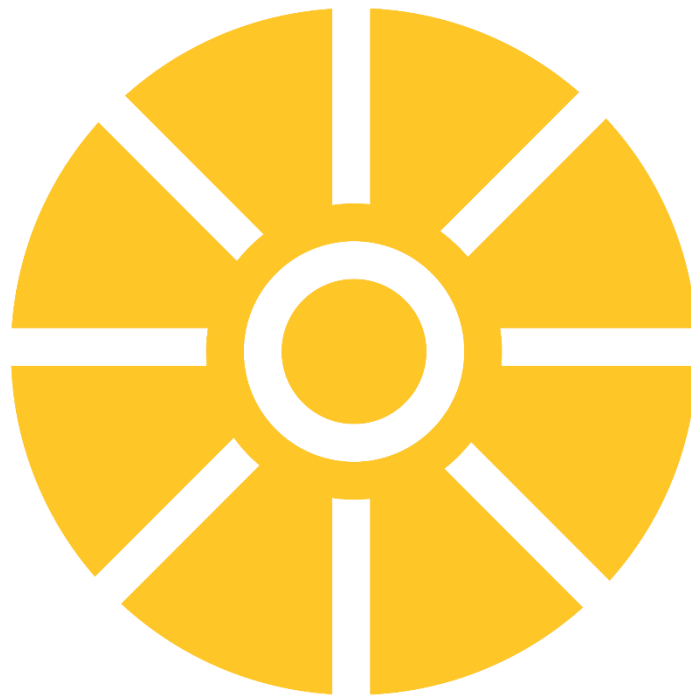


January 2019

SomerHubs

Improving Mobility, Connectivity, and
Dependability in Somerville Through
Mobility Hubs



TRANSITMATTERS

What are Mobility Hubs?

A Mobility Hub is a designated, easily identifiable location where multiple modes of transportation converge, guaranteeing that on a 24/7 basis, people can find at least one (and optimally several) sustainable modes of transportation to get them to their ultimate destination. These Hubs also serve as a convenient place to find accurate, real-time information about transit schedules and sustainable mobility choices.

A Mobility Hub is anchored by access to frequent, high-capacity transit. Therefore, urban hubs must be located at a station serving a subway or rapid transit line, a Key Bus Route, or a combination of the above. (*See the section “What are the Elements of a Mobility Hub?” for more specifics*). These locations would include assigned spaces for buses and other modes of transportation.

The basic concept of a “Mobility Hub” is not unique. Regional governance structures from Los Angeles to Toronto have used the term to define locations with connectivity to multiple transportation options. The Mobility Hub model we have developed goes a step further, and innovates by reducing barriers to sustainable transit, prioritizing wayfinding and consolidating options.

What Problems do Mobility Hubs Solve?

- **Mobility Hubs solve the last-mile problem** for busy transit routes, by providing a variety of connecting options.
- **Mobility Hubs provide space for bike/scooter-share storage**, possibly with a financial contribution from operators.
- **Mobility Hubs allow commuters to acquire fare payment media and find real-time information** about connecting transit.
- **Mobility Hubs provide dedicated space for transportation network companies (TNCs) taxis, and private shuttle pickups**, making access/egress safer and reducing congestion.
- **Mobility Hubs move several transit options under one “roof,” letting travelers choose the option that is best for them**, and making multi-modal travel easier.

Mobility Hubs Support SomerVision (2030/40)

SomerVision 2040's Transportation & Infrastructure goals include improving infrastructure to balance the needs of the city and its users while allowing for easy-to-use and efficient intermodal connection. A Mobility Hub can play an integral role in making this possible. TransitMatters recommends identifying possible Mobility Hub locations, based on a balance of the following criteria:

- Adjacent to fixed route transit, ideally multiple routes or lines.
- High levels of commercial activity.
- Opportunities for new or enhanced placemaking.

TransitMatters has identified three locations in Somerville as prime candidates for Mobility Hubs, but there are doubtless other options. For instance, future stations on the Green Line Extension may be ideal candidates. Public input should be sought to determine the locations best suited for intervention.

Mobility Hubs support Somerville's efforts to accommodate growth, and to do so equitably and sustainably. SomerVision calls for "85% of development in 'transform' areas, 30,000 jobs, 6,000 housing units and a 60/40% commercial/residential split of development." The expansion of the Green Line is also expected to bring more jobs, businesses, and visitors. Economic growth in Somerville will be dependent on its ability to balance transit access and development. Equity requires more affordable, sustainable access for all residents – access to jobs, healthcare and other key destinations. Such access requires offering choices and reliable information, two essential components of a Mobility Hub.

Mobility Hubs fill a need for a focal point integrating the transit station, the network of contributing streets, bus stops, local businesses, and the convenience of the transit user. Beyond basic transit functionality, there are opportunities to incorporate community events, farmers markets, and public art into Mobility Hubs. This all contributes to an enriched experience which preserves the neighborhood's unique identity.

What are the Elements of a Mobility Hub?

We envision coherent standards for Mobility Hubs that would result in a consistent identity and recognizable form, creating an image in much the way the T roundel logo signifies public transit in the MBTA service area, or a BlueBikes dock is immediately recognizable. This legibility is a key element of the concept.

The ideal Mobility Hub would integrate the following features:

- Proximity to sites of commercial, residential, or civic importance.
- A signature kiosk with a neighborhood map and real-time information about transportation serving this immediate area. This includes arrival times for mass transit (including nearby from bus stops not directly at a hub,) proximity for TNC vehicles, and travel time by walking/biking to various destinations. This installation would offer all the information one needs to plan a journey, or to orient oneself upon arrival. This kiosk would also contain a fare vending machine, allowing for immediate action on a journey plan.
- Adjacent transit stops with shelters, heaters (if outdoors), seating, schedules, and other amenities feeding the Mobility Hub and serving as the connections to the transit system. Hubs provide an opportunity to implement BRT components such as bus lanes and level boarding platforms.
- Wayfinding information integrated into the design of the Mobility Hub in such a way that clear directions are given to local retail, restaurants, and other landmarks, and travel times are given for pedestrian and cycle transport. Wayfinding includes clear signage of bus stops.
- Bike parking should be provided in a way that protects bicycles from the elements and connects to both bikeways and transit. Bikeshare or other person-sized-vehicle share should be signed and integrated into the area. Bike repair stands could also be available.
- A pick-up/drop-off area for use by TNCs or other private transportation companies. Limited standing times should be enforced, and a fee structure could be used to drive use.
- Where practical, electric vehicle carsharing should be provided at Mobility Hubs.

Ideally, all components specified as part of a Mobility Hub should have a consistent design or iconography that ties them together. Durability and quality must be paramount - when looking at a mobility hub component, a passer-by should have the impression of permanence, solidity, and investment. "This thing isn't going anywhere!"

Potential Mobility Hub Locations

Union Square

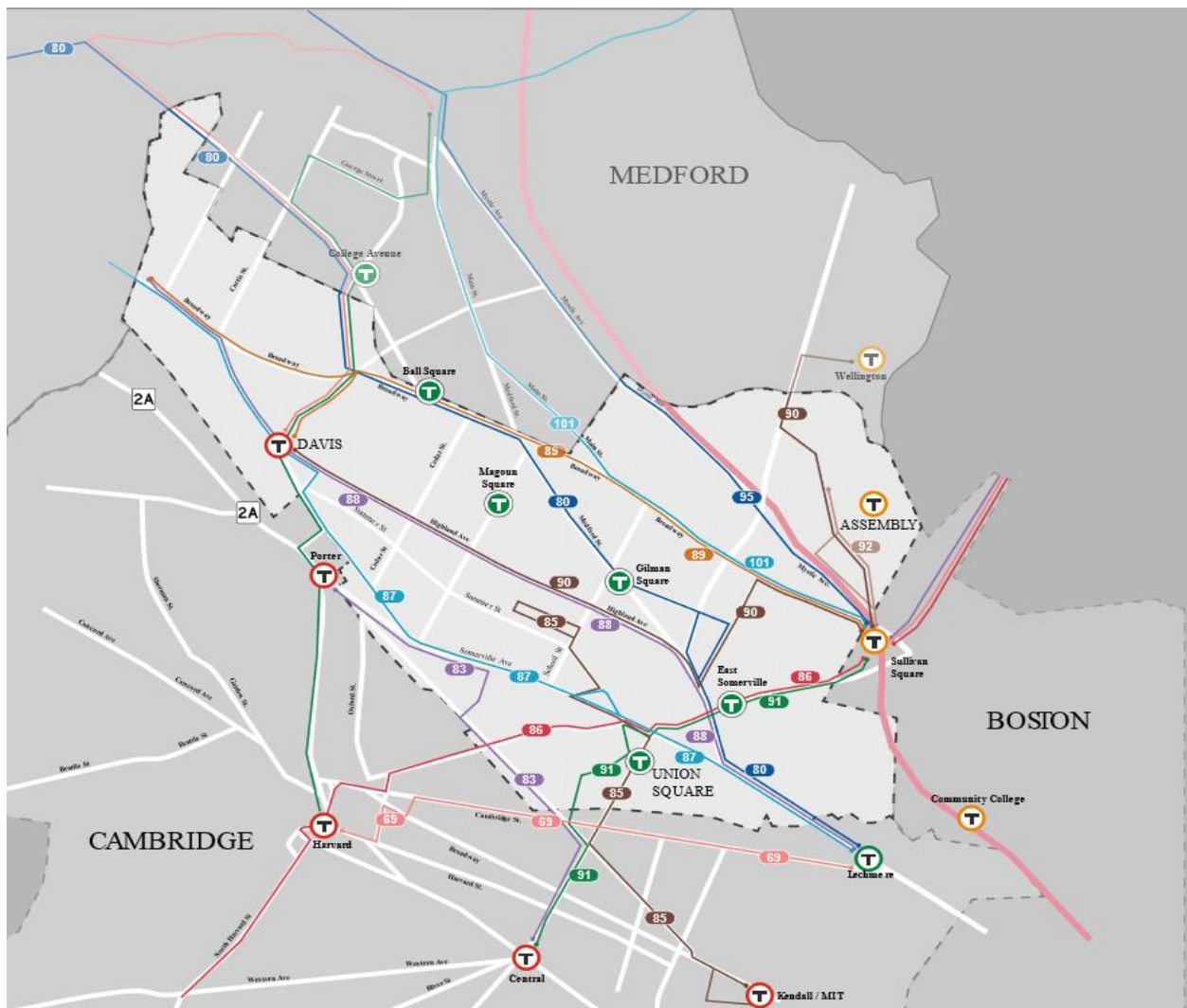
Today, Union Square is marked by popular restaurants, breweries, and significant real estate development. Like many neighborhoods, rapid changes create a need to activate surrounding areas with additional services and infrastructure improvements to be able to support future growth. The coming Green Line Extension will only increase the neighborhood's visibility. A Mobility Hub here would transform the Square's current transit network into a more convenient and pleasurable experience. With development plans for Union speeding along, there's a prime opportunity to integrate and enhance the transit options that flow through the square and connect it to points in Somerville and beyond.

Davis Square

For several decades, Davis Square has been a site of vibrancy and an economic heart of Somerville. It owes this in part to its excellent transit access - the Red Line station and connecting buses link the area to points throughout Somerville and Medford, plus Harvard and Kendall Squares, Downtown Boston, and Dorchester and the South Shore. In addition, the City of Somerville already requires TNC pickups in Davis Square to occur at designated curb space. These attributes, combined with proximity to Tufts University and the Community Path, make Davis Square an ideal candidate for a Mobility Hub. An installation here would consist of improvements and integrations to the existing transit infrastructure in a way that improves wayfinding and connectivity.

Assembly Square

Assembly is a major job and activity center in Somerville, but the entire development could be an island, almost completely disconnected from the rest of Somerville. While it has good connectivity to points north and south via the Orange Line at Assembly, the station is not served directly by any bus lines and bus connectivity to the area as a whole is poor. Better wayfinding and other Mobility Hub components, and maybe even a "SomerBus" augmenting MBTA services, would serve to better integrate the area with the rest of Somerville and fully realize Assembly's potential transportation options.



Transit network in Somerville including future GLX stations

How Can Somerville Pay for Mobility Hubs?

We have identified a few different options for funding Mobility Hub infrastructure, with a variety of funding sources and categories.

Grants

One notable opportunity for funding may come from foundations looking to support innovative, sustainable mobility initiatives. For example, the Barr Foundation's recent push for Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) projects around the region has provided cities such as Everett, Arlington, Cambridge and Watertown with grant funding support. Mobility Hubs would provide Somerville an opportunity to put its own bold, "abnormal" stamp on bus improvements. Integration of BRT features such as bus lanes and level boarding with Mobility Hubs could attract similar interest.

Public/Private Partnerships

Many different scales of public infrastructure are funded or maintained through some level of private partnership. We can envision a robust public sector interest, by TNCs and Bike/Scooter companies, as well as real-time information providers, to participate in Mobility Hubs that feature their respective offerings in a vibrant, high-profile setting at the intersection of sustainable mobility and innovation. In addition, most bus stop shelters are funded through advertising, BRT lines in Cleveland come with naming rights, and Adopt-A-Highway programs are common across the country. We believe that there are ample opportunities for similar programs in Somerville for Mobility Hubs. Advertising is likely the easiest source of revenue; similar streetscape advertising programs are commonplace across the region. Sponsorship and adoption programs, however, deserve attention for their possible ability to tie mobility hubs to local businesses and the community. The transit agencies for both the St. Paul-Minneapolis area and Harris County, TX operate Adopt-A-Shelter programs. These have some differences, but usually give a sponsoring organization acknowledgement and transit tickets in exchange for trash removal, maintenance, and the opportunity to make improvements to the shelter area.

New Revenue Sources

As Governor Baker pursues new transportation revenue through the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI, or RGGI for Transportation), some portion of those new revenues should be dedicated for sustainable mobility purposes like Mobility Hubs. This is a matter to raise this year for legislative debate and action. On the municipal level, Somerville could pursue its own fees for Mobility Hub financing. As stated above, user fees could be levied on private commercial users of Mobility Hubs, such as TNCs, taxis, and private shuttles, in exchange for easy access to passengers. Citywide fees could also be attached to parking, through dynamic parking pricing or carbon impact fees, or on ride-hail trips, either with a tiered fee structure to reflect use (lower for "pooled" rides, higher for single rides) or those made to and from locations served by frequent transit, similar to transit improvement fees on TNCs in Chicago.