



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

THOMAS F GALLIGANI JR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Kevin,

Thank you for your efforts to submit a traffic calming petition to the City of Somerville. This letter is in response to your petition for Elston Street. It includes a summary of the City's findings and an explanation of next steps.

Traffic Calming Background

Somerville's traffic calming procedure is a community process intended to supplement the City's annual traffic calming prioritization efforts. The process was established to empower residents to identify traffic safety issues in our neighborhoods. Each year, the City evaluates data on vehicle volumes, vehicle speeds and land uses to identify locations for future traffic calming installations. We prioritize locations near schools, parks, affordable housing developments, and Community Path crossings. Petitions like yours create another important input to our process.

Most traffic calming treatments in Somerville are constructed through the City's annual "[Pavement and Sidewalk Management Program](#)". Each year, the City administers construction contracts to reconstruct sidewalks and repave streets. These contracts typically include speed humps and other traffic calming treatments.

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 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 Elston 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 are described in more detail below.

Metrics	Criteria	Criteria Met?
Traffic Calming Metrics		
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	No (0)
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	No (0)
Upcoming Street Reconstruction	Street is adjacent to an upcoming street reconstruction project	No (0)
Totals	Traffic Calming Metrics Met	3/4
	Priority Considerations Met	1/4

Speed Data

The City collects data on motor vehicle speeds and volumes using Automatic Traffic Recorded (ATR) 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 Elston Street, our ATR data indicate a prevailing speed of 25.5mph. Detailed speed data for Elston Street are visualized in Figure 1.

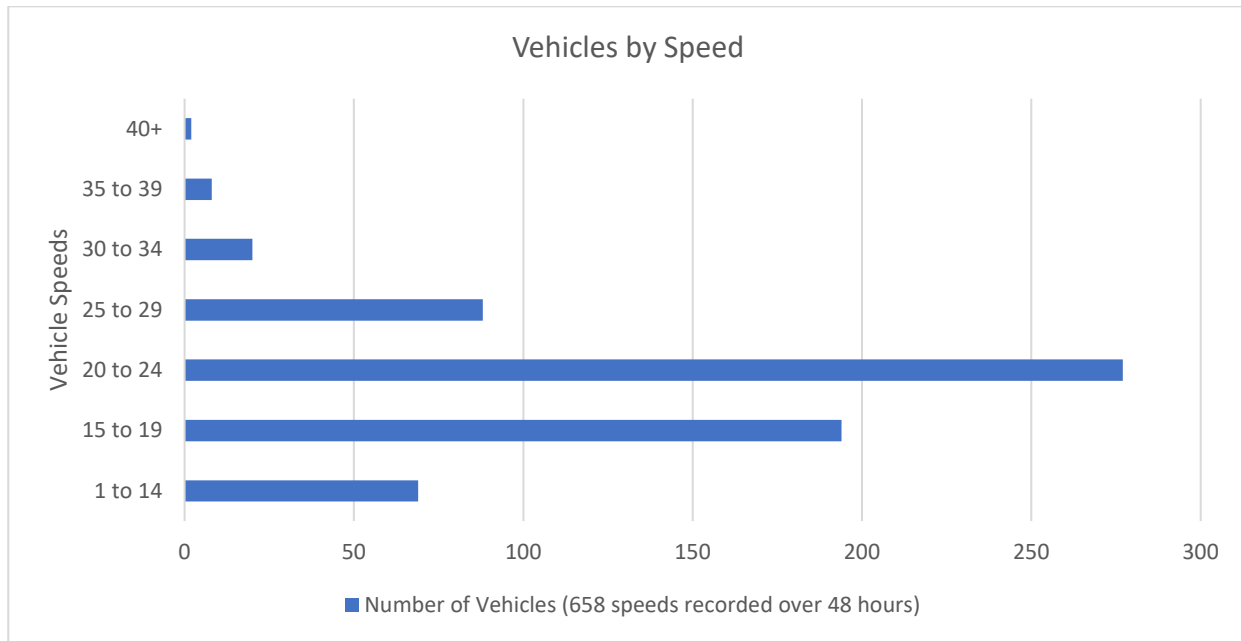


Figure 1: This chart shows vehicle speeds on Elston Street over the course of two days¹, broken down by five mile per hour speed bins. Most cars are travelling between 20 and 24 miles per hour.

When compared against other residential streets across Somerville, Elston Street’s speed data indicate an average prevailing speed. Comparative speed data are visualized in Figure 2.

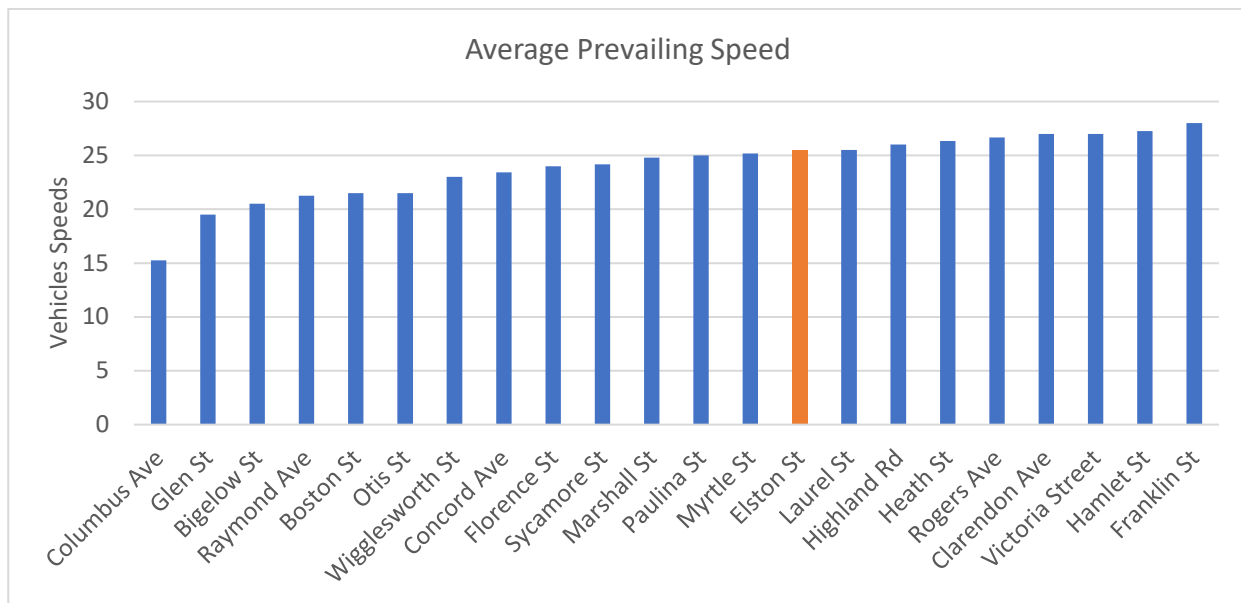


Figure 2: This chart shows the recorded average prevailing speeds for residential streets within our current Traffic Calming Cohort. The average prevailing speed is 24.5 mph.

¹ 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.

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 Elston Street, our ATR data indicate an average daily volume of 388 motor vehicles on a typical weekday. During the busiest hour of the two-day period, we recorded 80 vehicles. Detailed volume data for Elston Street are visualized in Figure 3.

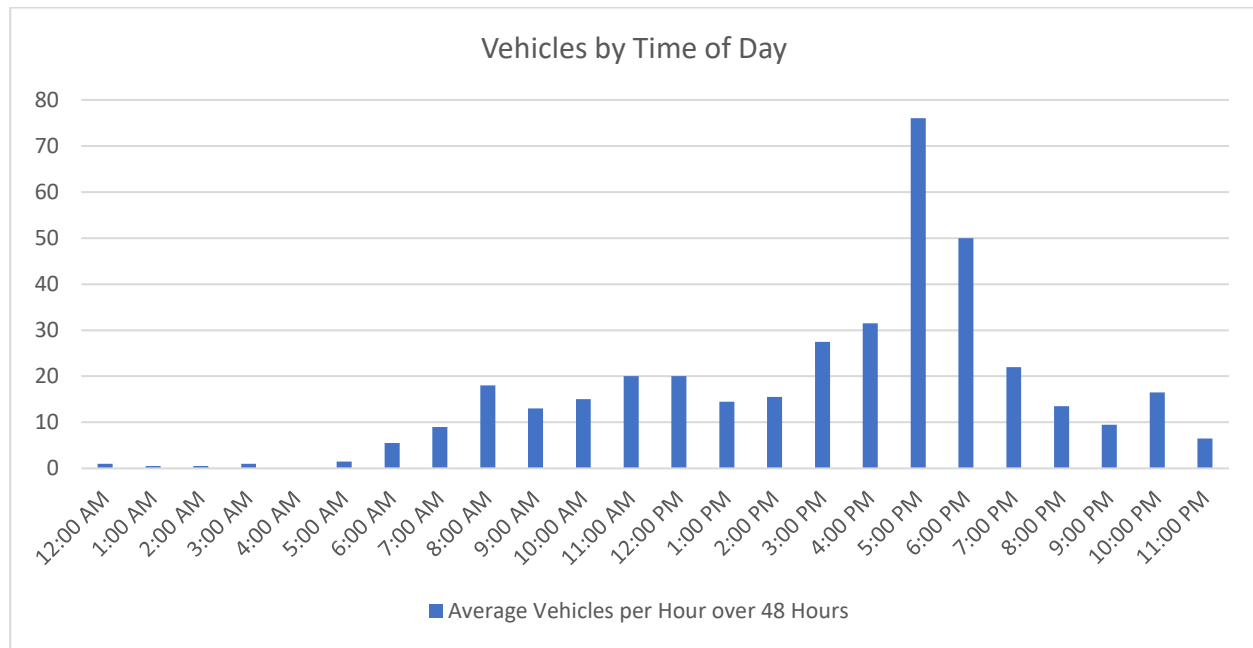


Figure 3: This chart shows average vehicle volumes per hour on Elston Street for a 48-hour period.

When compared against other residential streets across Somerville, Elston Street’s volume data indicate a very low average daily traffic volume. Comparative volume data from residential streets are visualized in Figure 4.

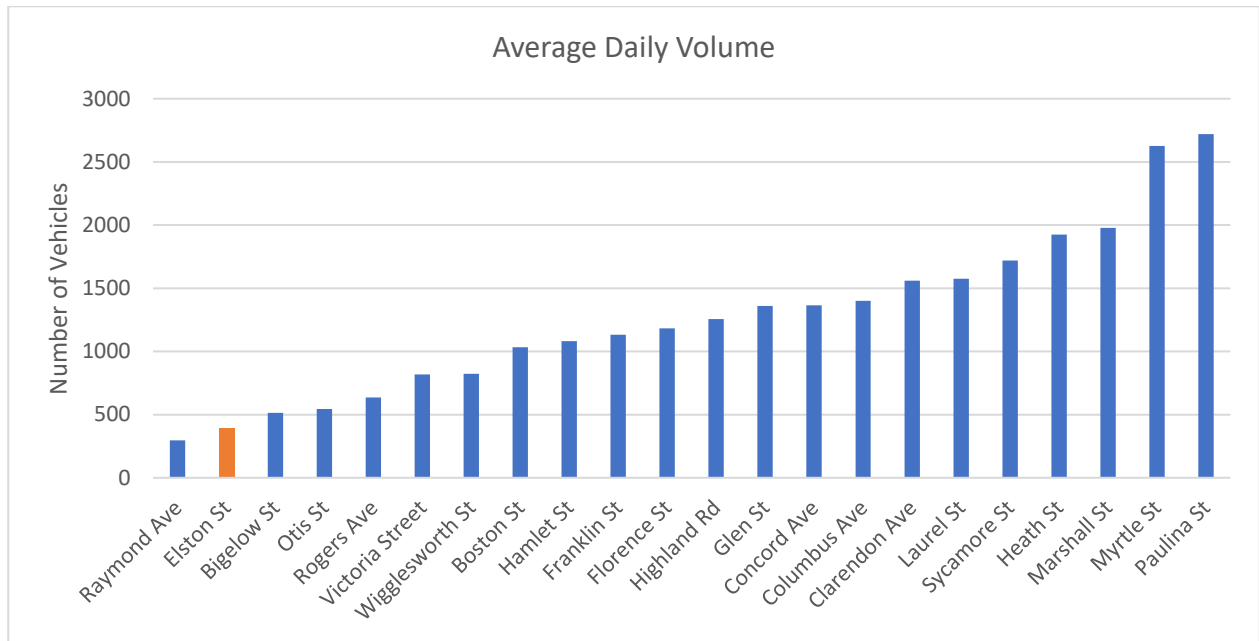


Figure 4: This chart shows the recorded average daily vehicle volume for weekdays for residential streets within our current Traffic Calming Cohort. The average volume of this cohort is 1,382 vehicles/day.

Priority Considerations

At this time, the data suggest that Elston Street does not meet the thresholds of Somerville’s traffic calming program. The City cannot recommend prioritizing physical traffic calming on Elston Street at this time. Elston Street will remain part of our evaluation database, which is reviewed and updated annually. In the meantime, the Somerville Police Department Traffic Bureau has been notified of your concerns and may increase enforcement activities to deter illegal speeding on Elston Street.

Next Steps

Please know that Somerville takes every reported traffic safety concern seriously. The City has scaled up our traffic calming program in recent years, and yet we still must use a prioritization system to address our highest-risk locations. We will continue to review our prioritization data going forward and look for opportunities to build more traffic calming treatments in your neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Brad Rawson
Director, Mobility Division