data to help evaluate the impact of Safe Streets;
- (5) identifying exceptional results to make permanent.



The Somerville Times

The Engineering and Evaluation Subcommittee also provided input to the City during the evolution of the Holland Street & College Avenue project.

The subcommittee was an early proponent of making temporary COVID-19 parking removals permanent to allow for enhanced pedestrian safety, transit access and bike safety in the Holland and College area. The subcommittee also recommended the adoption of permanent bike and bus lanes in the area rather than peak time bus lanes. The subcommittee communicated these suggestions to the Mobility Department. The City eventually incorporated both suggestions into the Holland and College Avenue project.



Somerville by Design

The Engineering and Evaluation Subcommittee proposed and began work on the creation of a public ‘safety score’ list for intersections in the city, including discussing an initial list of streets and intersections for review.

Further, the subcommittee proposed and began work on the creation of a public ‘safety score’ list for intersections in the city, including discussing an initial list of streets and intersections for review.

Looking forward to 2021, the subcommittee intends to:

- Continue to provide input to the City on upcoming projects, such as the Spring Hill Sewer Separation project, the McGrath Redesign and the final Holland and College project including advocating for safe and accessible transit options;
- Create and maintain a working list of upcoming City projects on which the subcommittee plans to provide input;
- Continue to develop its ‘safety score’ list along with accompanying infrastructure improvement suggestions;
- Encourage the City to implement the detailed recommendations and specific goals embodied in its policy guidance documents, including the Vision Zero Action Plan, the Open Space Task Force Strategy, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Transition Plan, and Complete Streets;
- Provide active input and feedback to the City on its forthcoming Bus Network and Municipal Transportation Demand Management Plans;
- Improve the subcommittee and committee’s mechanisms for communicating our activities to the community.

Policy and Enforcement Subcommittee



Scout Somerville

One area of focus was City policy on sidewalk snow clearance. Uncleared sidewalks create dangerous conditions for pedestrians and can make our city impassable for many residents until the snow melts.

In 2020, the Policy and Enforcement subcommittee focused on building PTAC's capacity for making recommendations on policy issues and on identifying specific policy areas where PTAC can make a positive impact for pedestrians and transit users in Somerville.

The subcommittee met regularly beginning in July 2020, researching and discussing topics including Shared Streets, outdoor placemaking, curbside regulations, traffic calming petitions, Somerville's Complete Streets Ordinance, residential parking permits, and the City's response to serious crashes. One area of focus was City policy on sidewalk snow clearance. Uncleared sidewalks create dangerous conditions for pedestrians and can make our city impassable for many residents until the snow melts. Somerville's Vision Zero Action Plan calls for improving snow clearance on sidewalks, and the subcommittee and committee intend to work with city staff in 2021 to make progress on this goal.

The subcommittee reviewed City plans and policies related to PTAC's work, including the neighborhood plans for Union Square, Davis Square, and other neighborhoods, which include specific

proposals for improving pedestrian space and transit access. We also collected examples from other cities of policies that promote pedestrian and transit activity and improve safety.

Additionally, the subcommittee met with City Councilor Ballantyne and invited her to give a presentation at the September 2020 PTAC meeting. Councilor Ballantyne described how city government in Somerville is organized and answered PTAC members' questions about topics including the division of powers between the City Council and the Mayor, strategic planning and policy-making in Somerville, and where to direct specific requests related to transit and pedestrian infrastructure. The subcommittee also took initial steps toward developing a relationship with the Somerville Police Department to begin to address safety and enforcement issues.

Education and Encouragement Subcommittee

- ■ ■ committee was formed with the initiative to broadcast information about projects

The Education and Encouragement committee was formed with the initiative to broadcast information about projects and upcoming road and bus route changes that affect residents in their daily commutes. We also intend to educate around non-automobile mobility in and around our city.

We had one meeting in August. We invited Councilor Mark Niedergang who gave us an overview of his interest in pedestrian matters and told us that when city projects are not adequately communicated, the result is confusion and frustration; thus, the importance of educating residents.

The Education and Encouragement Subcommittee took the reins in establishing branding and an online presence for PTAC. In addition, we initiated setting up internal working structure:

Branding and external work

- Logo development that incorporated images of pedestrian and transit iconography
- Website for PTAC (somervillePTAC.org)
- Social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (@SomervillePTAC on all platforms)
- Email setup for sending/receiving email from outside our committee (SomervillePTAC@gmail.com)
- Calendar setup for events and meetings that pertain to the committee

Workflow setup for internal work

- Google Drive repository for our letters, minutes and calendar
- Minutes Template for acting secretary



Redbubble

Each of the social media avenues for distribution of information is in its infancy and can be better fleshed out. For 2021, we intend to set goals on what we would like to achieve through these avenues and work toward meeting milestones. We will invite speakers to our meetings who will help us interface with the many organizations that impact the pedestrian and transit experience.

Due to CVOID-19 restrictions for gatherings, any plans of community talks or community events have been tabled until an appropriate time.

Our committee is not fully staffed and a few more volunteers would be welcome.

Looking ahead to 2021

No one can deny that 2020 was an unusual year and that pedestrian and transit needs and expectations changed dramatically. Throughout the year, the Somerville Mobility Department rallied, improvised and took on significant challenges. The result was an opportunity to test out new ways to think about our roadways, such as implementing Safe Streets, and to learn about flexible outdoor dining space.

Moving in to 2021, and with COVID-19 being better understood and managed and with vaccinations being administered, the SPTAC expects engage the community through neighborhood walks, in-person meetings, staffing of booths to dispense information, and become a stronger resource for the community.

And we will continue to offer feedback on city projects and

How to become involved in SPTAC!

Come to our meetings! Held on the third Thursday of each month, from 6:30-8pm, currently at this GoToMeeting [link](https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/539724445): <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/539724445>

Agendas are posted on our website or the City website the Monday prior to orient you to the monthly conversations. And of course, if you have a topic of interest to you that you would like to discuss you can send an email to us.

Join us at one of our community events or neighborhood walks to learn about projects that affect pedestrian and transit accessibility.

Join our committee and participate in one of our sub-committees.

We look forward to growing.



Connect with Us!



Get Social with Us!