



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

THOMAS F. GALLIGANI, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Michael,

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 Laurel Street and includes summary of our findings as well as an explanation of next steps.

Traffic Calming Background

The traffic calming petition procedure is a community process intended to supplement the annual traffic calming prioritization done by the City. The process was established to empower residents to identify potential traffic safety issues on the street where they live. Every year, the City uses data that looks at speeding, vehicle volumes, and crash rates to identify locations for traffic calming installations. The City also prioritizes locations near schools, parks, community path crossings, and larger affordable housing development. Traffic calming is often implemented in pavement and sidewalk reconstruction projects through the City's [Pavement Resurfacing Program](#).

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 Laurel Street has been completed. The next section of this letter will summarize the results.

Traffic Calming Assessment Table

The City uses several metrics to assess the general characteristics of streets and the potential viability of traffic calming measures. A second group of metrics helps document priority considerations. Each metric is assigned a “Yes” or “No” designation. Metrics and Laurel Street’s scores are described in more detail below.

Warrant	Criteria	Laurel Street
Traffic Calming Warrants		
Prevailing Speeds	85 th percentile speed exceeds 20 mph	Yes (1)
Street Width	Paved width of street does not exceed 40 feet	Yes (1)
Minimum Traffic Volume	Average Daily Traffic of at least 800 vehicles per day	Yes (1)
Public Support	At least 33% of residents, or 9 residents, support petition.	Yes (1)
Priority Considerations		
Prevailing Speeds	85 th percentile speed exceeds 25 mph	Yes (1)
Adjacent Land Use	Street serves or is adjacent to a school, public space, senior center, affordable housing or building of worship.	No (0)
Neighborway	Street identified as Neighborway in Somerville’s Bicycle Network Plan	Yes (1)
Totals	Metrics Met	4/4
	Priorities Met	2/3

Speed Data

The City collects data on motor vehicle speeds and volumes using Automatic Traffic Recorder equipment placed on a street for a minimum of 48 hours. The “Prevailing Speed” metric is calculated based on 85th percentile speed of all vehicles recorded. This value represents the highest speed that the vast majority of vehicles achieve at a given location. For Laurel Street, this speed was measured and observed to be 25.5 mph. Detailed speed data for Laurel Street are visualized in Figure 1.

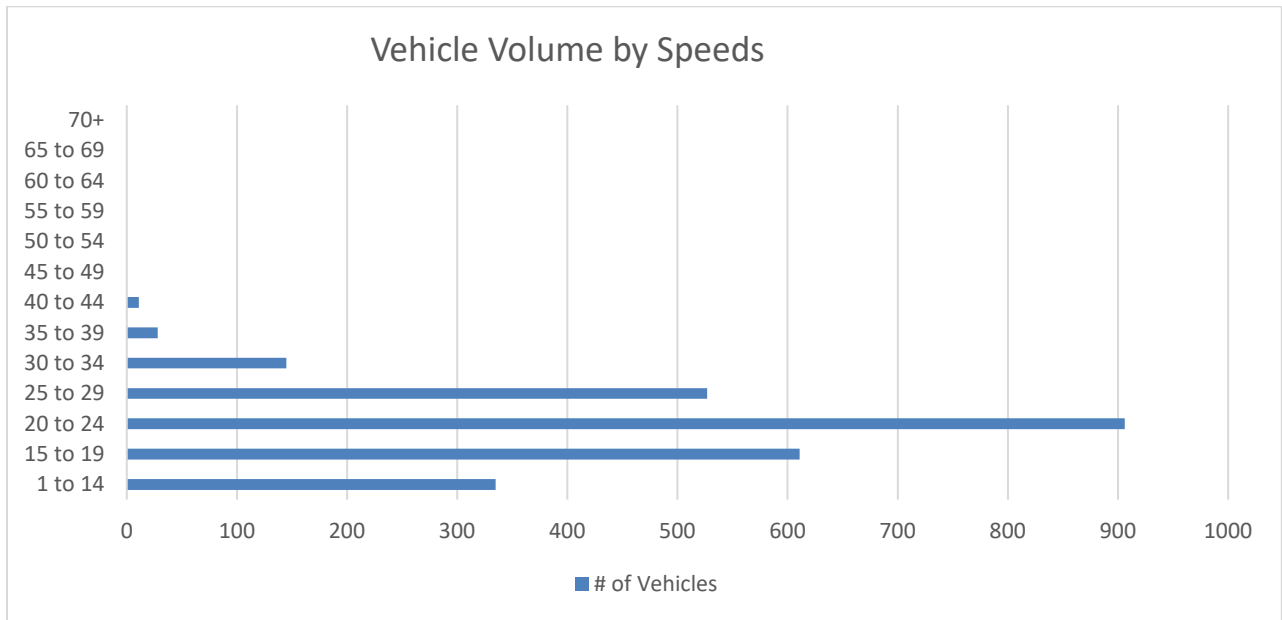


Figure 1: This chart shows vehicle speeds on Laurel Street over the course of two days, broken down by five mile per hour speed bins. Most cars are travelling between 20 and 24 miles per hour.

When compared against other residential streets across Somerville, Laurel Street’s speed data indicates an above average Prevailing Speed, meaning on average, cars travel faster on Laurel Street compared to other residential streets measured in Somerville. Comparative speed data are visualized in Figure 2.

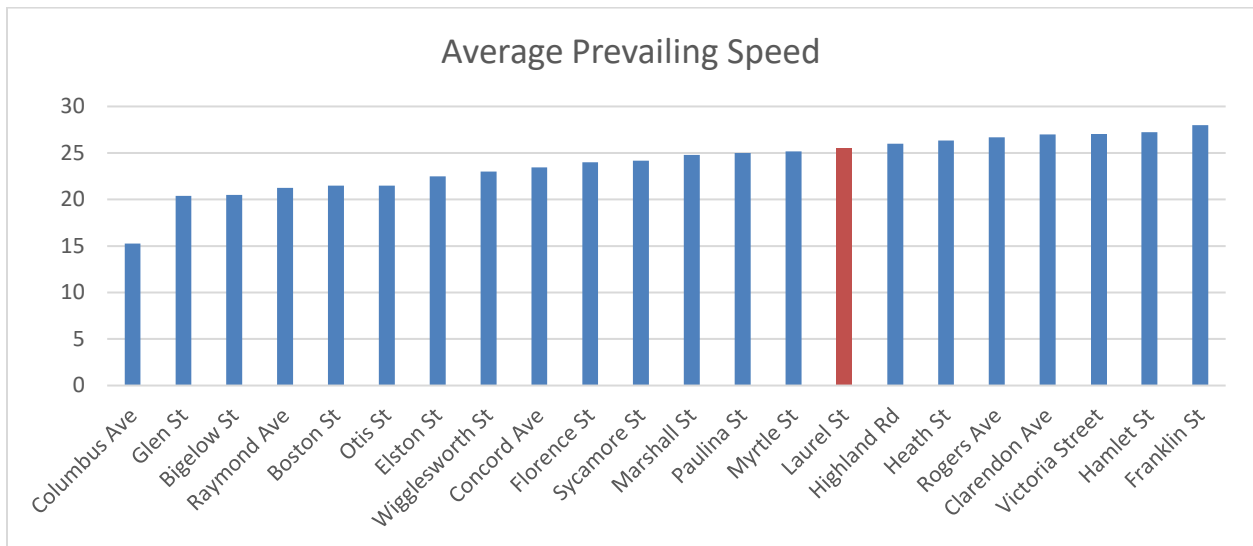


Figure 2: This chart shows the recorded average prevailing speeds for residential streets within our current Traffic Calming Cohort. The average prevailing speed across this cohort is 24.5 mph.

Volume Data

Somerville’s traffic calming program is also intended to limit the overall volume of motor vehicles traveling on a given street, since higher volume streets are typically associated with higher risk of crashes. Somerville’s traffic calming assessment includes a “Minimum Traffic Volume” metric of 800 vehicles per weekday.

For Laurel Street, our Automatic Traffic Recorder data indicate an average daily volume of 1,631 vehicles on a typical weekday, and 170 vehicles during the morning rush hour. This means that a typical resident sitting on a Laurel Street front porch for 15 minutes at rush hour could expect to see 42 vehicles pass by during that period. Detailed volume data for Laurel Street are visualized in Figure 3.

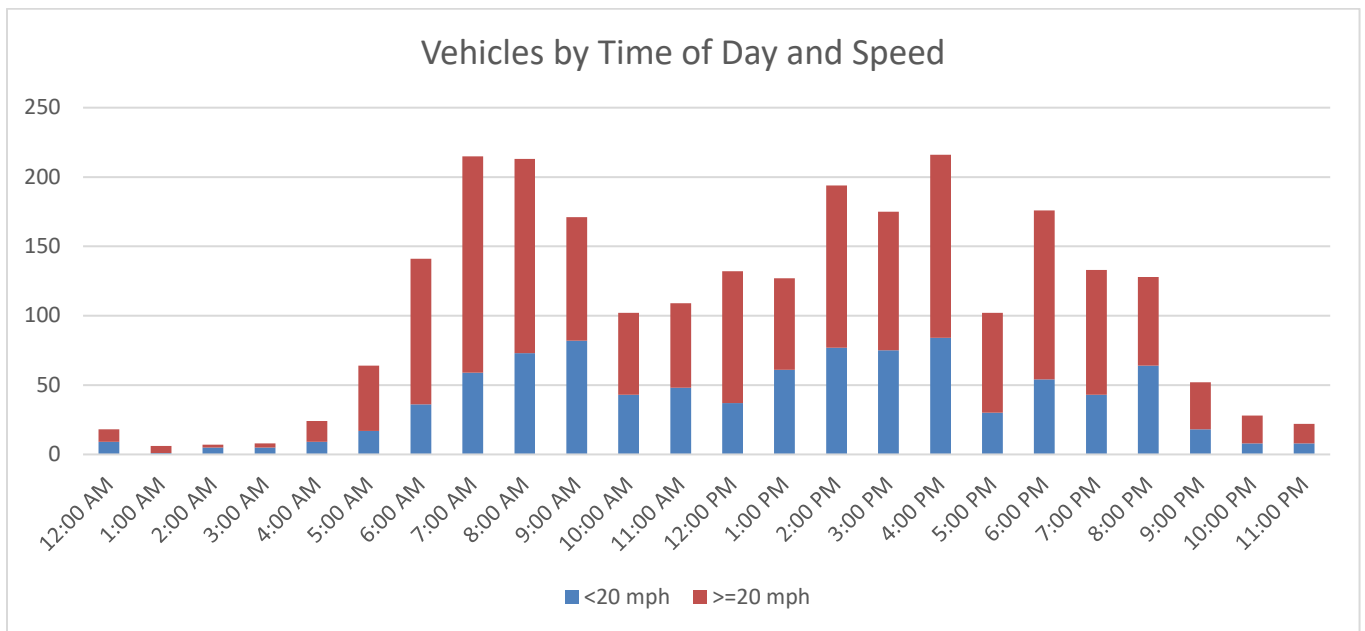


Figure 3. Traffic volumes on Laurel Street over the course of two days by the number of vehicles counted each hour. In this graph, orange indicates total vehicles traveling over 20 mph while blue indicates vehicles traveling under 20 mph. Please note the total number of vehicles with speeds recorded is lower than the total number of vehicles reported on a corridor as it is not always possible to record a speed on every vehicle that travels the street due to issues such as queuing/bunching of cars.

When compared against other residential streets across Somerville, Laurel Street’s volume data indicate an above average daily traffic volume for one-way local streets. Comparative volume data from residential streets are visualized in Figure 4.

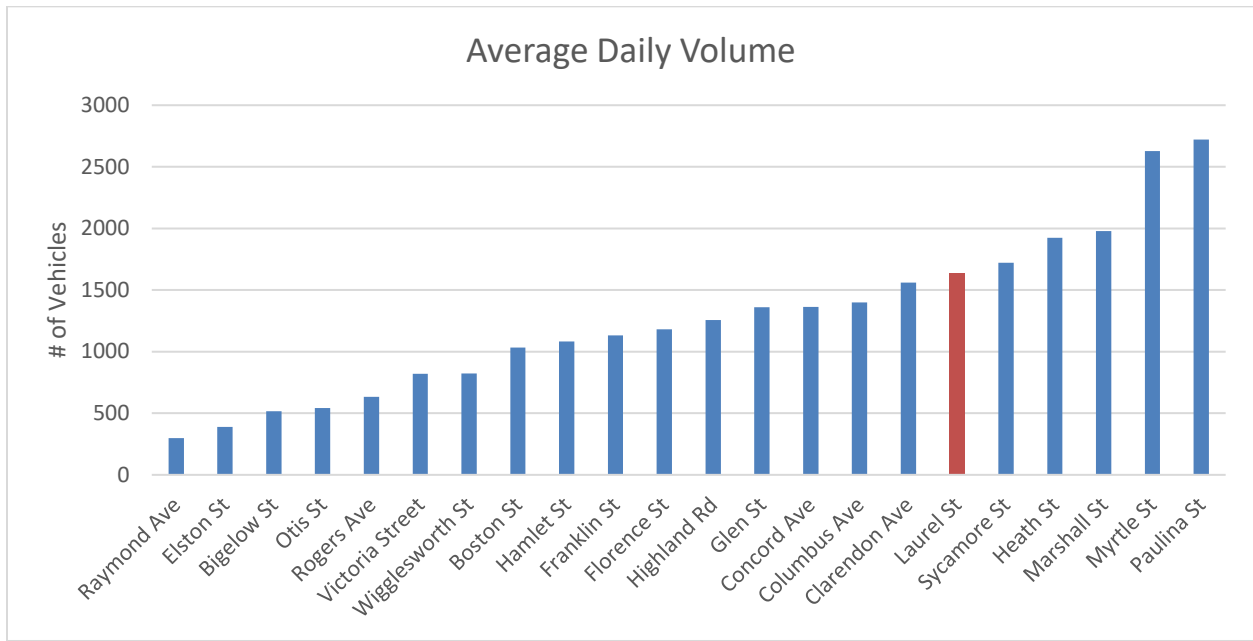


Figure 4: This chart shows the recorded average daily (for weekdays) vehicle volume for residential streets within our current Traffic Calming Cohort. The average volume of this cohort is 1382 vehicles/day.

Priority Considerations

At this time, the data suggest that Laurel Street meets the thresholds and is a good candidate for traffic calming treatment. Based on the priority considerations listed in the Traffic Calming Assessment table, the City is recommending that traffic calming for Laurel Street be considered for the 2025/2026 list. To see all the planned speed hump installations at this time, please check out the City’s Traffic Calming Map at www.somervillema.gov/trafficcalming.

Next steps

In the months ahead, City staff will continue to finalize the 2025/2026 traffic calming priority list. The City aims to prioritize streets that are found to have the most serious safety concerns (for example, the highest crash rate and speeds) in the closest proximity to areas or facilities with a high rate of foot traffic (such as areas near schools or senior centers).

In addition, the City will also determine if utility work or a full-depth street reconstruction is planned for a petition street in the next five years. In those cases, if a street has qualified for traffic calming device installation, it may be cost-effective to move forward while this planned construction takes place.

The residents of the City of Somerville have ambitious mobility goals. As your government, we intend to do as much as we can to ensure residents are as safe and comfortable as possible while traveling on our streets. 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 that extends to the right.

Brad Rawson
Director, Mobility Division