



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

THOMAS F. GALLIGANI, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Annie,

Thank you for taking the time to gather signatures and submit a traffic calming petition to the City of Somerville. The following letter is in response to your petition for Lexington Avenue, which includes a summary of our findings and an explanation of next steps. We will 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 building 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 are selected each year, including but not limited to community feedback collected through outreach, 311 service requests, city staff recommendations, city councilor input, larger-scale street reconstruction projects and more. The traffic calming petition that you have submitted is one of the factors that influences this process, while also providing an opportunity for community members to share their advocacy and support for traffic calming on a particular street. All of 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.

Status of Your Petition

The traffic calming petition process involves several steps, including:

- Acceptance and certification of petition
- Collection of data for your street
- Evaluation of that data

Following these steps, the City determines if traffic calming installations are warranted and what traffic calming tools are most appropriate.

The initial investigation and data collection for Lexington 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 speeds and vehicle volumes. We then review additional characteristics of the street such as width and nearby land use, prioritizing streets that are near schools, parks, affordable housing developments, faith institutions and community path crossings. We also check to see if the street has been identified for any street pavement and sidewalk work, or prioritized in City plans such as the [Somerville Bicycle Network Plan](#) and [Vision Zero Action Plan](#). Below are details regarding this assessment.

Neighborhood Context and Adjacent Land Uses



Lexington Avenue is a quarter-mile long street located in Ward 6, situated between Willow Avenue and Cedar Street. It has a variable width: the eastern section between the Hancock Street “bend” and Cedar Street is 26 feet wide from curb to curb. This width is typical of many Somerville streets. The western section from Willow Avenue to Hancock Street is wider, measuring roughly 34 feet from curb to curb.

Lexington Avenue is home to Lexington Park. There is a path that runs along the edge of Lexington Park that connects the Community Path and the Hancock Street Neighborway via a crosswalk across Lexington Avenue. Lexington Avenue is designated as a [Safety Zone](#) with a 20mph speed limit.

Speed Data

The City collects data on motor vehicle speeds and volumes using Automatic Traffic Recorder equipment placed on a street for two 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 2024.

Figure 1 shows a percentage breakdown of speeds for vehicles recorded in our data collection. The average speed of vehicles on Lexington Ave was measured to be 21 mph. Most cars on the street are traveling between 20 and 24 miles per hour.

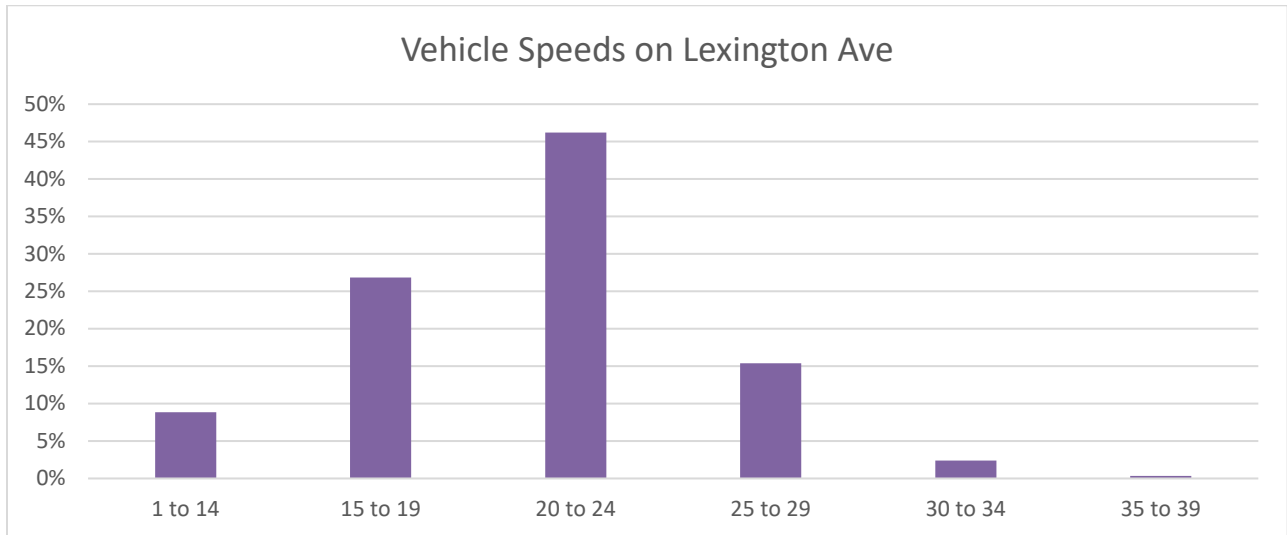


Figure 1. This chart shows the breakdown of vehicle speeds on Lexington Avenue over the course of two days.

Figure 2 shows how the average speed on Lexington Ave compares to the other streets in Somerville where traffic data was collected in spring 2024.

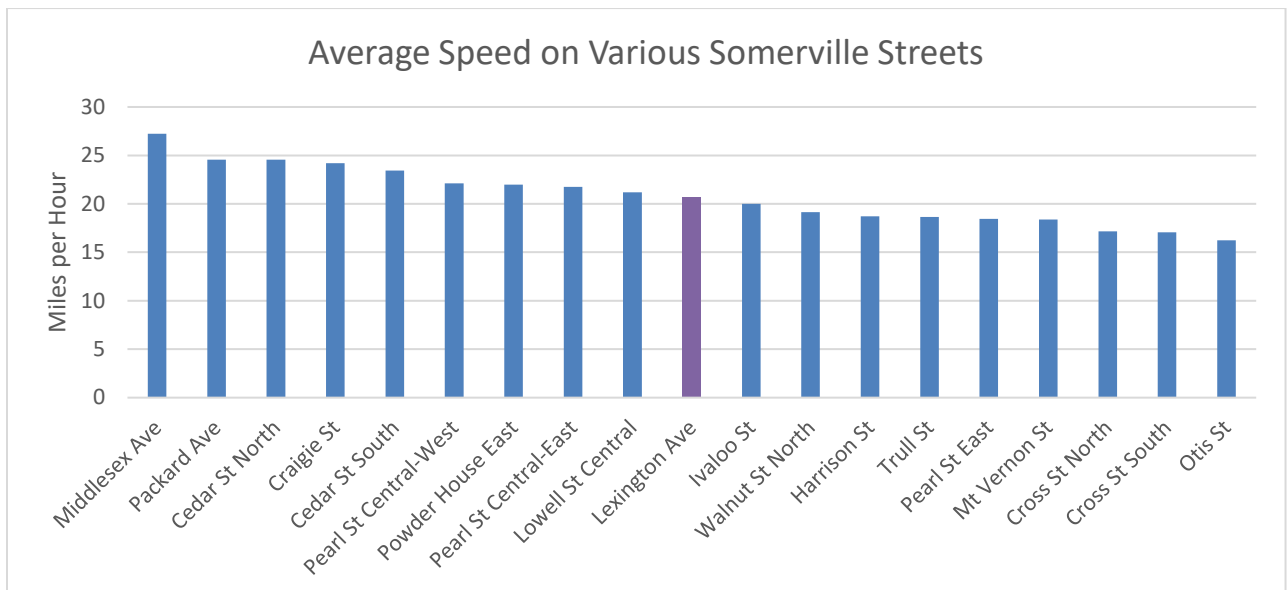


Figure 2. This chart shows the average measured motor vehicle speed for all streets where traffic data was collected in spring 2024. The average speed across these streets is 21 mph.

We are most concerned when we see average speeds exceeding 25 mph, but still consider traffic calming on streets where we see average speeds over 20 mph.

Volume Data

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 in the near future unless the street meets other priority considerations.

For Lexington Avenue, our Automatic Traffic Recorder data indicate an average daily volume of 972 vehicles on a typical weekday, and an average of 130 vehicles in the evening peak hour. This means that if you were watching traffic during the evening rush hour, you could expect to see approximately two vehicles every minute.

Figure 3 shows how the average daily volume on Lexington Avenue compares to the other streets in Somerville where traffic data was collected in spring 2024.

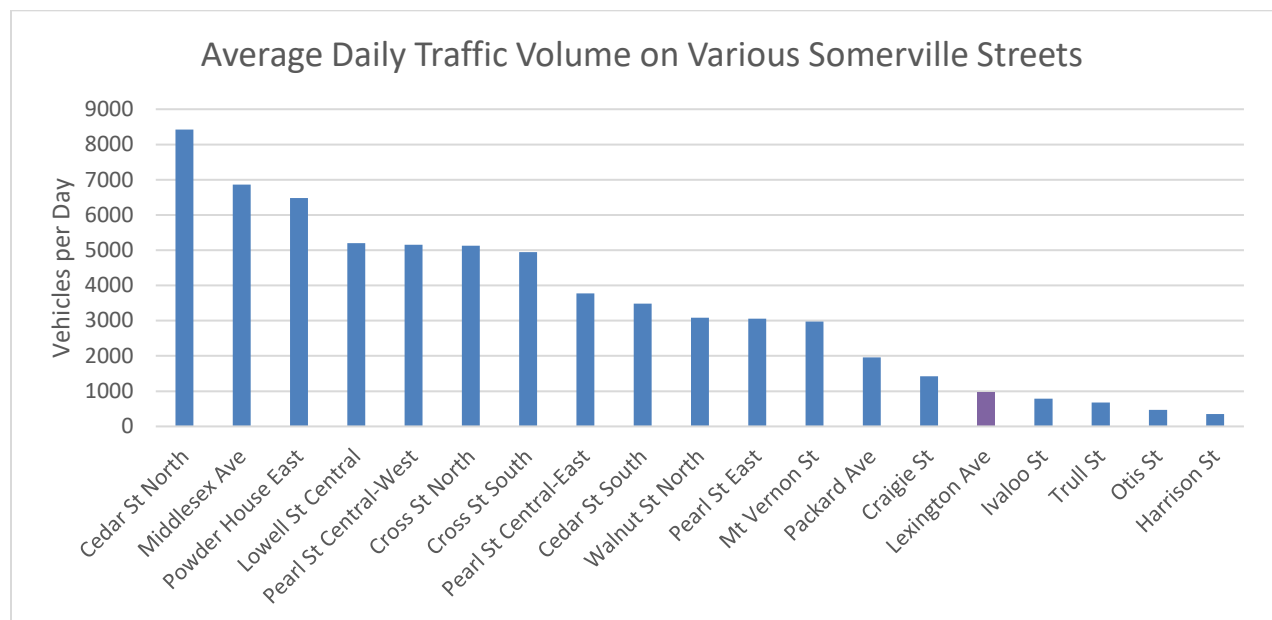


Figure 3. This chart shows the average measured weekday motor vehicle volume for all streets where traffic data was collected in spring 2024. The average volume across these streets is 3,400 vehicles/day.

While speed data and volume data on their own are helpful, we find that combining the two is important to determine where the most people are driving the fastest. The traffic data that we collect includes a metric that measures how many vehicles were measured going over a certain speed, in this case 25 mph. Figure 4 shows how many vehicles were measured going over 25 mph as an average of the two weekdays during which data was collected. For Lexington Avenue, there were approximately 136 vehicles traveling over 25 mph.

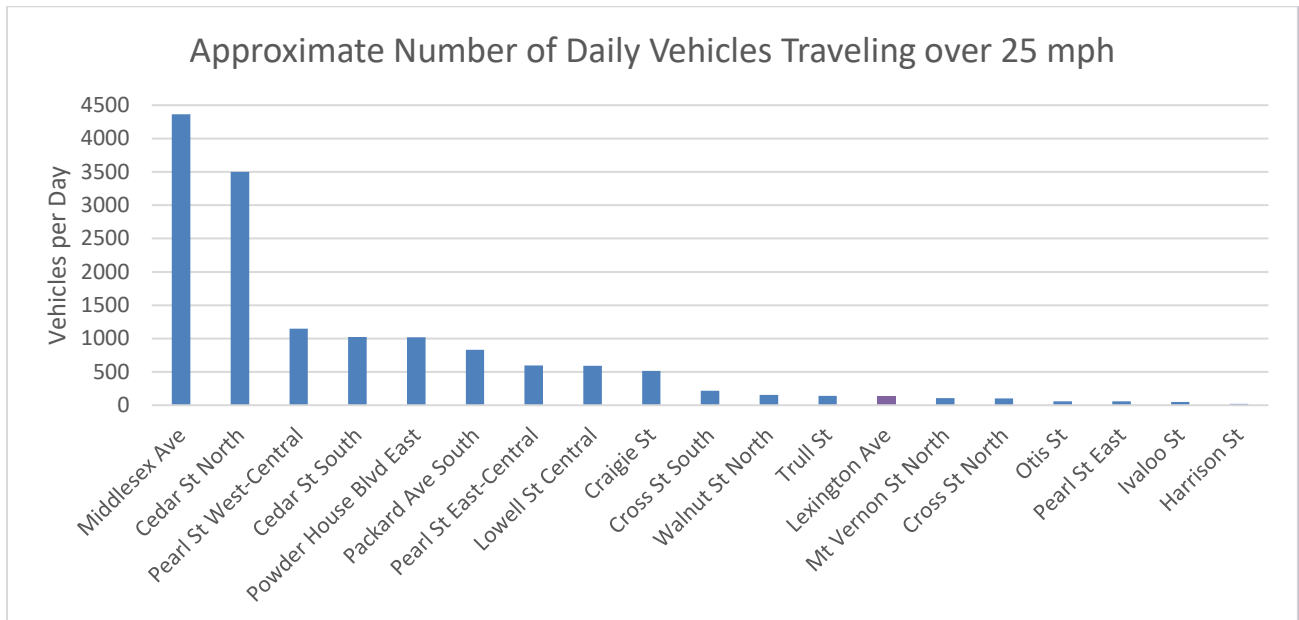


Figure 4. This chart shows the approximate number of motor vehicles that were measured traveling over 25 mph for all streets where traffic data was collected in spring 2024. The average across these streets is 770 vehicles/day.

Next steps

Based on our evaluation, Lexington Avenue meets some of our priority considerations for traffic calming. However, the data do not suggest that Lexington Avenue would be prioritized over many other streets where we have measured higher speeds and volumes.

Over the next few months, we will weigh what we learned about Lexington Avenue with a slate of streets under consideration. We will finalize our 2025/2026 traffic calming priority list by January 2025. If Lexington Avenue is not selected for the 2025/2026 speed hump list, it will remain on our consideration list for the following year.

We do aim to prioritize streets that are found to have the most serious safety concerns, such as streets with the highest speeds and volumes, and in the closest proximity to areas or facilities with a high rate of foot traffic, such as areas near schools or parks.

We will reach out when we have finalized this list. We also will announce our next batch of streets prioritized for speed hump construction in the [Mobility Newsletter](#) and update our [Traffic Calming map](#) on our [Traffic Calming webpage](#). Please consider subscribing to stay in the loop on a variety of Somerville transportation and traffic calming updates.

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 dark ink, appearing to read 'Brad Rawson', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Brad Rawson
Director, Mobility Division