



## **SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES SOMERVILLE AVENUE STREET RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT**

**Provided by the Boston Bicycle Planning Initiative  
August 30, 2005**

### **BACKGROUND:**

This Design Public Hearing is to hear testimony on the reconstruction of Somerville Avenue proposed by MassHighway (MHD). Included in this design is a bicycle lane for most of the length of the project which extends from Union Square to the Cambridge line at Porter Square.

The Somerville Bicycle Committee (SBC) has been following this project since 1999, when the 25% Design Public Hearing was held. At that time, the 4-foot wide bicycle lane proposed by MHD consultants was substandard according to Federal and professional design guidelines.

The designs that are presented today now have bicycle lanes that meet federal standards (5 feet or 1.5 meters) for the majority of the project. Three short stretches (at Beacon, Park and Dane Streets) show bicycle lanes reduced to 4'1" (1.25 m), creating dangerous "pinch points"—meanwhile the vehicle travel lane stays consistent at 11'6" (3.5 m).

**>>> FLIP OVER FOR OUR KEY POINTS >>>**

### **OUR KEY POINTS:**

1. We commend MassHighway for modifying their bicycle lane designs to follow Federal guidelines and generally accepted best practice.
2. We urge MassHighway to maintain a consistent bicycle lane width of 5 ft (1.5 m) throughout the project. In the three short stretches where additional space, we urge MassHighway to consider the needs and safety priorities of all street users. In this case, the extra space needed (10") should come from the vehicle travel lane, leaving 10'8" which is more than adequate. For comparison, a newly paved and painted stretch of Main Street (a designated "Truck Route") in Cambridge off of Massachusetts Avenue, has an 10'8" travel lane and a 5'0" bicycle lane next to parking.
3. We urge MassHighway to further study transitions for the planned bicycle lanes to allow for seamless connections with Elm, Beacon, Washington, and Porter Square.
4. We commend the new design because it will aid pedestrian and handicapped crossing of Somerville Avenue. But a long stretch still exists between Sacramento and Beech Street without a crosswalk— we urge MassHighway to incorporate additional crosswalks.
5. We urge MassHighway to employ thermoplastic zebra stripes at un-signalized intersections because the scored concrete pavers that are shown in the design drawings are inadequate for safety.

### **ABOUT US**

The Boston Bicycle Planning Initiative is a non-profit advocacy group seeking to make the Boston area more friendly and safe for bicyclists.

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