



Neighborhood Traffic Management Policy

Updated on 7/3/07

I. Introduction

In recent years, Public Works staff has been requested to provide remedies for community concerns involving traffic cutting through residential neighborhoods, speeding on residential streets and a perceived lack of pedestrian "friendliness" due to automobile traffic.

Residential streets should accommodate local traffic in a safe and efficient manner with due regard to surrounding land uses. Excessive traffic speed and volume on residential streets leads to local increases in noise and air pollution, perceived and real hazards to children and other pedestrians, and difficulties in exiting driveways. These issues can be mitigated by neighborhood traffic management techniques. Neighborhood traffic management includes coordinated enforcement and land use planning efforts as well as what is often referred to as "traffic calming."

Traffic calming involves strategic physical changes to residential streets to reduce vehicle speeds and excessive traffic travelling through residential neighborhoods. Limited enforcement resources, newer and more maneuverable cars, changing neighborhood densities and lack of vehicular capacity on arterial roads are some of the factors contributing to excessive vehicular intrusion and speeds in residential areas. Specifically, traffic calming devices such as speed humps are intended to reduce cut-through neighborhood traffic and/or reduce vehicle speeds, as well as to encourage the use of arterials versus local streets. In many cases, traffic calming features are also used to improve the aesthetics of a neighborhood.

County staff has reviewed the policies and practices of 20 jurisdictions throughout California and the United States, and has reviewed literature on this subject from 5 countries. Reductions in 85th percentile speeds from agencies throughout the United States range from 3 miles per hour to 13.5 miles per hour, while traffic volumes have been reduced by up to 40 % upon construction of traffic calming devices. This policy is based on the most effective of those policies and is supported by recommendations regarding residential traffic of the Institute of Transportation Engineers, the American Planning Association, and the American Society of Civil Engineers. The Policy has been reviewed and recommended by the Board's Traffic Engineering Committee, and incorporates the information gained by a trial project on Padova Drive within the County. This Policy is intended to provide general criteria for when traffic calming measures are appropriate. Specific applications will still require detailed design based on sound engineering judgement.

II. Traffic Calming Measures

Typical traffic calming devices include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Speed humps
- 2) Traffic Circles at previously uncontrolled intersections
- 3) Curb extensions (or "bulbs outs")
- 4) Diagonal diverters

Stop signs and traffic signals are not considered traffic calming devices.

III. Approval Criteria

The determination of whether or not traffic calming devices should be installed on residential streets within a "Residence District" (per California Vehicle Code Section 515) shall be based on a traffic engineering study conducted by the Public Works Department and shall be based on the following criteria:

- 1) When the primary concern is vehicle speeds, the 85th percentile speed should be 10 mph or more above the prima facie speed limit. The 85th percentile speed (also known as the "critical speed") is generally accepted as the reasonable, appropriate speed for a given roadway. The Vehicle Code prescribes a prima facie speed limit of 25 miles per hour for roads in a Residence District. Traffic calming measures will be considered only when enforcement of existing speed limits has been unsuccessful in achieving the desired result. An 85th percentile speed well in excess of 25 miles per hour indicates that altering the geometry of the road is appropriate to reduce reasonable drivers' speed to the prima facie speed limit. **Note: in cases where traffic calming is desired by residents, but the 85th percentile speed is less than 10 mph above the 25 mph prima facie speed limit, and the street otherwise meets the requirements of this policy, traffic calming may be allowed but must be fully funded by outside sources.**
- 2) The roadway should carry at least 500, but shall not carry more than 5,000 vehicles total in both directions, in a 24 hour mid-week period. Volumes outside this range indicate low usage or that the street is an important link in the circulation system respectively. **Note: in cases where traffic calming is desired by residents, but the average daily traffic volume is less than 500 average daily trips, and the street otherwise meets the requirements of this policy, traffic calming may be allowed but must be fully funded by outside sources.**
- 3) The potential effect of the proposed traffic calming measures shall be studied to establish that other residential areas are not negatively impacted, such as by diversion of vehicles from one street to another.
- 4) Traffic calming devices shall not be installed in the absence of a petition signed by 75% of the affected residents and property owners in favor of the installation. In developments governed by a recognized homeowners' association, a letter stating the association's position shall be included in the petition.

For the purpose of this criterion, "affected residents" shall be determined by County staff and shall mean all residents who may be impacted by changes in traffic patterns. This may include more than just the streets on which physical changes are proposed.

- 5) Speed humps, traffic circles, yield points and similar fixed object-style traffic calming devices shall not be installed on a roadway grade steeper than 5% because of the increased potential for injury accidents with errant vehicles.
- 6) Roadways considered for traffic calming applications should be 40 feet or less in width and have no more than one travel lane in each direction. Wider roads and multi-lane roads are generally needed for regional circulation and should not be reduced in capacity by traffic calming.
- 7) Major emergency response routes, as defined by emergency service providers, shall not be considered for traffic calming without written concurrence of the emergency service providers. Delays, lack of passing lanes, narrowed roads, jolting of fire apparatus, and ambulance passenger discomfort have been found to be unacceptable side-effects of most traffic calming measures.
- 8) Defined public transit routes shall not be considered for traffic calming without written concurrence of the transit provider. Passenger discomfort and restricted access for transit vehicles caused by common traffic calming measures have been found to be unacceptable side effects of most traffic calming measures.
- 9) Both sides of the subject street should have curb & gutter. Alternatively, an appropriate means of preventing circumvention of the proposed traffic calming device shall be provided. Further, proper storm water runoff shall be maintained.

Traffic calming on streets not within a "Residence District" is not covered by this policy and is generally not acceptable.

IV. Design Guidelines

Traffic calming devices shall be approved by the Public Works Director or the County Traffic Engineer. The following issues shall be considered during the design process:

- 1) Right-of-way necessary for the installation shall exist or shall be acquired prior to the installation.
- 2) Sight distance appropriate for the design speed and traffic conditions shall be maintained.
- 3) Appropriate signing and pavement markings shall be provided.
- 4) Reflectors and/or street lights shall be provided in accordance with accepted engineering criteria to aid in identifying traffic calming devices at night.

- 5) The traffic "environment" should be consistent along the road, with no sudden changes in horizontal clearances or safe speeds.
- 6) Proper drainage of the roadway and adjacent properties shall be maintained.
- 7) Arrangements for future maintenance of the installation shall be made.

V. Safety and Performance Monitoring

A separate neighborhood traffic engineering study shall be conducted for each traffic calming application approximately six months after construction to determine its effectiveness (i.e. speed and volume reduction, as well as impact on traffic safety). Any increase in accident severity or rates directly attributable to the traffic calming device shall be grounds for removal of the device notwithstanding the removal criteria of this Policy. Upon removal of a traffic calming device, the residents will not receive a refund of their cost.

VI. Funding

Funding of traffic calming shall be from one of the following:

- 1) An adopted Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) with an associated impact fee program; or,
- 2) An outside organization (e.g. homeowners association, developer, citizen group, etc.); or,
- 3) A combination of outside funding and TIP funds if demand for traffic calming exceeds available funds; or,
- 4) A combination of outside funding and County Road Funds if use of such funds has been approved by the Board of Supervisors as part of the Road Maintenance Annual Plan (RDMAP).

VII. Requests for Removal

Requests for removal of traffic calming devices will be considered by the Public Works Department based on the following criteria:

- 1) Written petition of 75% of the affected residents.
- 2) Identified funding sources to properly remove the device.
- 3) At such time as the Public Works Department determines the devices to be unsafe or unsuitable for the location.