

Elm-Beacon Connector

Informational Presentation to the Traffic Commission

March 12, 2026

Project website: somerillema.gov/elmbeacon

Mayor Jake Wilson

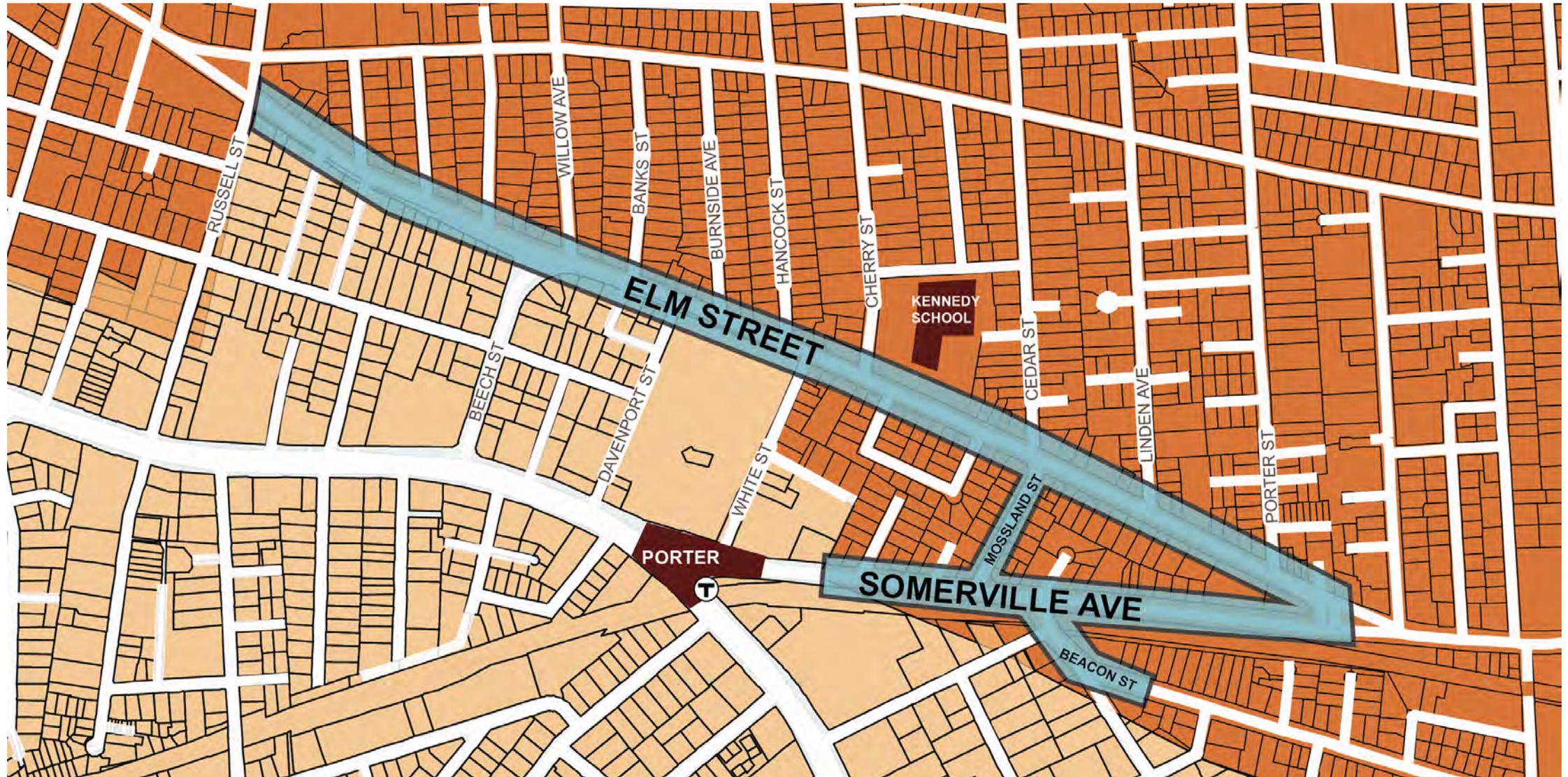
Mobility Division | Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development | City of Somerville

Ward 2 Councilor JT Scott | Ward 3 Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen | Ward 5 Councilor Naima Sait | Ward 6 Councilor Lance Davis

Project Background



Limit of Work



Project Foundations

Guiding values:

- Keeping people safe on our streets
- Improving access to public transit
- Creating more sustainable transportation options for people

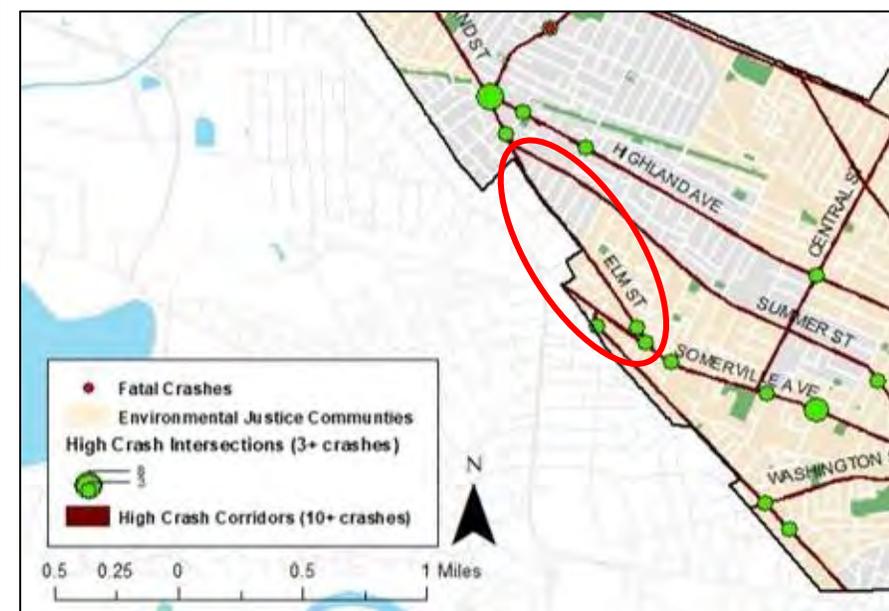
Guiding plans:

- SomerVision (2021) – Somerville’s comprehensive plan for community development
- Climate Forward (2024) – Decarbonizing our transportation system
- ADA Transition Plan (2013) – Making our streets accessible to everyone
- Bicycle Network Plan (2023) – Enabling people to get around safely by bike
- Vision Zero Action plan (2022) Preventing death and serious injury on our streets

These plans and values are further codified by the Complete Streets Ordinance (2014) and Safe Streets Ordinance (2024)

Why here? Why now?

- Elm Street, Somerville Avenue and Beacon Street are on the city's high-crash network for people walking and riding bikes.
- Project area includes 3 high-crash intersections:
 - Elm Street/Porter Street
 - Elm Street/Somerville Avenue
 - Beacon Street/Oxford Street
- In the Bicycle Network Plan, **Elm Street**, **Somerville Avenue**, and **Beacon Street** are all designated for protected bike lanes in both directions. **Mossland Street** is designated as a low-speed, low-volume Neighborway.
- Elm Street & Somerville Avenue are part of the Plan's Priority Network to be completed by 2030.



Detail of high-crash network map of bicycle and pedestrian crashes with project area circled



Detail of Priority Bicycle Network Map with project area highlighted

Summary of Community Engagement



Pre-Concept Design Engagement Activities

Fall 2024



Full details about how we engaged community members and what we heard are available in the [Pre-Concept Design Community Engagement Report](#).

Concept Design Engagement Activities

Spring 2025



Community Open House

- Hosted event on March 10.
- Promoted event information prior through direct email, City Newsletter, flyers on door, sent City Alerts, and social media posts.

Over 125 participants



In-person Outreach Events

- Hosted Elm Street at Hancock Street Pop-up on April 2.
- Tabled at Kennedy School Parent Teach Conferences on March 13.
- Visited with businesses on March 21 and March 28.

Over 214 participants



City Committee Feedback

- Collected feedback at the Bicycle Advisory Committee on April 3.
- Collected feedback at the Pedestrian and Transit Advisory Committee on March 20.

28 participants



Online Engagement Opportunities

- Conducted a Concept Design Feedback Survey from March 10 to April 14.
- Hosted a Virtual Office Hour on March 19.
- Collected email feedback from February 18 to April 14.

203 participants

February 18, 2025

April 14, 2025

Full details about how we engaged community members and what we heard are available in the [Concept Design Community Engagement Report](#).

Overall Outreach Feedback

- **General**
 - Many shared their support for the overall design proposal and appreciation for the traffic analysis study.
 - Many community members described that the future changes would make them feel much safer traveling in the area while walking, wheeling, and biking (53% in survey responses)
 - Some felt that quick-build changes might encourage more aggressive behavior from people driving.
- **Biking**
 - Many had described feeling unsafe while biking on Elm Street and Somerville Avenue with no separation from motor vehicles.
 - There was substantial support for protected bike lanes and safer options to get to and from Beacon Street as well as schools, daycares, jobs, and local businesses.
- **Traffic**
 - We heard requests for congestion mitigation in response to Mossland Street closure with signal timing changes.
 - Some shared their concerns about speeding currently on Elm Street and Somerville Avenue and requested rethinking the current design.
 - We heard concerns about red light running, especially during pedestrian phases.
- **Transit**
 - Some requested more shelters for shade and weather coverage.
 - We did not hear concerns about bus delay.
 - We heard requests to shift the Hancock Street westbound bus stop to far side to increase safety near the crosswalks.
- **Crosswalks**
 - Many shared concerns about people driving not yielding/stopping for people in the unsignalized crosswalks.
 - We heard requests for more signage and other tools to increase visibility of crossings.
 - We heard support for Clear Corners both for people who walk/roll and who drive.
 - Some shared support for narrowing crosswalks distances on Elm Street to reduce exposure to vehicles.
- **Parking**
 - We received requests for more school arrival and dismissal dedicated curb space.
 - Some shared concerns about parking removal, in particularly impacting side street curb use.
 - We heard some describe the need to maintain or increase short-term parking like metered and loading zones for small businesses.

Major Intersection Outreach Feedback

- **Elm Street at Beech Street & Willow Avenue**
 - Many shared how they feel unsafe in the long crosswalks that see low yielding compliance.
 - People described that motor vehicles take fast turns from Beech Street to Willow Avenue.
 - There was significant support for shortening the crossing distance across Beech Street and removing the slip lane.
 - Some requested consideration of a rotary, traffic light or all-way stop signs to help manage traffic.
- **Elm Street from Cherry Street to White Street & Hancock Street**
 - We heard the desire to increase visibility and priority for the crosswalk across Elm Street at the Kennedy to increase safety for students.
- **Somerville Avenue, Beacon Street & Mossland Street**
 - We heard requests for a dedicated left turn for bikes to increase safety.
 - Some shared requests for variable traffic signal timing to more effectively managing changing cues.
- **Elm Street at Cedar Street & Mossland Street**
 - Some asked us to consider signage or other treatments to ensure that people biking yield to people using the crosswalk, especially across Mossland Street.
- **Elm Street at Somerville Avenue**
 - Some described how it feels like there are no options to take a left from Somerville Avenue to Elm Street on a bike without feeling incredibly vulnerable and unsafe.
 - Many people who walk and bike described how they feel people driving rarely stop at the stop sign in the westbound Somerville Avenue slip lane.
 - We heard lots of support for diverting car traffic from Mossland Street at Somerville Avenue to Elm Street at Somerville Avenue.
 - Some people shared that they were still concerned about safety for motor vehicles turning left from Somerville Avenue onto Elm Street.



Above: Somerville Avenue at Elm Street

Progress Since Spring 2025

- After our last round of public engagement in March/April 2025, we hired a consultant to develop the final pavement marking and signal plans.
- We used feedback from community members and other City departments to develop a 75% design with that consultant in the fall of 2025. We then took these updated designs to the following departments and partners for further review over the winter:
 - Fire Department
 - Parking Department
 - Department of Public Works
 - Department of Infrastructure & Asset Management
 - Public Space & Urban Forestry Division
 - City of Cambridge
 - MBTA
- The main changes between 25% and 75% were adjusting the design to more efficiently account for fire and sanitation vehicle turning movements, any impacts to bus service with bus stop changes, traffic signal timing and phasing analysis, and confirming facility dimensions. As a result, we did not bring the design to the public for further review.
- We also were able to increase the scope of the project based on some of the requests we received. This pushed our timeline slightly, but we were excited to be able to include these elements:
 - Adding the intersection of Somerville Avenue at Craigie Street
 - Adding a raised crosswalk across Elm Street at Cherry Street
 - Including an accessible curb ramp on Elm Street at Beech Street
- To familiarize the Traffic Commission with the details of the project, we will go through the plans that were presented to the community in March 2025.

Concept Design Overview

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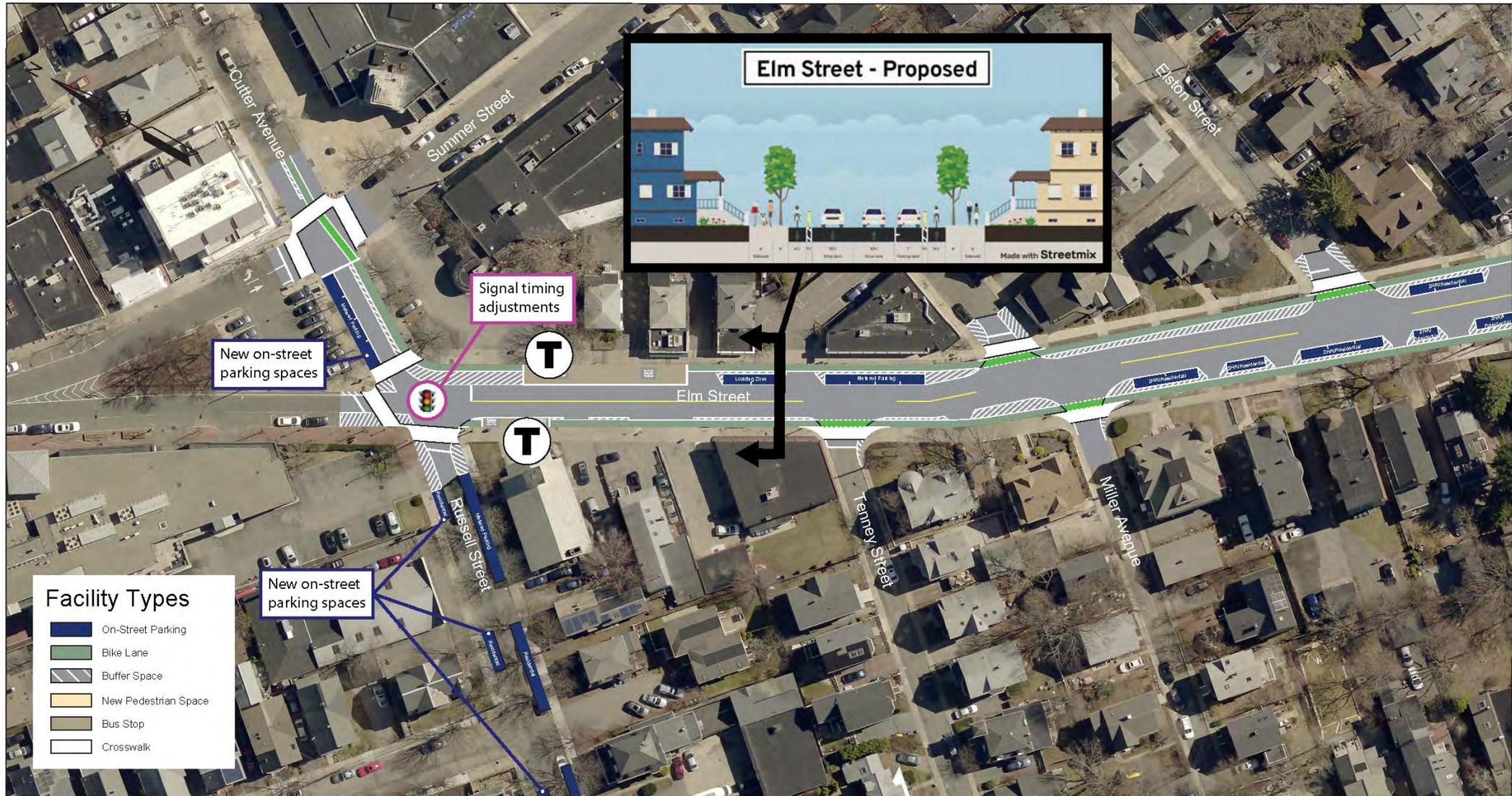
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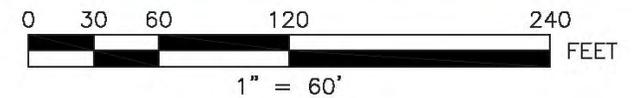
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Design Proposal: Elm Street – Russell Street to Elston Street

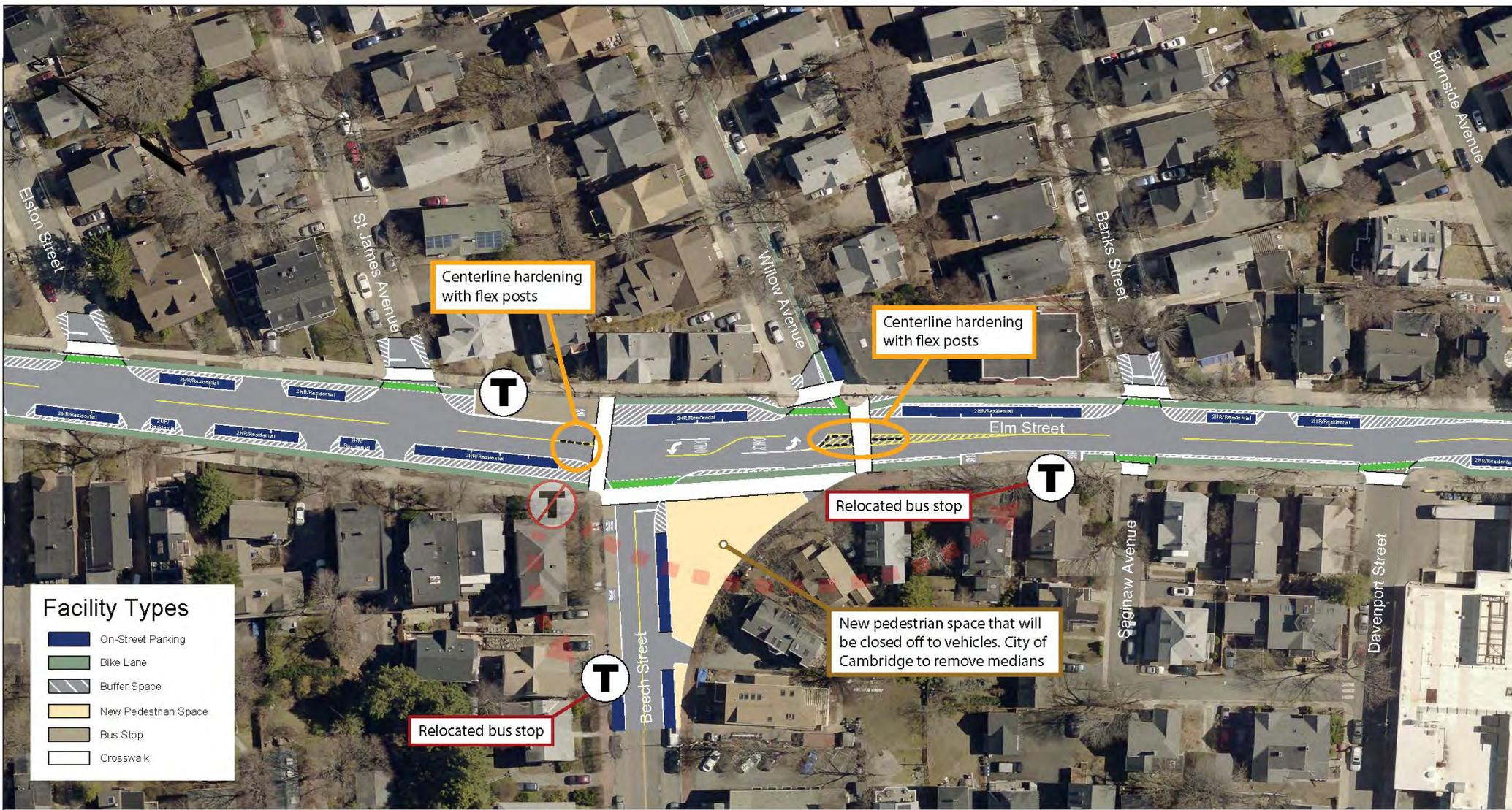


Elm-Beacon Connector

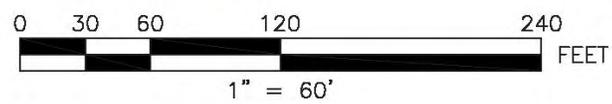
Concept Design
March 2025



Design Proposal: Elm Street – Elston Street to Burnside Ave



Elm-Beacon Connector
 Concept Design
 March 2025



Design Proposal: Elm Street – Burnside Ave to Holyoke Rd E

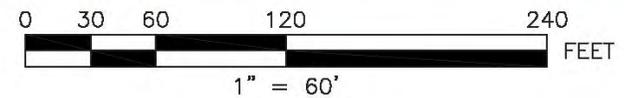


Design Proposal: Elm Street –Holyoke Rd E to Porter Street

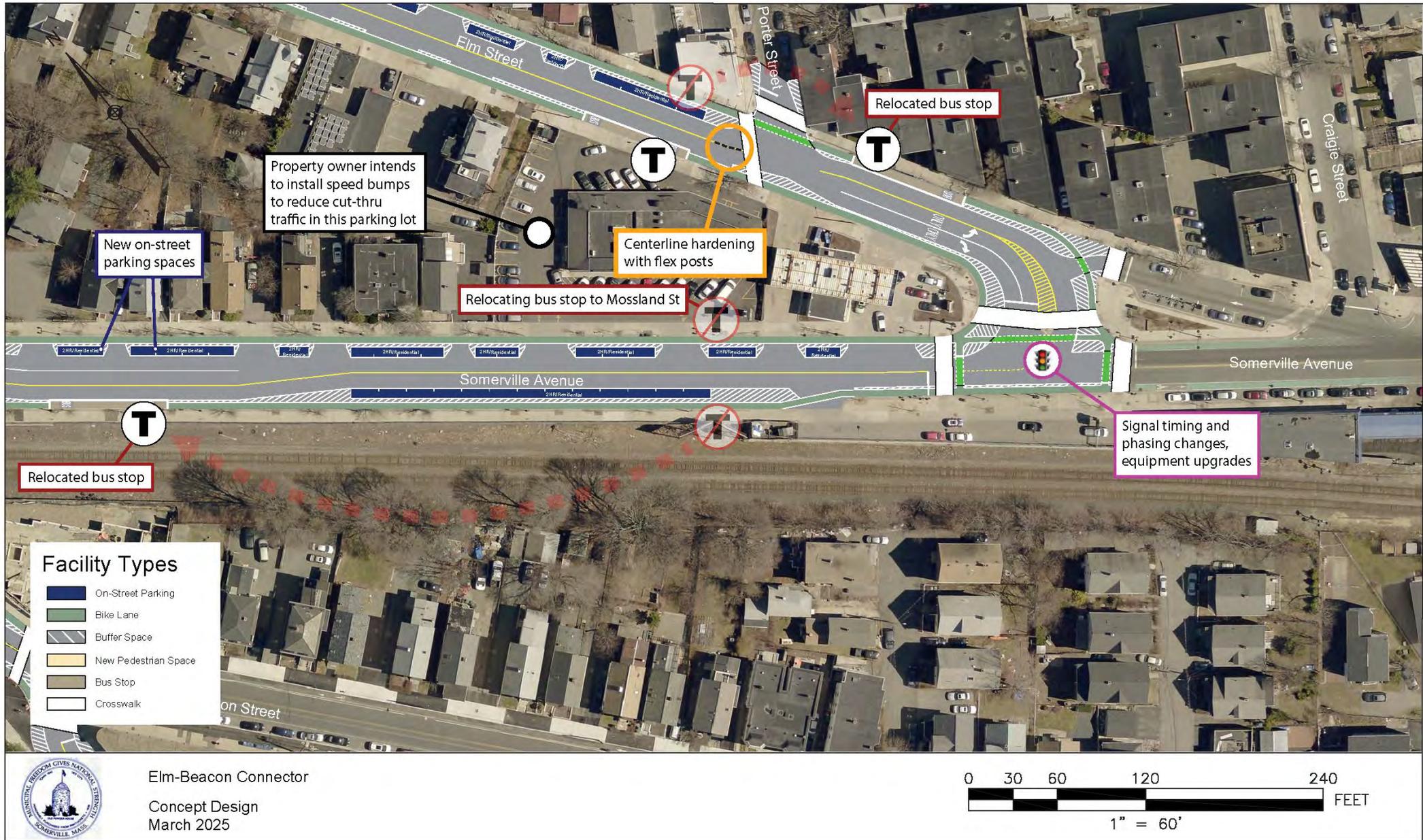


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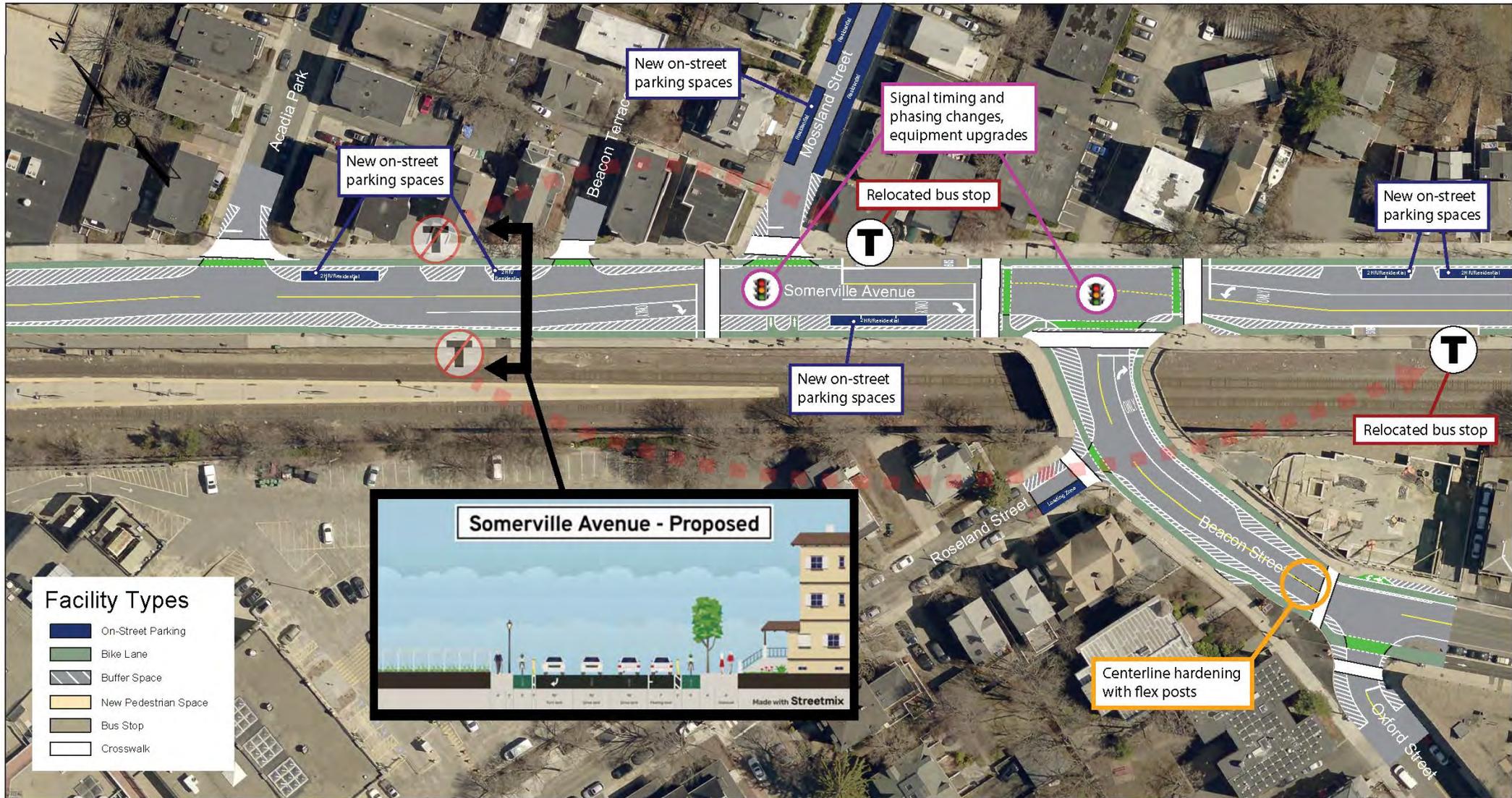
Concept Design
March 2025



Design Proposal: Wilson Square

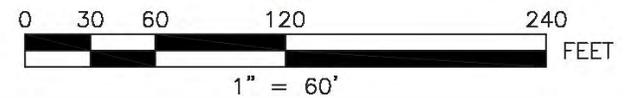


Design Proposal: Somerville Avenue & Beacon Street



Elm-Beacon Connector

Concept Design
March 2025



Next Steps

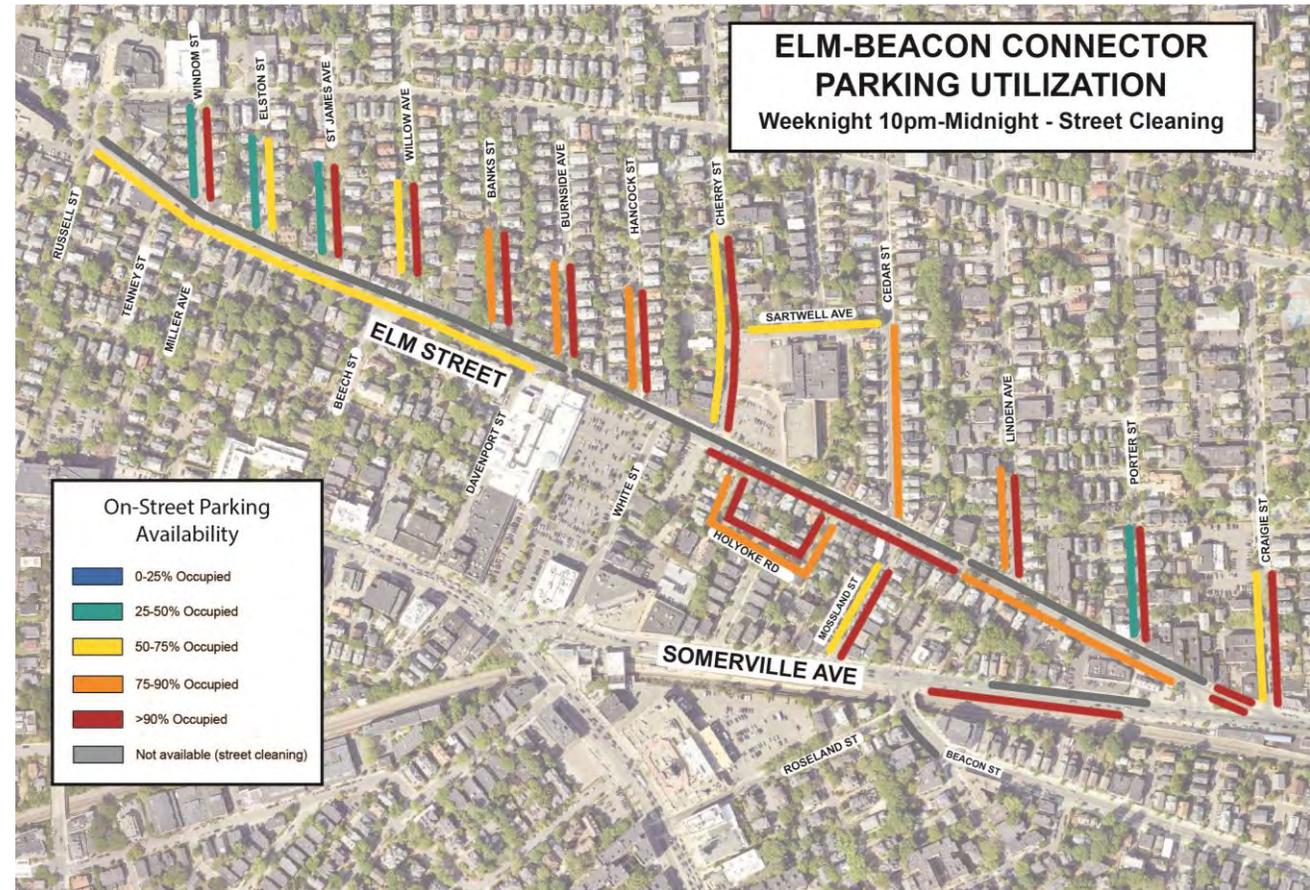


Anticipated Parking Regulation Changes

- We anticipate that the final design will have the following parking impacts:
 - Elm Street: Removal of 108 spaces
 - Beacon Street: Removal of 4 spaces
 - Somerville Ave: Removal of 3 spaces
 - Mossland Street: Removal of 1 space
 - Cutter Ave: Addition of 3 spaces
 - Russell Street: Addition of 10 spaces
 - **Total removal: 103 spaces**
- Of the parking that will remain, we anticipate that most of the spaces will be maintained as 2-hour except by permit. Based on our outreach, the changes that we do anticipate requesting are as follows:
 - Additional dedicated school pick-up and drop-off spaces on Cherry Street and Sartwell Avenue
 - Additional metered spaces on Cutter Avenue and Russell Street
 - Additional residential permit parking only on Russell St
 - Additional loading zones on Elm Street and Roseland Street near businesses
 - Additional accessible parking spaces on Elm Street, Windom Street, Holyoke Rd, and Craigie Street
- The proposed designs will also result in the following bus stop changes:
 - Moving the westbound Elm Street stops at Hancock Street and Cedar Street from the near side to the far side of the intersection
 - Moving the westbound Elm Street stop at Porter Street from the far side to the near side of the intersection
 - Moving the eastbound stop at Porter Street approximately 100 ft northwest
 - Several stops will also be lengthened to meet minimum MBTA requirements

Parking Analysis

- We conducted a parking study in the fall of 2024 that looked at on-street utilization within the project area and on the first 300 feet of each side street (excluding Cambridge-owned streets). We measured overnight parking availability as well as daytime use.
- On a typical weeknight, when on-street parking is most highly used, between **50-63 parking spaces** were available on Elm Street and between **188-201 spaces** were free in the overall study area.
- On a street cleaning day when there was no parking on the north side of Elm (depicted on the map to the right), **22 spaces** were free on Elm Street and **109 spaces** were free in the overall area.
- Based on these observations, we anticipate that there will be still be enough parking availability when the project is complete to accommodate parking demand on a typical day.



Map showing parking occupancy rates during a weeknight with street cleaning restrictions. There were 22 open parking spaces on Elm Street and 109 across the full study area when this count was collected.

Anticipated Traffic Regulation Changes

- Implementation of the proposed designs will require converting Mossland Street from a one-way to a two-way street. It will function as a dead-end at the Elm Street intersection for motor vehicles, but will be passible for people on bikes, people walking/rolling, and emergency vehicles. We will be requesting restrictions of all turns onto Mossland St to reinforce the proposed dead-end condition.
- Additional turn restrictions that will be requested include:
 - Restricting the left turn from Elm Street eastbound onto Cutter Avenue northbound
 - Vehicles wanting to make this movement already have better access via Summer Street
 - Restricting the right turn from Somerville Avenue onto Elm Street
 - Vehicles wanting to make this movement already have better access via the Wilson Square slip lane
 - Restricting the thru movement from Beacon Street onto Adelaide Road
 - Only counted 2 vehicles making this movement per day and will improve traffic operations, can still access Adelaide Road from either direction of Somerville Ave
- No Turn on Red signs will also be requested on signalized approaches where they don't exist in the traffic regulations today:
 - Elm Street southbound at Somerville Avenue
 - Somerville Ave eastbound at Beacon Street
 - Mossland Street southbound at Somerville Avenue
 - Somerville Avenue westbound at Mossland Street
- We will also be requesting stop signs for both directions of Elm Street at Beech Street to support the safety improvements at that intersection and ensure that Beech Street traffic doesn't back up onto Mass Ave. This change will result in modest increases in delay for Elm Street vehicles, but will significantly reduce delay for Beech Street vehicles.

Anticipated Timeline

A draft final design based on the feedback from our internal and external partners is nearly complete and will be reviewed again by those same partners over the next couple weeks.

Any remaining feedback, including from the Traffic Commission, will be incorporated into the final design, which is expected to be completed prior to the April Traffic Commission meeting.

If the Traffic Commission approves the required traffic and curb regulation changes to implement this project, the procurement process to secure the necessary materials and labor will begin in Mid-April.

If a bid is submitted by a contractor that meets the city's standards and is within budget, implementation is expected to begin in July and be completed by November of this year.



Thank You!

