



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JAKE WILSON
MAYOR

THOMAS F. GALLIGANI, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Ari,

Thank you for taking the time to gather signatures and submit a traffic calming petition for Boston Avenue, between Irvington Road and Mystic Valley Parkway, to the City of Somerville. This letter is in response to your petition. It includes a summary of our findings and an explanation of the next steps. We also publish this letter to the City website at www.somervillema.gov/trafficcalming.

Traffic Calming Program Background

Somerville is a [Vision Zero](#) city that is committed to improving safety on our streets. One way that the City makes progress toward this goal is by identifying locations where vehicle speeding is a concern and then installing speed humps to reduce speeds. However, we receive more reports of speeding concerns than we can address each year and must prioritize which streets will receive speed humps.

There are many factors that influence which streets we consider each year, including but not limited to: 311 service requests, constituent requests that we receive via email, community feedback at our in-person outreach events, input from our City Councilors, recommendations from our City staff, and traffic calming petitions like the one you have submitted. All these inputs are then accounted for in a data-driven process that helps us determine which locations are the highest priorities and ensures that traffic calming interventions are equitably distributed. The petition process provides an important opportunity for community members to share their advocacy and support for traffic calming, so City staff prepare formal response letters when we receive requests via petition.

Status of Your Petition

The traffic calming petition process involves several steps, including:

1. Acceptance and certification of petition
2. Collection of data for your street



3. Evaluation of that data

Following these steps, the City determines if traffic calming installations should be prioritized and what traffic calming tools are most appropriate. We generally prioritize speed hump installation on streets directly next to schools, parks, civic spaces, Community Path crossings, and larger affordable housing developments. We also prioritize speed hump installation on streets that have relatively high traffic volumes and high rates of speeding compared with other speed hump candidate streets. In prioritizing residential streets for traffic calming, we often look for streets with higher-than-average volumes. Lower volumes do not preclude a street from receiving traffic calming, but we may be less likely to prioritize installing speed humps on it soon unless the street meets other priority considerations.

The initial investigation and data collection for Boston Avenue has been completed. The next section of this letter will summarize the results.

Traffic Calming Assessment

To assess a street or street segment for traffic calming, we start by collecting and evaluating vehicle speed and vehicle volume data. We then review additional characteristics of the street such as width and nearby land use. We also check to see if the street has been identified for any street pavement and sidewalk work, or if the street is prioritized in City plans such as the [Somerville Bicycle Network Plan](#) and [Vision Zero Action Plan](#). Below are details regarding this assessment of Boston Avenue.

Neighborhood Context and Adjacent Land Uses

Boston Avenue is an Urban Minor Arterial located in Ward 7. Urban Minor Arterials are streets or roadways that provide a level of regional connectivity that link cities and towns. The Somerville portion of Boston Avenue runs approximately 850 feet between the Mystic River/Medford City Line and Irvington Road. It is about 38 feet wide from sidewalk curb to sidewalk curb.

Boston Avenue is two-way for motor vehicle travel, has parking on both sides, and carries the Route 80 and 94 bus services. The speed limit is 25 mph. Boston Avenue is adjacent to the state-owned Mystic River Reservation parklands. It is designated for protected bike lanes in the Somerville Bicycle Network Plan but has not been included as part of the Priority Network to be completed by 2030. It is not located near any schools. This neighborhood context is illustrated in Figure 1 on the next page.



Figure 1: Neighborhood context

Speed Data

The City collects data on motor vehicle speed and volume using Automatic Traffic Recorder (ATR) equipment placed on a street for two consecutive weekdays. These data help us to prioritize traffic calming on streets where we see significant speeding. In response to your petition, the City collected speed and volume data in spring 2026.

Figure 2 shows a percentage breakdown of speeds for vehicles recorded in our data collection of Boston Avenue. The average speed of vehicles on Boston Avenue was measured to be 19 mph.

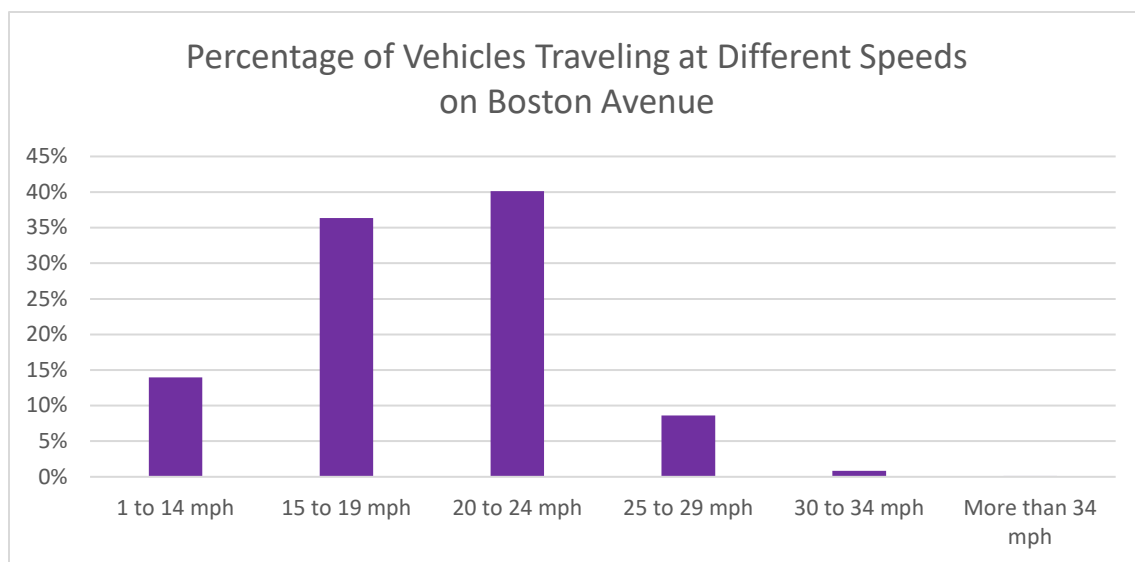


Figure 2. This chart shows a breakdown of vehicle speeds on Boston Avenue over the course of two days.

We look at the average speed and 85th percentile speed when evaluating a street. The “85th percentile speed” is the speed at which 85 percent of people drive at or below on a road segment. We use this measure in transportation planning because it can help us understand which speed most people driving perceive to be safe traveling on the street. Generally, when the 85th percentile speed is higher than the speed limit, it helps indicate to us that we need to adjust the design to reduce speeds. It gives us a deeper understanding of behavior on the street than just using average speed data. The 85th percentile speed for Boston Avenue was 24 mph.

Figure 3 shows the average and 85th percentile speed for Boston Avenue compared to other streets in Somerville where traffic data was collected in spring 2026. This cohort of streets are also under traffic calming consideration.

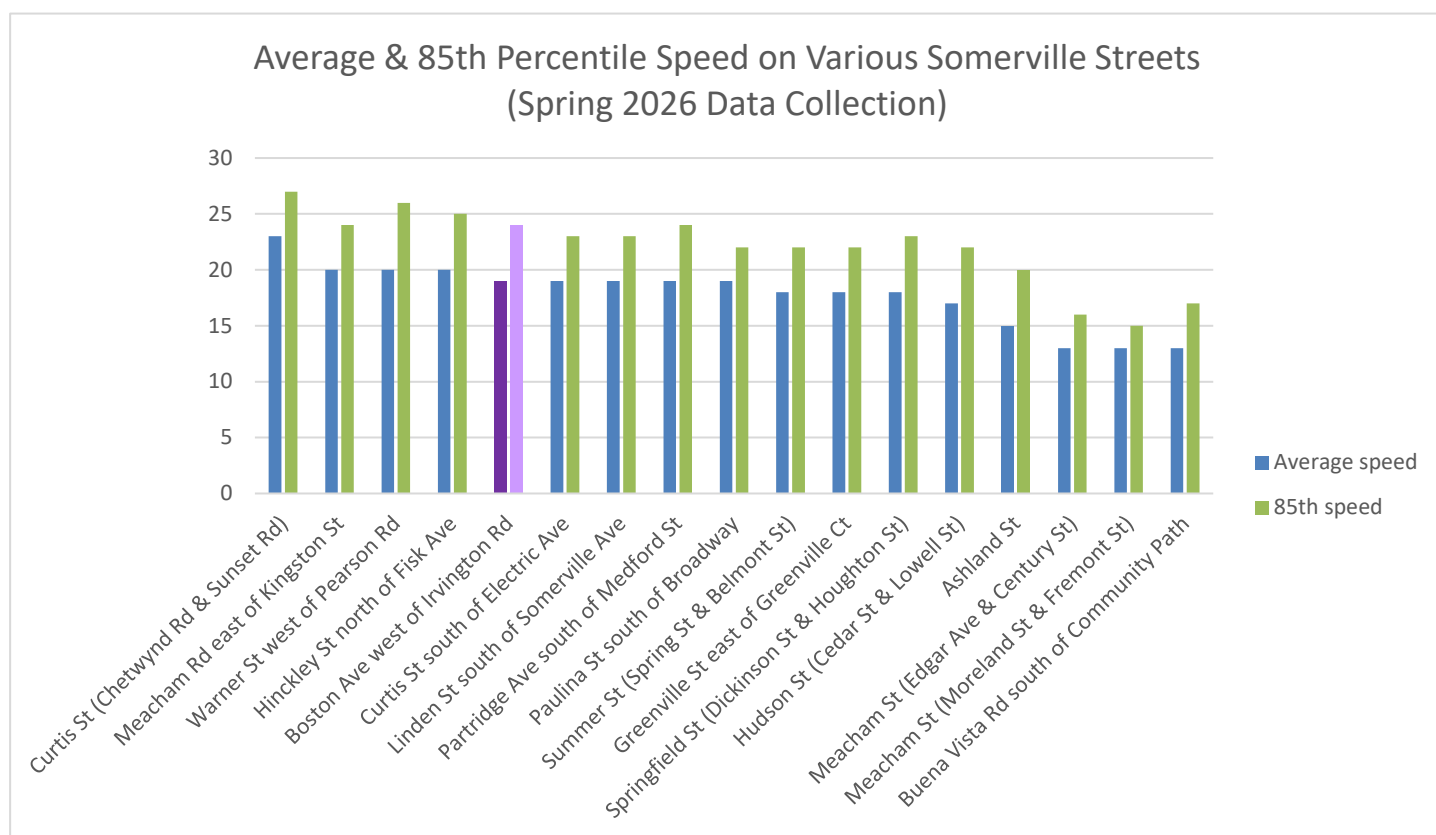


Figure 3. This chart shows the average speed and 85th percentile speed for various streets where traffic data was collected in spring 2026. The average speed across all streets is 18 mph. The average 85th percentile speed across all streets is 22 mph.

Volume Data

For Boston Avenue, our Automatic Traffic Recorder data indicates an average daily volume of 6,716 vehicles on a typical weekday, and an average of 536 vehicles in the evening peak hour (5:30pm – 6:30pm). This means that if you were watching traffic during the evening rush hour, you could expect to see a vehicle going by every 6 or 7 seconds on average.

Figure 4 shows the average daily volume on Boston Avenue compared to the other streets in Somerville where traffic data was collected in spring 2026. We collected data on these other streets as they were also being considered for traffic calming or other safety improvements.

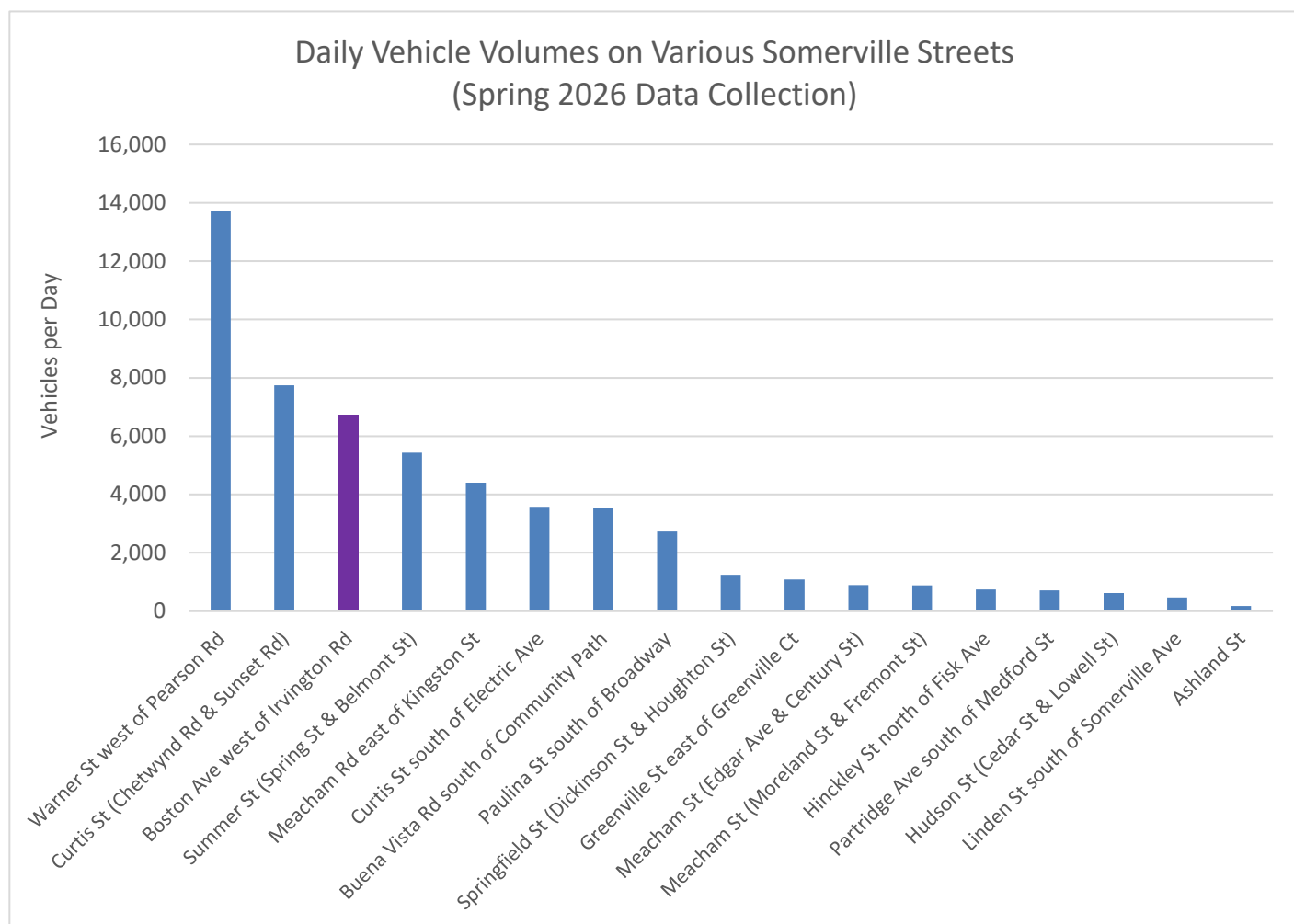


Figure 4. This chart shows the average weekday motor vehicle volume for various streets where traffic data was collected in spring 2026. The average volume across all streets is 3,217.

Our speed and volume data also allow us to combine these two metrics to determine the relative frequency and severity of speeding behavior. Figure 5 shows how many vehicles were measured traveling over 25 mph as an average for the two weekdays during which data was collected. For Boston Avenue, we recorded approximately 409 vehicles traveling over 25 mph on an average day.

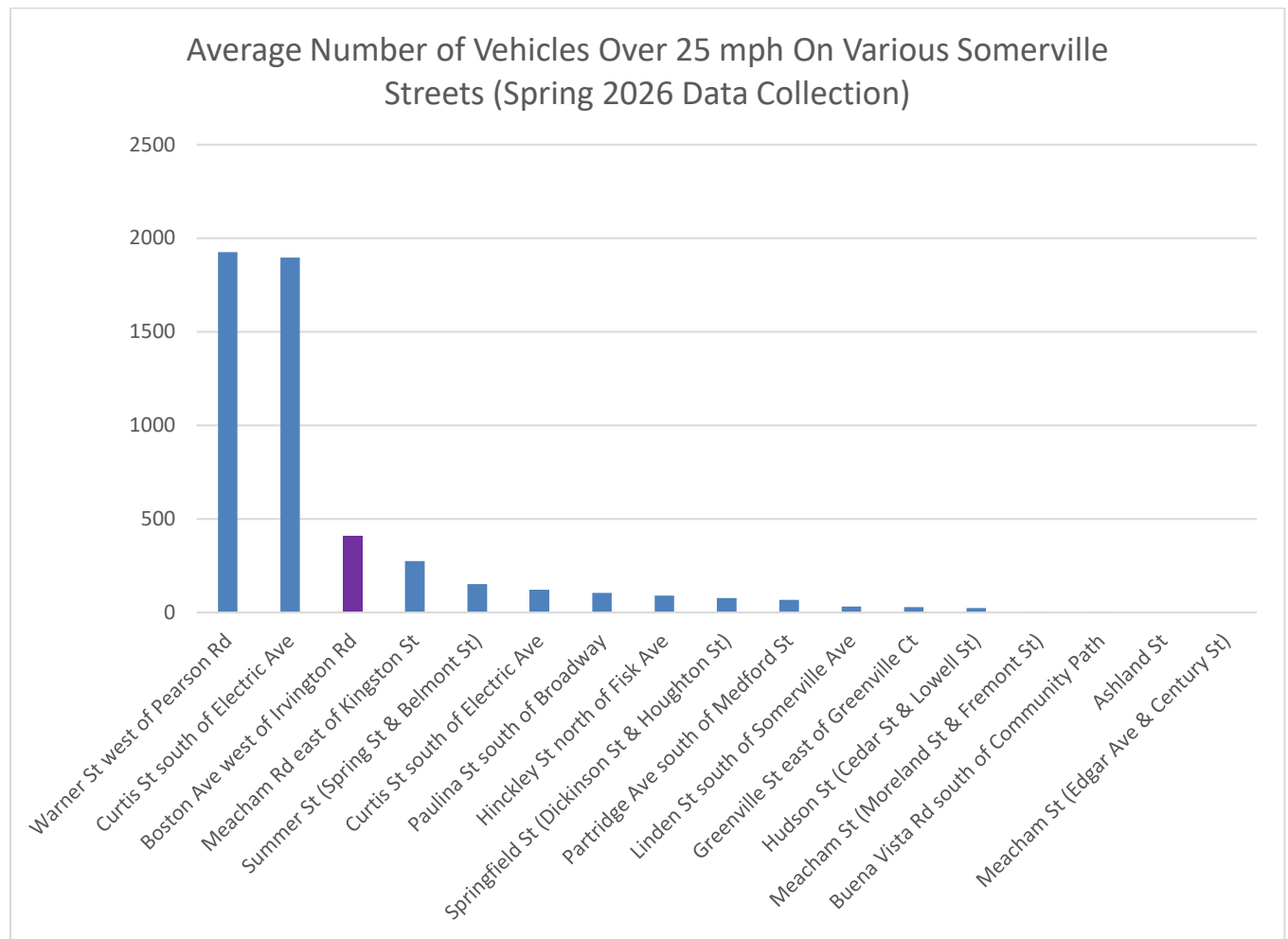


Figure 5. This chart shows the approximate number of motor vehicles that were measured traveling over 25 mph for various streets where traffic data was collected in spring 2026. The average across these streets is 306 vehicles per day.

Next steps

Based on our traffic evaluation, Boston Avenue meets some of our priority considerations to be eligible for traffic calming. At this time, it will remain on our consideration list which we evaluate and update annually, but we do not anticipate it being selected for our 2027/2028 speed hump list. The City does not generally install speed humps on streets that have MBTA bus service due to the low clearance of buses. As a result, the next stage of our due diligence will be to evaluate alternative traffic calming tools.

For streets that carry MBTA buses, the City generally installs raised crosswalks as our preferred traffic calming treatment. This type of construction is generally planned and executed through the City's Pavement and Sidewalk Management Program, which uses a five-year plan to guide street reconstruction efforts. Boston Avenue is not currently on the five-year plan, which limits some of the options we can pursue to alter the street.

Given these challenges, the City would likely need to explore quick-build solutions to reduce vehicle speeds and increase safety on Boston Avenue. These quick-build solutions often use pavement markings and/or flex posts to modify roadway geometry and reduce vehicle speeds. At this time, we prioritize quick-build traffic calming interventions at critical crosswalks and as part of corridor-scale protected bike lane projects. Boston Avenue has not been identified as meeting these particular criteria at this time, but we will keep it in mind as we continue to develop our traffic calming program.

Thank you again for your advocacy for safer streets and patience in our evaluation. If you are interested in staying in the loop on our Traffic Calming program, please consider subscribing to the [Mobility Newsletter](#). The City takes our Vision Zero commitment very seriously, and resident advocacy for safer streets is a critical element of our success in recent years. Thank you for being a part of that mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brad Rawson', with a long, sweeping underline.

Brad Rawson
Director, Mobility Division