



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
CLERK OF COMMITTEES**

December 9, 2019  
REPORT OF THE TRAFFIC AND PARKING COMMITTEE

<b>Attendee Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Arrived</b>
Mark Niedergang	Chair	Present	
Ben Ewen-Campen	Vice Chair	Absent	
Lance L. Davis	Ward Six City Councilor	Absent	
Jesse Clingan	Ward Four City Councilor	Present	
William A. White Jr.	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Jefferson Thomas ("J.T.") Scott	Ward Two City Councilor	Absent	
Katjana Ballantyne	Ward Seven City Councilor	Present	
Mary Jo Rossetti	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Wilfred N. Mbah	City Councilor at Large	Present	
Stephanie Hirsch	City Councilor At Large	Present	
Matthew McLaughlin	Ward One City Councilor	Absent	

The meeting was held in the Council Chamber and was called to order by Chair Niedergang at 6:11pm and adjourned at 9:42pm.

Councilors Ewen-Campen, Scott, and McLaughlin were absent due to another Committee meeting and Councilor Davis had a work emergency.

Others present: Brad Rawson - OSPCD; Annie Connor - Mayor's Office; Adam Polinski - OSPCD; Melissa Dullea - MBTA; Kimberly Wells - Assistant Clerk of Committees; Steve MacEachern - DPW, Traffic Commission; Thomas Graney - Fire, Traffic Commission; Lt. Jim Polito - Police, Traffic Commission; Lena Webb - Traffic Commission

**Approval of the November 20, 2019 Minutes**

The Committee members present for the meeting that these minutes detail were not present at this Committee meeting, so the Chair tabled this item until they are able to review the minutes.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>TABLED</b>
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**Joint Public Hearing with the Traffic Commission on the  
Winter Hill Broadway Bus/Bike Lanes**

The Chair introduced the public hearing and noted that the goal is to provide information and an opportunity for decision makers to hear from the public on the new traffic configuration on

Broadway in Winter Hill. The Chair clarified that questions will not be answered. He also reviewed the decision-making process regarding how the changes were determined. The Mobility Division of the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD) held a series of community meetings over 4-5 years and decided to implement the plan that we see in place on Broadway. A vote by the Traffic Commission to remove parking spaces was necessary. The proposal to remove 56 parking spaces was agreed upon by unanimous vote. Ultimately, 43 spaces were removed for the bus and bike lanes. The City Council did not vote on these changes and does not have the power to implement or change them. Councilor Hirsch commented that it is important to listen to each other and understand that we all have different needs. She encouraged compromise and empathy and a focus on problem solving.

Mr. Rawson, Director of Mobility, made a presentation. He noted that issues of mobility are a challenge and it is important to respect each other. The professionals on staff try their best to implement the City's vision. The team is trying to provide as much new data as is currently available to demonstrate the success of the project, but he said that it is still too early for much important information. The project began in August, and he noted that pavement markings require several weeks to implement during overnight shifts. The traffic signal changes on Broadway were not able to be changed before the lanes were implemented, and rather were completed in mid-October. As of the end of November, there is one final remaining element -- to construct a new crosswalk. In fall 2019, the MBTA increased bus daily trips, including on weekends. The City has great control over how frequently busses can achieve their on-time performance goals. As municipalities take steps to improve bus mobility, it is hoped that the MBTA can mirror the bus investment with more frequent trips. Daily ridership for MBTA Route 89 has also increased over last year. People are choosing to "vote with their feet". Bus stops have also been consolidated, which serves to decrease travel time. Conversely, average motor vehicle travel times were elevated. However, by November, this average time had decreased as well (in particular once the new signal timing took effect). Motor vehicle volumes have decreased at major intersections during morning and evening rush hours as well as throughout the day. The previous average was approximately 22,000 cars per day. Some side streets have seen increased rush hour volumes, but not all. In a test data set from Broadway and Glenwood, speeding has decreased by 2,000 cars per day, which is a major goal in preventing pedestrian accidents and deaths. With the exception of the month of September, crash reports have also decreased from last year. The presentation will be made available at the Winter Hill and Motion and Mobility Division websites.

Melissa Dullea, MBTA Senior Director of Service Planning, shared that the current trend of steadily increasing traffic congestion in the Greater Boston region is not sustainable. The City needs to support transit, cycling, and pedestrians to move people through its streets. The existing Broadway bus and bike lanes are an excellent example of how investments in roadway infrastructure can enhance the transit experience. Somerville can serve as an example for two-way all-day bus lanes. One potential investment being considered by the MBTA's Fiscal Management and Control Board (FMCB) would be added frequency to the Route 89 bus route. The MBTA is also taking steps to improve the transit experience, and the City needs to preserve the steps it has taken to support this.

The Chair invited Arthur Moore of Restore Broadway to speak, and Mr. Moore shared that he is not anti-bike, but much of the dedicated space is not being utilized. The bus lane is causing

problems where it suddenly transitions to one lane. The new lanes are stopping people from coming to the businesses in Winter Hill, and many issues have been created for people with disabilities.

Close to seventy (70) residents came to speak at the Public Hearing. Approximately 60% of these were supportive of maintaining the dedicated bus and bike lanes. The overwhelming reason for this was for the safety of all residents traveling throughout the city. Other common reasons for support included that it emphasizes equity and prioritizing lower-income people and those without cars, which shows a lot about Somerville's values, and that it is a climate-forward focus and acting to mitigate the hazards of climate change, such as public transportation and cycling and walking are imperative. Equitable, low-carbon mobility is a positive change for a healthier and more resilient future. There were also a number of positive comments about the data-driven approach; the increased efficiency of getting around; the ability to access more of the city without a car; and the increase in predictability and timeliness of busses. A number of residents also noted that this is a long-term investment that aligns with the City's goals and needs, and should be continued in other areas.

A number of residents also expressed frustration with the changes. These heavily focus on parking, in particular overnight street parking on the eastbound side of Broadway and parking in front of small businesses. A suggestion was made that changing the street sweeping schedule could help alleviate this issue. It was also noted that more frequent bus service, including a north-south bus service would also help a lot. Other frustrations included that the signal at Main Street and Broadway is still problematic for pedestrians, even with the change in signal timing, and needs more work; the lanes have caused congestion and increased travel time and traffic; there are not enough busses and bicycles to justify the lanes; and the lost parking will also negatively impact snow removal. Several small business owners shared that the lanes have blocked parking and made it inconvenient for customers.

A resident who works with the LivableStreets Alliance, shared that 83% of people shopping on Broadway do not arrive by car, and 92% of bike riders reported feeling safer. It was noted by another speaker who has a small business that the 17% of people who do use a car and need parking could make the significant difference for the survival of a small business. A number of speakers emphasize the razor edge that divide success from failure for small businesses in Somerville. Another resident who also works for the MBTA shared that the equivalent of 15% of MBTA bus service has been lost to congestion since 2006.

Some suggestions included considering additional metrics such as total passenger minutes for commutes and effect on air pollution; working to alleviate the parking concerns by reducing demand for parking by charging market-rate for on-street parking; adding speed bumps to side streets to discourage cut-through routes; and focusing on pedestrian safety as well as cyclist safety. A "Don't Block the Box" campaign was also recommended.

The Chair closed the Public Hearing at 9:02pm and invited questions and comments from Councilors. Councilor Rossetti asked if there was ever a crossing guard at Main Street and Broadway. Lt. Polito noted that there is currently, but the hours are from 7:30-8:30am and 2:30-3:30pm. Councilor Rossetti also added that there were a number of concerns about crosswalks that should be addressed, and that area in particular is one that was mentioned as a concern. She noted as well that the concern for small businesses is significant and important and wondered if there was any dialogue with the business owners before the parking spaces were removed and Mr. Rawson shared that staff, volunteers, and non-profit partners interacted with business owners

throughout the corridor prior to the project. They asked questions about how customers and workers arrive, and how frequently and how deliveries are received. Councilor Rossetti expressed that it was a missed opportunity that needs to be corrected in the future that abutters and affected merchants were not fully aware of the impact and timing. There were no mailings to make residents aware that changes were being made, which is another mistake. Councilor Rossetti requested that Temple Street be considered for a speed bump, and even if the traffic calming process is lengthy, it is worth exploring.

Councilor Hirsch asked for a written response to the issues and suggestions that were submitted in writing. There appears to be a generational and cultural divide about change, she said. It isn't fair to have only one group bear the pain of making change, and there should be a process to get to more reasonable compromises or win-win resolutions. Councilor Mbah added that this is important for the City's future, but more consideration should be given to the elderly and disabled and other disaffected residents. He asked about handicapped spaces. Mr. Polinski responded that the one on-street HP space that existed prior to the project was preserved. Councilor White shared the background that in 1976, the City Council gave up control over traffic and parking issues to the Traffic Commission. It is important to consider the notification procedures to alert people to changes. The Chair added that the Traffic Commission did not get much community feedback, as most of their decisions are smaller in nature and a robust process for public outreach is not needed for those small parking and traffic issues. But he agreed with Councilors White and Rossetti that important issues before the Traffic Commission need to be better publicized, and he said he is working with the Administration to try to make that happen. He added that the cost of the changes would be useful information, and also urged the Administration to emphasize traffic calming and enforcement. He said parking reform is urgently needed and said that parking is an issue throughout the City and impacts all aspects of City life. Parking policies need to work better overall and do not reflect the current realities in the City. Mr. Graney clarified that there have been no delays in Fire Department response times due to the changes. Councilor Clingan asked for clarification of the expectations for delivery drivers, and Mr. Rawson noted that this will be part of the citywide parking study, as will the needs for handicapped parking spaces. No new loading zones were added, but the administration will work with business owners to reevaluate this if needed. Councilor Ballantyne added that two big issues are the concern for small businesses and congestion. We need to better understand these issues as a region and how the impacts extend beyond just Broadway.

**208888: That the Director of SPCD report to this Council on the effectiveness of the Winter Hill in Motion plan and its impact on congestion.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**209001: That the Administration provide an update addressing the Winter Hill in Motion project, including links to the educational materials created.**

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>KEPT IN COMMITTEE</b>
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**Handouts:**

- Comments (with 208888, 209001)
- Comments - S LaRiccia (with 208888, 209001)

- Comment - G Cohen (with 208888, 209001)
- 2019-12-9 Traffic & Parking Committee Broadway Winter Hill (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - A Kasparian (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - B Martin (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - D Blumsack (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - G Doane (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - J Heaton (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - K Tammaro (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - L Goodfellow (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - L Pinheiro (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - M Joy (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - Murphy (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - Neighborhood Paws (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - P Pham (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - S LaRiccia x2 (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - S LaRiccia x3 (with 208888, 209001)
- Comment - V Doran (with 208888, 209001)