

Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee



2010
Annual Bike Report

March 23, 2011



2010 ANNUAL BIKE REPORT

Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Goals for 2020	2
Accomplishments of 2010	3
'10 in 2010' Campaign	3
Bicycle Parking	4
Organized Bicycle Rides	4
Events and Other Promotions	5
Pedestrian and Bicycle Counting Program	7
Bicycle, Pedestrian and Vehicle Safety Campaign	7
Annual Report and Municipal Meeting	8
Mapping	9
Guidance Provided on City Projects	9
Priorities for 2011	10
Bicycle Facilities	10
Education and Outreach	10
Initiatives for 2011	10
Maps	
#1: Historical Progression of Bicycle Infrastructure	11
#2: Bicycle Network as of November 2010	13
#3: AM Cyclists by Intersection, Fall 2010	15
#4: 2011 Bicycle Infrastructure Initiatives	17

INTRODUCTION

The Somerville Board of Alderman established the Somerville Bicycle Advisory Committee (SBC) in 2001. The SBC works to improve conditions for bicyclists in the city, promote bicycling as a means of transportation, improve safety conditions for bicyclists, and to help implement bicycle policy, programs, and routes for all ages and abilities.

As of 2009, 5% of Somerville residents commute by bicycle¹, and many more cycle on a daily basis to run errands, to access educational opportunities and for personal enjoyment. This is nearly a three-fold increase in bicycle commuting over two decades (1990, 2%) and a near doubling in under a decade (2000, 3%)². To supplement these statistics, the SBC and the City have begun a multi-year bicycle & pedestrian counting project to better document and understand how transportation choices are changing.

The increase of bicyclists in the city has paralleled the improving conditions for bicycling in Somerville. These improvements over the past two decades

1 US Census, 2009 Community Survey

2 US Decennial Census, 1990 & 2000

include traffic calming measures, the Community Path, bicycle lanes and City-sponsored community bike rides. In 2010, over ten miles of new bicycle infrastructure (bike lanes and sharrows) was added, more than doubling the City's total bicycle infrastructure in a single year. Table #1 shows the increase in bicycle infrastructure over the past four years. See Map #1: Historical Progression of Bicycle Infrastructure, for the location of bike infrastructure over time.

The SBC and the City know that cycling is as much about community and culture as it is about pavement and paint. Somerville is lucky to have an enthusiastic cycling population. This was evident during the SBC's three annual bike rides held in 2010: the spring Historic Bike Tour, the fall Tour de Somerville, and the first annual winter Illuminations Tour to see the city's holiday light displays.

The SBC plans to continue these improvements over the next decade, focusing on increasing both bicycle facilities and public outreach to encourage increased cycling in Somerville. Our overall goal is 10% of Somerville residents traveling by bicycle in 2020.

Table #1: Historical Growth in Somerville Cycling Infrastructure

Year	Off-Street Paths (miles)	Bike Lanes (miles)	Sharrows/ Routes (miles)
2007	1.7	0.7	-
2008	-	3.8	1.1
2009	-	-	2.5
2010	0.8	2.7	8.8
Total	2.5 miles	7.2 miles	12.4 miles

GOALS FOR 2020

To continue the growth of bicycling in the city, and attain 10% bicyclists by 2020, the SBC has charted the following key elements to reach this goal:

- **Complete the Community Path**, to provide a direct, car-free route from Somerville to Boston via Brickbottom and North Point. The path currently ends at Cedar Street.
- **Provide Bike Route signage**, to help bicyclists navigate our neighborhood streets and avoid roads with heavier motor vehicle traffic where possible.
- **Provide bicycle facilities on all major city roads**, to provide safe and efficient facilities for bicyclists to travel throughout the city.
- **Increase access to bike parking**, by:
 - » Installing public bike racks in all business areas and at 1/4 mile intervals in residential areas; and
 - » Providing centralized and preferably sheltered parking facilities at main commercial centers, civic areas and transit stations.
- **Establish a city-wide bike share program** with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), to facilitate flexible, seamless bicycle travel with neighboring cities and transit.
- **Update zoning to anticipate increased bicycle use**, which will place a greater demand on private bicycle parking facilities than currently required by zoning.
- **Calm street traffic**, so bicyclists of every age and ability can travel comfortably throughout the city.

- **Educate grade school students to operate bicycles in the city**, such that, with calmed vehicular traffic, 20% or more of Somerville students will bicycle to school.
- **Educate everybody about cycling in the city**, so drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians, of all languages and backgrounds, know the rights and responsibilities of bicycling in Somerville.
- **Prepare more bicycle promotion programs and materials**, to provide all Somerville residents with the encouragement and support to be a cyclist in Somerville.

Each of these elements will help Somerville residents to bicycle more. The following measures will allow the City to chart its progress and provide feedback on the optimal use of funds.

- **Annual bicycle counting**, to chart bicycle usage; led by the Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development (OSPCD) in coordination with the SBC.
- **Regular enforcement and recording of dangerous traffic behavior**; led by the Police Department.
- **Annual bicycle accident and incident report**, to assess both problem locations and problem behaviors; led by the SBC in coordination with the OSPCD (data sources may include MassDOT, MAPC, CTPS, City Police Reports, and other local sources).

Together, these efforts will help the SBC achieve its long term vision of 10% bicycle travel on safe, connected routes.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2010

The SBC has advanced the above goals throughout 2010, through successful partnerships with the following city organizations and departments:

- Mayor's Office
- Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development
- Traffic and Parking
- Department of Public Works
- Historic Preservation Commission
- Police Department
- Shape Up Somerville
- Somerville Arts Council

'10 in 2010' Campaign

The Committee advised and promoted the City's '10 in 2010' campaign – an initiative to install over 10 miles of new bicycle infrastructure during the year. By year end, 11.1 miles had been installed! Prior to 2010, there were 8 miles of bicycle infrastructure throughout the city—2010 saw a 135% increase in on-street bicycle infrastructure!

The following streets were upgraded during 2010:

Bicycle lanes installed:

- Somerville Avenue, from the Cambridge city line to Union Square
- Cedar Street, from Highland Avenue to Elm Street

Sharrows (shared lane markings) installed:

- Cameron Avenue, from Holland Street to Cambridge city line
- College Avenue, from Medford city line to Davis Square
- Powder House Boulevard, from Powder House Circle to Mystic Valley Parkway/Route 16
- Cedar Street, from Broadway to Highland Avenue
- Washington Street, from Hawkins Street to Webster Avenue and from Somerville Avenue to Mansfield Street/Boston Street
- Elm Street, from Davis Square to Cutter Avenue
- Holland Street, from Teele Square to Davis Square
- Dane Street, from Somerville Avenue to Washington Street
- Cross Street, from Route 28/McGrath Highway to Broadway
- Tufts Street, from Washington Street to Cross Street
- Bow Street, from Somerville Avenue to Somerville Avenue

In October 2010, the Mayor led a ride along many of the streets with new infrastructure as a way to celebrate and promote the ongoing bicycle improvements to the street network. See Map #2: Bicycle Network as of November 2010, for the current bicycle network.

Bicycle Parking

The Committee helped the City with its Bicycle Parking Program by reviewing and suggesting locations for the over 100 bicycle racks that were installed on city sidewalks in 2010. Installation focused on commercial squares and corridors, public buildings (libraries, schools and city offices) and other service-oriented locations.



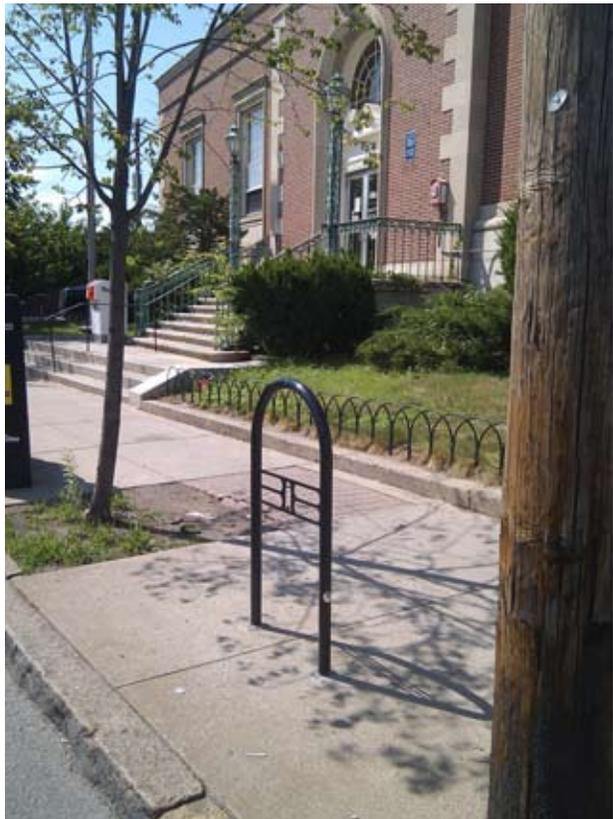
Rack at Edgerly School (Credit: Kathleen Ziegenfuss)

In addition, a 2009 SBC initiative to undertake an on-street bike parking pilot program (bike corrals accommodate 14 bicycles in the place of one parked car) was adopted by the City. The program is advertised on the City website, and it is anticipated that three bike corrals will be installed in the spring of 2011.

Organized Bicycle Rides

The Committee organized three bike rides this year: the annual Historic Bike Tour and the annual Tour de Somerville, as well as a new Illuminations Tour by bike.

The 2010 Historic Tour – Lost Theatres of Somerville was held on Sunday, May 23. It is estimated that over 100 people joined the ride, which stopped



Rack at Union Square Post Office (Credit: Kathleen Ziegenfuss)

at current theatres as well as sites of former theatres. The group was able to experience a behind-the-scenes tour of the historic theatre on Broadway in East Somerville, which Mudflats is currently redeveloping into a new clay center. In addition, participants received a backstage tour of the Somerville Theatre in Davis Square. Other stops included Assembly

Square, Ball Square and the site of three former theatres at the intersection of Cedar Street and Highland Avenue.

The 2010 Tour de Somerville – Paths, Present and Future: A Mystic River Ramble was held on Saturday October 16. The tour attracted approximately 80 riders. The ride featured existing, recently constructed, and planned off-road paths through the heart of the city and along the Mystic River. The 14-mile tour led cyclists along the Community Path, the new Alewife Greenway, the Mystic River Path in Medford, and to the site of the planned Community Path Extension alongside the Green Line Extension project.

For the first time, the SBC initiated a winter ride to celebrate year-round cycling. The committee approached the Somerville Arts Council to organize a concurrent bike ride on the evening of the Illuminations Tour, a trolley bus tour of the holiday light displays at various homes throughout the city.

The ride was held Saturday, December 18 and over 40 cyclists came to enjoy the event. The ride visited numerous homes in Ward 2, East Somerville and Winter Hill. The overwhelming number of participating cyclists and the enjoyment had by all suggests that the Committee will host this ride again next year.

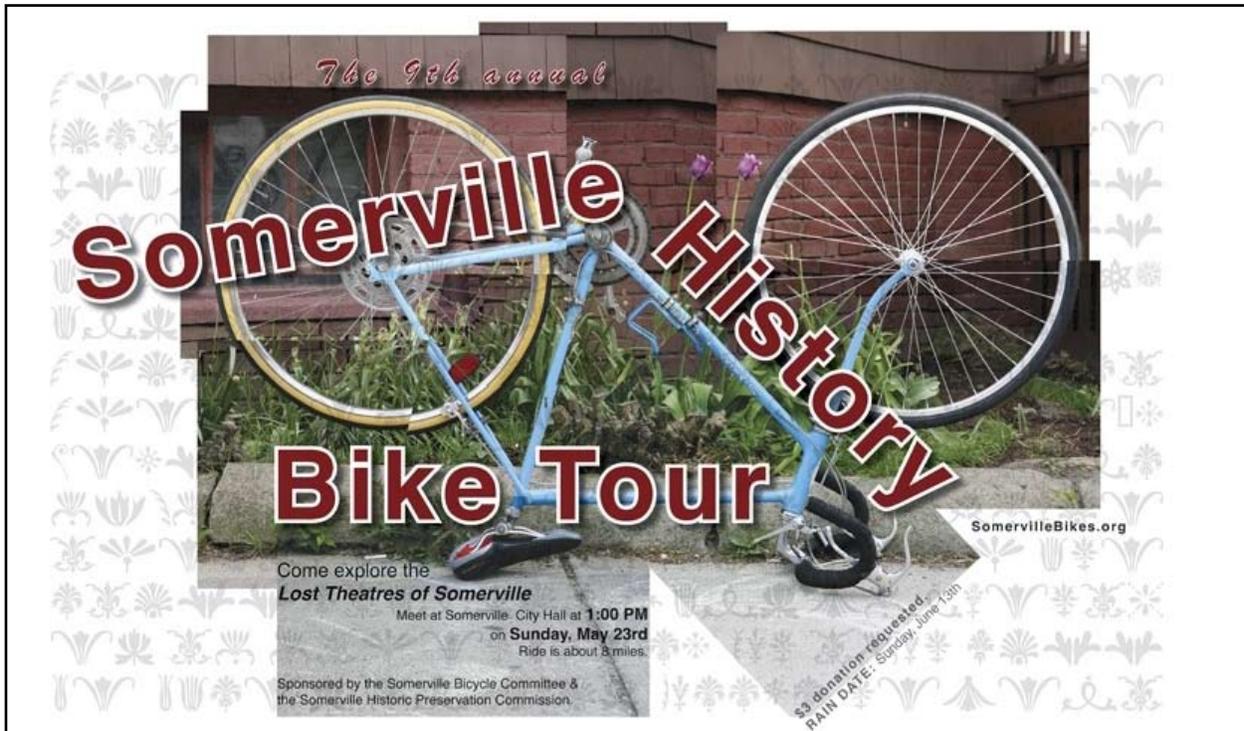
Events and Other Promotions

The Bike Committee staffed an information table at Art Beat and at the Chamber of Commerce sustainability event at the Holiday Inn, participated in talks about climate change and transportation choices at the Climate Action Committee-sponsored World Café, and helped with bike valet at some of the “SomerStreets” events during the summer.

The Committee is working to develop promotional materials (maps, a banner, safety related information, etc.) to have on hand during upcoming events.



2010 Historic Bicycle Tour through Union Square (Credit: Kathleen Ziegenfuss)



Poster designed by Dereck Mangus



Poster designed by Dereck Mangus



Poster designed by Laurinda Bedingfield

Pedestrian and Bicycle Counting Program

The SBC helped initiate the first-ever comprehensive bicycle and pedestrian counting project in the City. Working with the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, two volunteer-conducted censuses counted the number of users (cyclists, pedestrians, joggers & other users) on city streets and sidewalks for one morning peak hour and one evening peak hour in both the spring and the fall. The censuses were undertaken at 35 intersections in the spring, with a 36th intersection (Boston Avenue and Route 16/Mystic Valley Parkway) added in the fall.

During the spring counts, 5,219 cyclists were observed throughout the city. The busiest intersection in the morning was at Mossland Street and Somerville Avenue (360 cyclists observed), and the busiest afternoon intersection was Beacon Street and Concord Avenue (316 cyclists observed). The fall counts documented 4,366 cyclists in 36 locations, with the busiest intersection during morning again observed at Mossland Street and Somerville Avenue (262 cyclists observed), and was also the busiest afternoon intersection (219 cyclists observed). See Map #3: AM Cyclists by Intersection, Fall 2010, for the count locations and sample volumes.

In general, counts were lower for bicyclists during the fall, most likely due to cool, rainy weather during the collection dates. However, there was evidence pointing to less of a decline in the number of cyclists along roads where new infrastructure had been installed during the summer and

early fall of 2010. Because it is difficult to compare spring results to fall results, it is anticipated that the 2011 counts will provide additional insight into the effects of new bicycle infrastructure on the usage of the bicycle and street network.

The information from these counts is on the City website (<http://www.somervillema.gov/section.cfm?org=OSPCD&page=1621>), and the program was presented at the first ever New England Bike-Walk Summit in Providence, Rhode Island in early October. The title of the presentation was "Learning to Count: The role of data in obtaining resources for improved bicyclist and walking conditions". The Committee and the City are hopeful that the model developed will be useful to other municipalities undertaking a similar project.

The bicycle and pedestrian counting project is on-going, and it is expected that the counts will continue twice a year to monitor the effects of improved infrastructure on pedestrian and cyclist behavior.

Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Vehicle Safety Campaign

The Committee provided advice for the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Vehicle Safety Campaign that the City is developing through the Mayor's Office and the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development. A member of the Bike Committee is on the outreach/communications team of the campaign, and will help promote safer streets for all users.



2010 Tour De Somerville - Paths, Present & Future (Credit: Alan Moore/Dick Bauer)

In addition, the Bike Committee was instrumental in developing the plan to distribute informational material about 'sharrows' – the shared bike and vehicle stencils that have been installed throughout the city in growing numbers during 2010. An informational description and image of the symbol was included in the 2011 elections mailing distributed to all households by the Elections Department in early January, 2011.

Annual Report and Municipal Meeting

In 2010, the Bike Committee changed its approach to producing the required annual report, opting to publish a public document aimed at garnering support and enthusiasm for the work the Committee is doing. In March 2010, the Committee released its 2009 Annual Bike Report to the public. This document highlighted 2009 accomplishments, included updated maps of the bike network, and helped

set the vision for bicycling in Somerville moving forward.

In addition, the Committee initiated an annual meeting with the City departments that implement improvements to the bicycle infrastructure in the city and plan for bike-related projects. This meeting proved to be a successful way to bring together the Department of Public Works, Traffic and Parking, and the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development to go over accomplishments of the past year, priorities for the coming year, and initiatives that could potentially be undertaken by the City to increase the diversity and scope of bicycle facilities in Somerville. This meeting helped solidify the working relationship between the Committee and the City, and was instrumental in achieving many of the accomplishments in 2010. We anticipate a similarly productive meeting in 2011.

Mapping

The Committee is working to develop an updated Somerville Bicycle Map with on-road bicycle facilities and recommended routes throughout the city. The map will supplement the updated facilities map which can be found on the City website, and will be printable and available for distribution. In addition, the Committee is working with the City of Boston to have the entire City of Somerville included on the map they publish of the greater Boston region (as of now, only part of Somerville is included).

Guidance Provided on City Projects

The Committee gave advice to the City on various infrastructure projects throughout the course of the year. These projects include City, State and private projects:

- Washington Street (between McGrath Highway and Charlestown)
- Somerville Avenue (between Union Square and Cambridge/Porter Square)
- Assembly Square
- Union Square
- Community Path
- Green Line Extension Stations
- Mystic River Parkway Alewife Brook Bridge
- Alewife Brook Multi-Use Path
- Broadway in East Somerville
- Somerville's Comprehensive Plan

Through collaboration with the City, the above projects and efforts will provide greater accommodations for bicyclists.



2010 Illuminations Bicycle Tour (Credit: Charlotte Tolonen)

PRIORITIES FOR 2011

The Committee and City have agreed to work collaboratively on a number of priorities for the next year. These priorities center on bicycle facility expansions, as well as education and outreach.

Bicycle Facilities

The bicycle facilities network in Somerville is expanding rapidly. The priorities for this year focus on connectivity.

- Install 11 miles of bicycle infrastructure, including a combination of bicycle lanes, sharrows and multi-use paths;
- North-South connections, such as Walnut, School and Willow Streets;
- Connecting the Broadway bicycle lanes to East Somerville;
- Connecting the Somerville Avenue bicycle lanes to Massachusetts Avenue in Porter Square; and
- Continuing to move the Community Path project forward, by:
 - » Assisting with Cedar to Lowell Street design, and
 - » Assisting with Lowell Street to Inner Belt funding opportunities.

Education & Outreach

The SBC plans to further promote bicycle opportunities in the City. This will require new tools for education and outreach that the Committee is currently developing. Some of the tools will include:

- Creating a Committee banner to help identify cycling at community events;
- Developing a new Somerville

Bicycle Map, for print and Internet distribution; and

- Developing and distributing information for the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Vehicle Safety campaign.

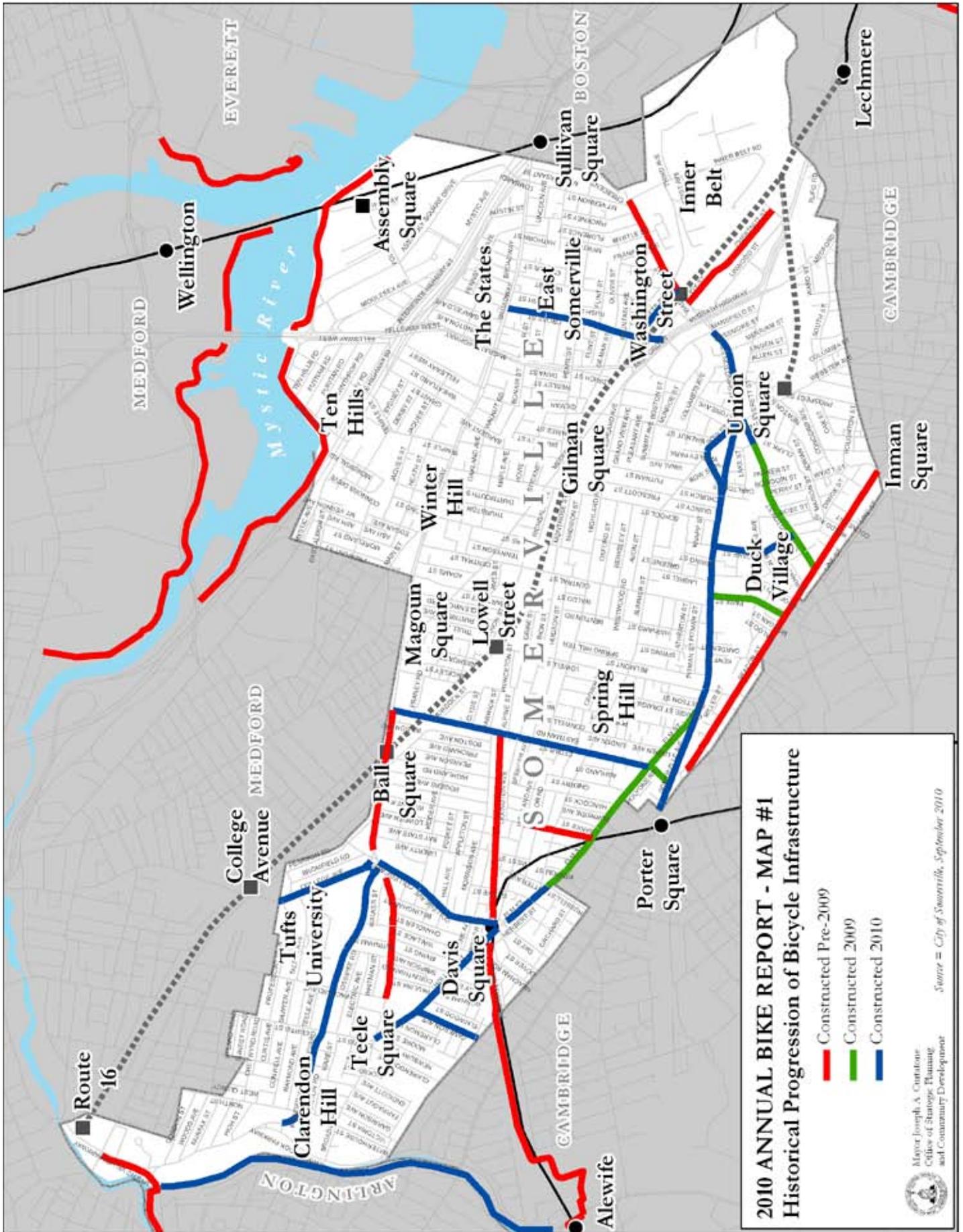
INITIATIVES FOR 2011

The SBC intends to explore a few key initiatives for 2011. These would build on the City's past accomplishments and work towards the Committee's 2020 goals. We plan to work with the City on the following initiatives:

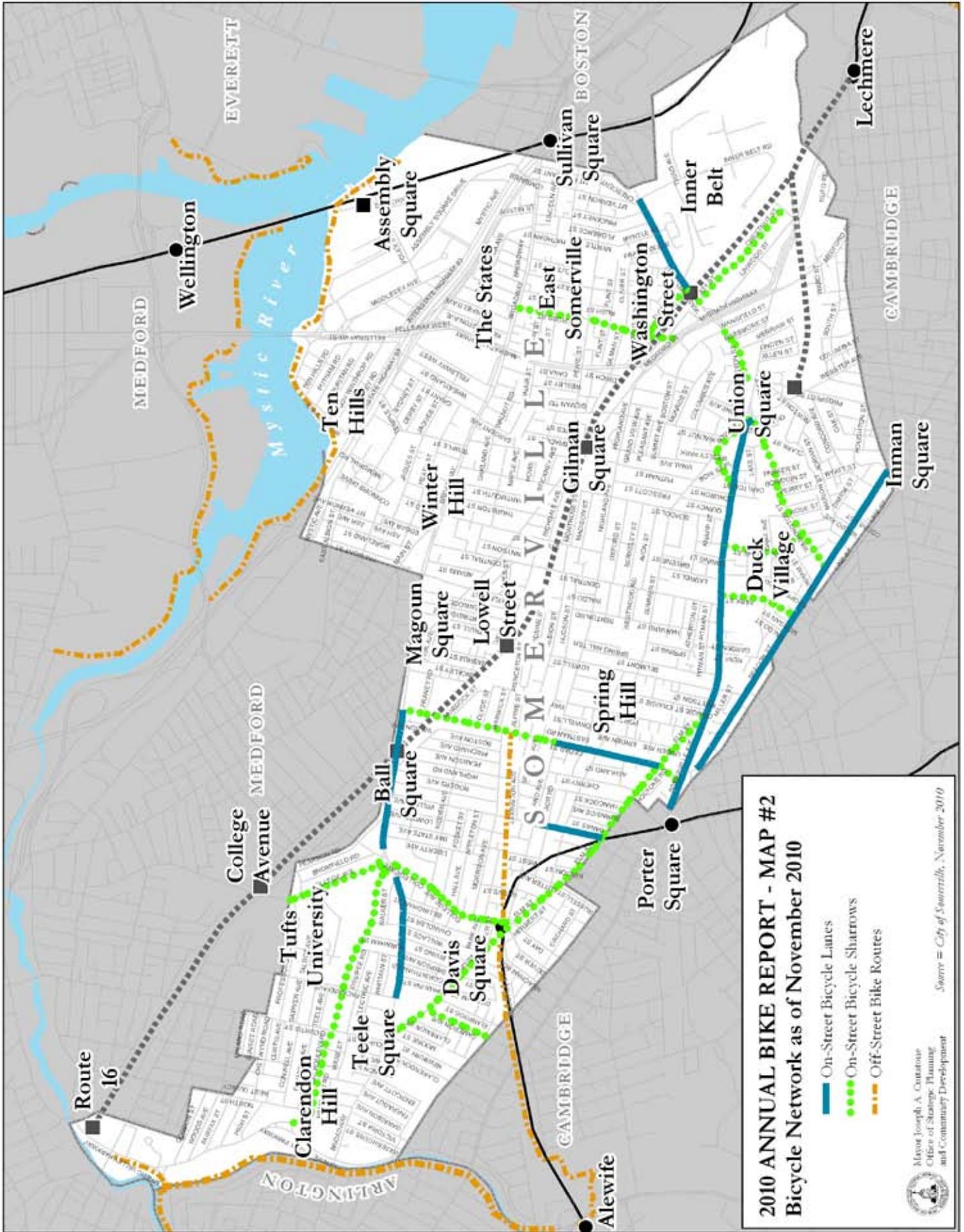
- Develop an on-street bike safety program, focused on encouraging bicyclists to use reflectors and lights at night, coordinated with the Police Department;
- Develop a bicycle wayfinding network built upon the Community Path and neighborhood streets to link major commercial & civic centers;
- Include cyclists' need for pavement quality into the City's annual road reconstruction prioritization process;
- Submit an application to the League of American Bicyclists for their Bicycle Friendly Community designation;
- Include a cycle track in the reconstruction of the high demand bicycle route along Beacon Street; and
- Evaluate the feasibility of a signal-free intersection trial to improve safety and mobility at an intersection with high levels of pedestrian, bicycle and motor vehicle activity.

See Map #4: 2011 Bicycle Infrastructure Initiatives, for the location of the priorities and initiatives described above.

MAP #1: HISTORICAL PROGRESSION OF BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE



MAP #2: BICYCLE NETWORK AS OF NOVEMBER 2010



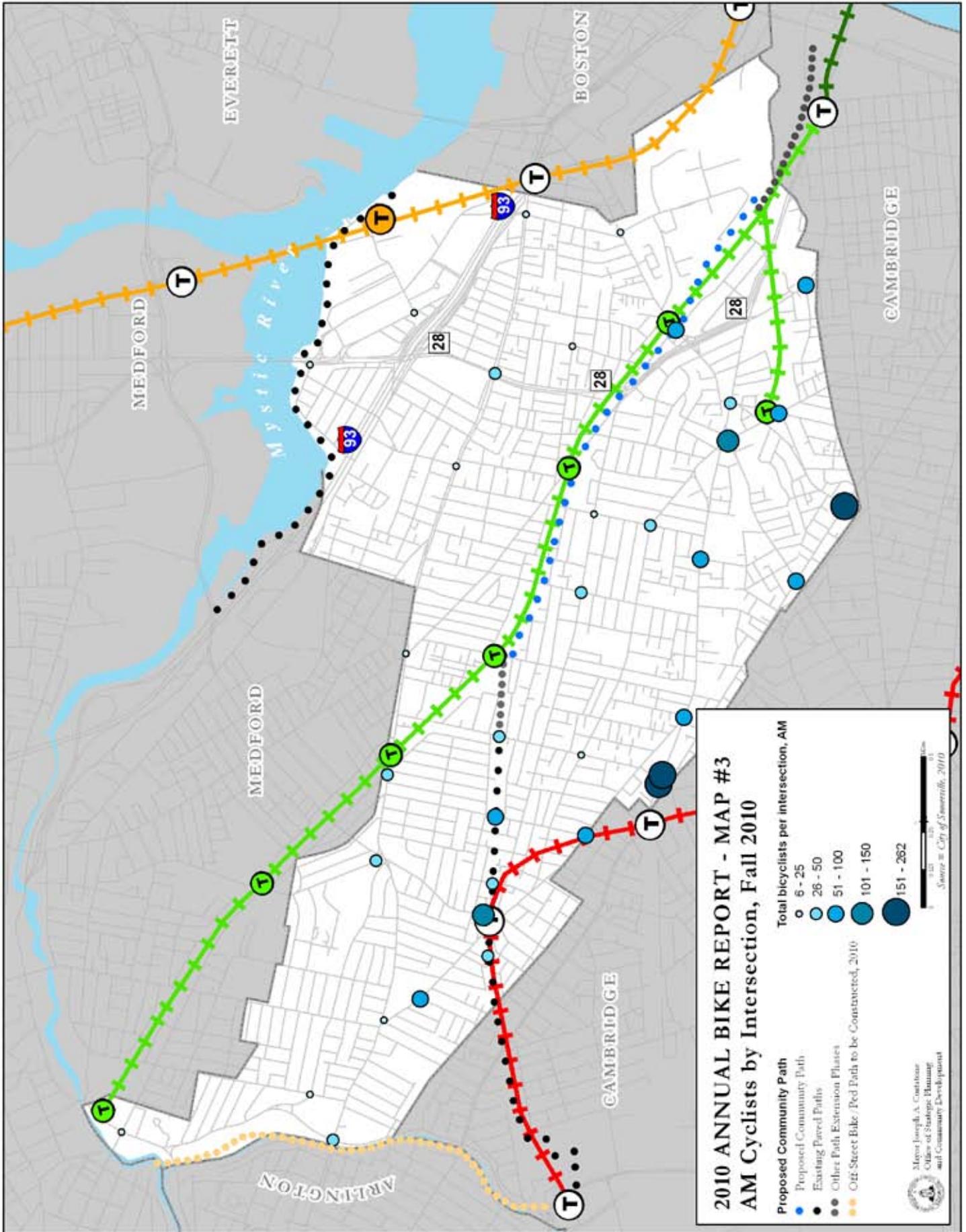
2010 ANNUAL BIKE REPORT - MAP #2
Bicycle Network as of November 2010

- On-Street Bicycle Lanes
- ⋯ On-Street Bicycle Sharrows
- - - Off-Street Bicycle Routes

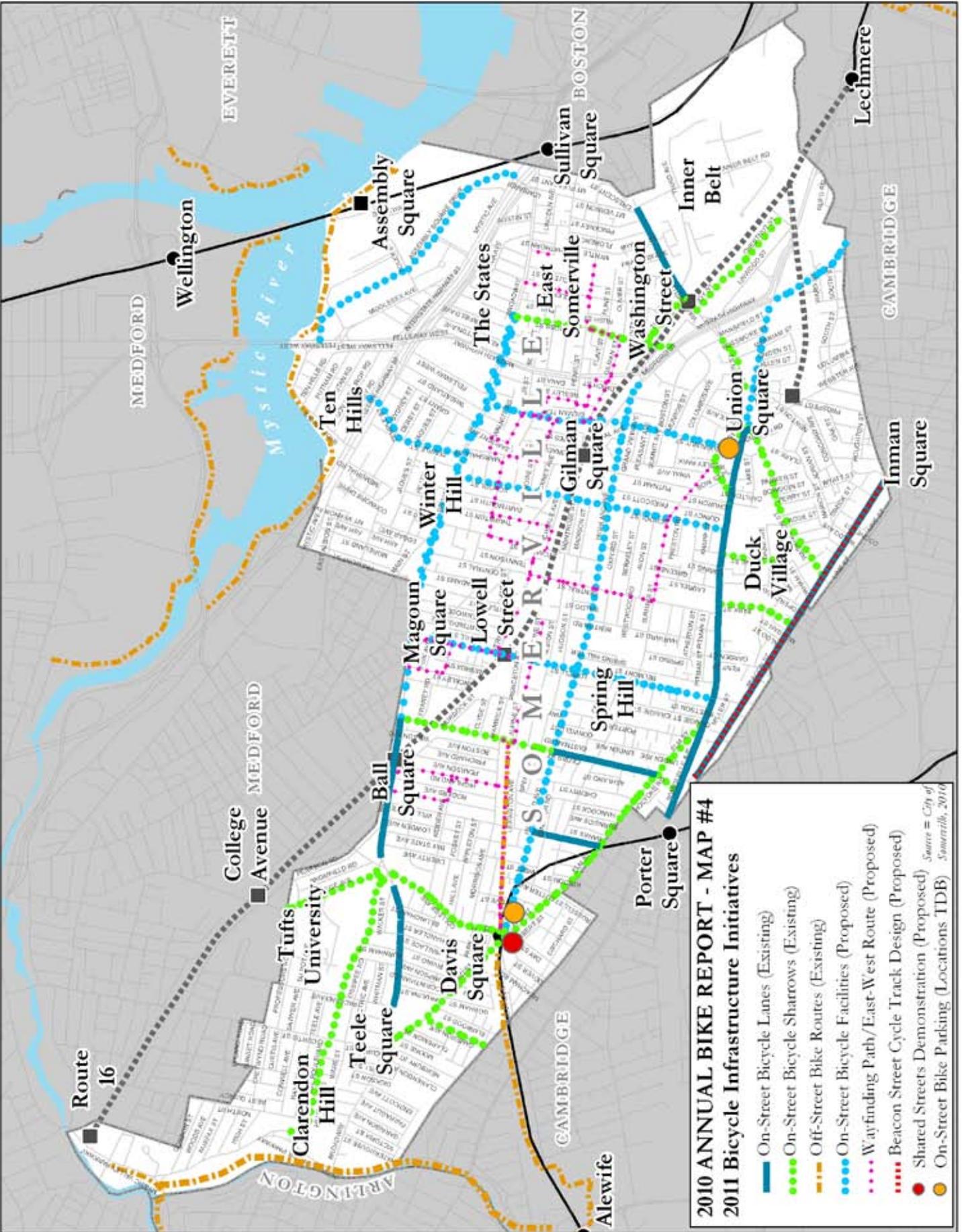
Mayor Joseph A. Couratone
 Office of Strategic Planning
 and Community Development

Source = City of Somerville, November 2010

MAP #3: AM CYCLISTS BY INTERSECTION, FALL 2010



MAP #4: 2011 BICYCLE INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVES





SOMERVILLE BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

For more information:

<http://www.somervillema.gov/Department.cfm?orgunit=BICYCLE>

<http://www.somervillebikes.org/>