

Officials advise more community feedback for street projects

Boston Sunday Globe · 6 Apr 2025 · By Shannon Larson GLOBE Staff Shannon Larson can be reached at shannon.larson@globe.com. Follow her @shannonlarson98.

a team of city officials had this advice for Mayor Michelle Wu for how to manage boston's streets: pump the brakes and listen to community feedback.

the mayor had called for a 30-day review of all street and transportation projects undertaken over the past 15 years.

the memo — sent by Mike brohel, superintendent of basic city services, to Wu last week— appears to echo a comment Wu made during an interview on GbH last month, when she said the city overlooked the concerns of community members and “just wanted to move as quickly as possible.”

“We heard consistent feedback that project communications and community engagement were inadequate, that decisions seemed predetermined, and that processes too often did not achieve consensus, contributing to a loss of community trust,” reads the memo. “Many felt that their feedback was given insufficient attention.”

Moreover, its release comes amid concerns among some transit advocates that Wu, who campaigned as a champion for transit infrastructure — including bus lanes, bike lanes, and safer crosswalks — is changing her tune on the issue as she faces intense backlash for some of those changes and is up for reelection. Her rival, Josh kraft, entered the mayor's race pledging to pause construction of bike lanes. the city recently axed a bus lane on boylston Street and yanked protective barriers out of bike lanes.

While many of the new memo's recommendations pertain to specific projects, such as considering narrowing the bike lane on boylston Street and evaluating the arlington Street bike lane for relocation, several are more big picture. the memo suggests prioritizing “consensus over speed” to improve project communications, establishing a clear timeline for future temporary projects, and identifying alternative solutions to replace flex posts that protect cyclists.

“In many neighborhoods, residents have expressed concern that there are too many flex posts in the road, creating confusion and visual noise,” according to the memo. “We recommend that Streets [the city's Streets Cabinet] rightsize the number.”

the review followed intense lobbying from back bay business leaders, notably Meg Mainzer-Cohen, head of the back bay association, and wealthy businessman Jay Cashman.

earlier this year, Cashman launched an organization called Pedal Safe boston, which urged the mayor in a letter to “halt all ongoing and planned bike construction” until a master plan is in place. In a phone call with Wu in January, Cashman recalled telling her, “You're going to do something about this.”

City officials said in the memo they “strongly” recommend the creation of a “comprehensive plan for bike lane infrastructure” and “mandate that any future bike lane project only occur if it fits into” the plan.

Meetings will be held to address other street projects and receive feedback from more

neighborhoods, per the memo. “We hope that through this review and recommendations, the Streets Cabinet can establish better project communications and engagement moving forward.”