



**CITY OF SALINAS
TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

DATE: MAY 9, 2019
DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
FROM: JAMES SERRANO, TRANSPORTATION MANAGER
TITLE: TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION:

The Traffic and Transportation Commission is requested to receive report on the City's Traffic Calming Program and provide recommendations and input to staff. Staff will consider input from the Commission and others and will return in June with recommendations for the City Council.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City adopted the Traffic Calming Policy in 2009 with recommendations from the Traffic and Transportation Commission.

Council requested that staff evaluate changes to the policy to facilitate delivery of traffic calming projects to communities that need them. Specifically, Council's request suggested a review of the policy to allow:

1. Council to request staff to review problems at specific locations without a petition;
2. Remove requirements for community support for Council initiated requests if staff determines there are safety concerns;
3. Reduce the work required with residents (community meetings) to enable quick implementation of traffic calming improvements.

BACKGROUND

The Salinas Neighborhood Traffic Management Program, the City's traffic calming policy, was adopted in 2009. Staff's work to develop the policy began in 2003 in response to increasing requests in residential neighborhoods for speed enforcement that could not be practically provided by the Police Department. Other than speed limit signs installed in accordance with the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD), the City did not have any speed control devices. Yet the demand for speed control in residential areas was unyielding. There was much pressure on City staff to install un-warranted STOP signs because of the public perception

and misconception that these STOP signs are effective tools for slowing traffic. Unwarranted installation of STOP signs typically increases collision rates and leads to traffic safety issues.

Traffic calming tools were not traffic control devices at the time the city established its policy and therefore not governed by existing statutes or standards (e.g. California Vehicle Code, MUTCD, Highway Design Manual, etc.). This continues to be true today. These guiding documents and standards still assume that a reasonable person will comply with speed limits and that enforcement will help bring the rest to compliance. Data from traffic studies conducted in residential streets however confirm that in many residential streets, the 25 mph prima facie speed limit is exceeded with 85 percentile speeds over 30 mph.

Traffic calming programs are generally locally established programs. Without approved standards, local jurisdictions desiring a traffic calming program therefore have to defend installations of traffic calming devices on their local streets if their installations lead to safety issues or public objections. The City engaged the services of Fehr and Peers, a firm recognized pioneering work to establish traffic calming programs, and developing data for the use of traffic calming tools in the United States. The City's policy therefore takes into account traffic studies, effectiveness ratings, safety surveys of various traffic calming tools and provides justification for the use of traffic calming on residential streets.

The City's policy provides a necessary fair and public process for changing the use of public streets in order to address residents' concerns with vehicle speeds and volumes on residential streets. While residents of certain street may feel that they need traffic calming, a person who does not live in the neighborhood but uses the street may feel it is her public right to use the street unimpeded provided she observes traffic laws. The implementation of traffic calming tools that may impede travel on public streets therefore needs a public process that support the reasoning for changing the use of the street.

Another reason for the need for the public support associated with the implementation of traffic calming is to ensure the city investment in a neighborhood is protected. Traffic calming is a significant investment of transportation funds, yet the implementation of traffic calming tends to bring objections from the public. The policy, taking from experiences in other jurisdictions, includes a plan support process so that implemented traffic calming projects have documented support from the neighborhood. Similarly, if there is a desire to remove traffic calming, consideration of the request follows the same process for support to ensure that the residents are consulted when there is a proposed loss of implemented traffic calming on streets where they live.

Requested Evaluation of the Policy

1. Council to request staff to review problems at specific locations without a petition.

Plan Initiation: Council Recommendation of Locations for Traffic Calming

City staff receives the bulk of traffic calming requests through petitions. Staff requires a petition from residents who inquire about traffic calming submit a standard petition (attached) in both English and Spanish. The petition merely requires the signatures of residents representing 10

households along the street requested for traffic calming. This is a very low threshold for staff to commit resources for the initial work on traffic calming. This step is important in order to identify a group of residents who agree on the traffic issues in a neighborhood that can support staff in the early steps of the process. Staff will inform this small group of petitioners of the findings of traffic studies and if their request meets criteria. Staff will also share schedule and other information leading to Council's prioritization of the traffic calming projects. Staff also works with this group, if necessary, to plan neighborhood meetings.

However, this requirement does not prevent City Councilmembers from recommending locations to review for traffic calming. Staff has received locations from Councilmembers for consideration of traffic calming and this is consistent with the policy. Staff has and will continue to receive requests from councilmembers for traffic calming. Staff will study these locations and include them for Council's consideration in staff's recommendation for prioritization.

Council's request is consistent with current policy. Staff will continue to receive request from Councilmembers for evaluation of traffic calming need.

2. Remove requirements for community support for Council initiated requests if staff determines there are safety concerns.

Neighborhood Support

Residential traffic calming plans require engagement from the residents who live on the street and who are ultimately affected the most by traffic calming devices. Devices like speed cushions impact public convenience, create noise, delay emergency response, increase vehicle maintenance and can affect property values. It is therefore paramount that residents request these devices first, work with staff to develop a plan, and vote to approve a traffic calming plan before the City installs these devices.

The current process involves development of the neighborhood plan with resident input. With consensus from those who participate at the meeting, the households along a street are then asked to vote in support of the neighborhood traffic calming plan. Ballots are sent to households along the street proposed for traffic calming. The City's policy requires a 50% return rate of ballots to establish that affected residents are aware of the neighborhood traffic calming plan; and a 67% vote in favor of the neighborhood plan to confirm the residents want the plan to be implemented. Effectively, the City's policy only requires approximately 30% of households to support a neighborhood plan. The process however still requires residents to work with their neighbors to establish support of the neighborhood traffic calming plan.

With every neighborhood traffic calming plan implemented, the city receives complaints from members of the public who are inconvenienced by traffic calming devices. Most of the complaints come from drivers who do not reside along the traffic-calmed streets. However, residents who supported their neighborhood plan remain in support of the neighborhood traffic calming plan after its implementation. City staff can also point to the neighborhood support for the implemented plan when faced with complaints from households who disagree with the traffic calming plan.

If the City is faced with a request for removal of traffic calming, residents who are affected would be required to meet the same process of demonstrating support for the removal. This ensures that there is core support for the City's investment in addressing the neighborhood issues.

Failure to first engage the public and gather support will inevitably result in the perception that City created impacts that were not desired by residents. Conversely, the traffic calming policy encourages implementing improvements desired by residents and ensuring that the City's investments of finite resources is effective.

An expressed concern from Council is that the process creates a bias against neighborhoods whose residents work or are busy with family and cannot attend community meetings who are not able to seek petitions or organize to secure a vote. Attached is a map of the implemented traffic calming locations in the City. This indicates that the spread of projects throughout. Furthermore, to address this concern, staff is developing bilingual program materials that could be easily shared at meetings and would be available through the City website. Staff is also reaching out to partners who are constantly working with the public such as the Monterey County Health Department and other City Departments to help disseminate information on the City's traffic calming program at community meetings.

Prioritization of Projects

Traffic Calming projects are prioritized annually. On November 7 2017, Council approved the adoption of a priority rating system based on data driven methodologies to deliver project based on identified needs and benefits rather than a first come first serve basis. The prioritization policy was developed by surveying other cities' prioritization policies and selecting the most common and quantifiable metrics which may indicate a high collision potential. All traffic calming requests are evaluated based on data for traffic volumes, vehicle speeds, collision history, land uses that generate pedestrian activity (schools, libraries) and other engineering considerations (presence of sidewalks, crosswalks, etc.). Staff's prioritization recommendations are brought to Council for approval, Council can choose to reprioritize staff's recommendation at their discretion.

It should also be noted, the traffic calming prioritization policy was developed because neighborhood requests for traffic calming projects were exceeding annual resources available. Council may increase the annual budget for Traffic Calming that would allow for the consideration of additional traffic calming projects during the year.

In effect, with the prioritization matrix, the City no longer says "no" to traffic calming requests. The matrix waives the threshold eligibility requirements based on volume and speeds. Staff scores these projects based on the prioritization and recommends 3-4 projects a year to Council. Given the basis for the recommended projects, Council may still choose to re-prioritize projects on the list regardless of scores but will need to consider costs allocated to the program.

City staff also resurveyed the same cities whose traffic calming programs were the basis of the prioritization process. All show support requirements either at the point of submittal of a petition; or at implementation phase. The following table summarizes staff's survey.

City	Petition (Support Requirement?)	Plan Development (Neighborhood Meetings)	Plan Support (Support Requirement)
City of Albuquerque	67% of households	yes	Neighborhood representatives to present plan to community
City of San Mateo	No	Yes	Ballot
City of Anaheim	30% of households	Yes	30% Returned Ballots;67% in favor
Berkley	51% of households	Yes	None. Budget considered. Prioritized.
City of Watsonville	15 residents	Yes	70% of resident group; 100% approval from impacted neighbors
College Station	None.	Yes	67% of ballots received in favor
Hagerstown, MD	25% of households	Yes	75% of affected residents
La Hamba	10 surveys returned; 51% of Traffic Calming Request Forms	Yes	50% return; 67% in support
Oakville	51% of Traffic Calming Request Forms	Yes	51% vote; an unreturned ballot is counted as a Yes
City of Pleasanton	None.	Yes	67% of households; plus approval by household fronting device
Salinas	10 signatures/ 1 per household.	Yes	50% return; 67% in support

Results of the survey are consistent with the City process and highlight the importance of getting a measure of support for implementation. Both the work with community and the final support vote is an important component of implementing traffic calming.

Public works staff does not recommend any changes to the approved Program that would bypass the community engagement process required to develop a plan, and that would bypass securing community support vote prior to getting Council approval for a Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan. However, staff will increase outreach to all districts and to partners to help residents be aware of the City's Traffic Calming Program.

3. Reduce the work required with residents (community meetings) to enable quick implementation of traffic calming improvements.

Most neighborhood requests require only two meetings, since residents are anxious to have a solution for their issues. A few neighborhoods have taken a few more meetings to arrive at consensus.

Staff believes that given the requirement for support that the time on community meetings is necessary. It is difficult to achieve consensus in one meeting. The residents need time to discuss the traffic calming plan with their neighbors and to bring more people to a second meeting where staff can present the neighborhood plan with input so far received in the community. Staff is very thorough with the presentation and explains the importance of the plan support process. The community meetings encourage neighborhood discussion and coordination.

Staff therefore recommends meeting with the community to determine Plan support. Staff will strive to encourage consensus in two to three community meetings.

The City's policy considered best management practices for managing a traffic calming program. The willingness shown by residents in city traffic calming programs to work with their neighbors and get a plan approved helps bring neighbors together and result in buy-in from the community. Staff will need this support for expected objections that arise after implementation.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Salinas Neighborhood Traffic Management Program

Attachment 2: Prioritization Scoring Sheet