



July 22, 2021

Somerville's Urban Forestry Committee endorses and amplifies the attached complaint by Mothers out Front, related to subsurface gas leaks on Somerville Avenue near Porter Square which are killing our street trees.

In 2021, the practical impacts of climate change are increasingly obvious to the naked eye. It is inexcusable that the distribution system for fossil fuels in our city is in such disrepair as to kill trees and prevent replanting. At a heavily traveled location like Porter Square, pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users would all benefit from the cooling and shade provided by mature trees. The buried power lines on Somerville Ave near Porter mean that it may be possible to plant large canopy trees that could provide significant ecosystem benefits for the neighborhood.

We urge the utility companies to work with urgency to repair these leaks.

Beyond these urgent repairs, the mature trees that were killed by these leaks were valuable civic infrastructure. The committee suggests that the utility companies should reimburse the city for the value of the trees that were killed.

Finally, we urge both the city and the utility companies to work to identify any similar issues throughout the rest of the city.

Respectfully,

Chris Dwan and Althea Northcross
Co-Chairs, Urban Forestry Committee