



**CITY OF SALINAS
FINANCE COMMITTEE
STAFF REPORT**

DATE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2019
DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT
FROM: DAVID JACOBS, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR
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TITLE: TRAFFIC CALMING

RECOMMENDATION:

The Council Finance subcommittee is requested to receive a report on the City's traffic calming program and begin considering the alternative of investing in effective traffic enforcement.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Council Finance Committee is asked to consider the effectiveness of the City's traffic calming program and begin to consider investment in effective traffic enforcement.

BACKGROUND

In October 2009, the City Council adopted the City's Traffic Calming Policy in order to address residential neighborhood traffic concerns. The program was established initially to address concerns from neighborhoods that could not be supported by traffic enforcement since it was impractical at the time to deploy traffic enforcement officers in residential areas. There had been a growing request for speed reduction throughout the City for which the City had no tools to address the residents' concerns.

Traffic calming tools are not part of the State and Federal Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices. The City started accumulating traffic calming studies in 2002 and found there was very few applications in California. To assist in the development of the City's Policy, the City hired Fehr and Peers, leaders in the traffic calming field, to help develop the City's traffic calming policy based on best practices.

The resulting policy contained a toolbox of traffic calming measures that would be used to address neighborhood problems associated with speeds and vehicle volume on residential streets. The adoption of the policy also included the adoption of traffic calming tools that can be provided on City streets. The policy also provided the process for consideration of projects under the Traffic Calming Program which is important for securing support from residents of a neighborhood who would be affected by traffic calming implementation.

City staff met with all affected parties including emergency response agencies and other city departments including the city's Police and Fire Departments. Other service providers including solid waste providers, street sweeping, and ambulance services were also invited in the discussion. The traffic calming program implementation therefore includes considerations and understanding of the program by potentially affected parties. The City's policy only applies to city streets that have residential uses.

On September 14, 2017, with an influx of traffic calming requests received, the City approved criteria for prioritizing traffic calming requests based on traffic conditions, collision history, nearby land uses, geometrics and facilities. The prioritization provided a transparent way to prioritize requests given the City's limited resources. Every year around Spring, staff presents traffic calming recommended priorities based on the criteria to the City Council. Council proceeds with implementation based on Council approved priorities.

Initial funding of the program began in Fiscal Year 2016-17 and had been funded annually ever since. The funding allocation through the fiscal years are as follows:

2016-17	\$200,000
2017-18	\$500,000
2018-19	\$500,000
2019-20	<u>\$500,000</u>
Total	\$1,700,000

Traffic Calming has been implemented in 9 neighborhoods:

Calaveras Street (District 6)
Little River Drive Neighborhood (District 6)
Rosarita Drive and Granada Avenue (District 4)
Monte Bella Subdivision (District 2)
Ambrose Drive (District 3)
Laurel Heights (District 4)
Riker Street (District 3)
Tyler Street and Iris Drive (District 5)
West Curtis Street (District 5)

The following neighborhoods have approved plans and are awaiting implementation:

Chaparral Drive/Maryal Drive (District 4)
South Cherokee Drive/Adams Street (District 5)
Nacional Street (seeking approval 9/10/2019) (District 3)

The following neighborhoods are approved priorities and are still in process of plan development:

North Cherokee Drive (District 5)
Villa Street (District 3)

Kittery and Snug Harbor (District 6)
First Avenue (District 2)

There are still 28 neighborhoods that have submitted petitions and are waiting for their requests to be prioritized.

Councilmembers have expressed concern with the City's Traffic Calming Program which include:

1. Cost of Improvements. Traffic calming implements physical devices on City streets and has substantial costs. As mentioned, the annual traffic calming budget is \$500,000. This has currently accommodated the implementation of approximately 3 traffic calming projects each year. While the program is neighborhood-driven, staff is very careful to inform neighbors that costs are a consideration and therefore it makes sense to recommend effective tools to obtain Council approval of the neighborhood plan. Most of the recommendations in neighborhood plans result in speed cushions because these devices provide the highest effectiveness for the least costs. However, given the trends seen in construction projects staff anticipates installation and materials costs to rise further.
2. Potential Throwaway costs. There is expressed concerns that residents will eventually want to remove traffic calming devices on their streets. Although the City program is only in its fourth year of implementation, this sentiment has not been heard from residents. The robust support process that is part of the City's program helps cement support from residents. Almost all complaints staff has received from traffic calming implementation are from drivers that do not live in the neighborhood but drive through neighborhood streets. Complaints received from residents in neighborhoods where traffic calming has been implemented are typically reporting not enough devices or asking for more devices. A survey of cities indicates similar experiences when the traffic calming program has a good support process. This concern can therefore be minimized with continuing to require a solid support process.
3. Time of Implementation. The plan development process and support process take 4 to 6 months. Installation of devices have also taken the same amount of time (4-6 months). Staff is experiencing that finding contractors to work on relatively small traffic calming jobs has not been easy. Staff has therefore solicited proposals for on call contractors that will be able to assist in implementation. Staff is also bundling traffic calming projects together to provide a more competitive project for contractors to bid on. The timeframe from Council prioritization to complete implementation still remain between 8-12 months. If the traffic calming program continues, staff will continue to explore delivery options to reduce this timeframe.
4. Effectiveness. An expressed concern is that traffic calming does not affect the desired behavior changes and that installation of traffic calming merely pushes traffic unto another street that will now have to petition the City for traffic calming. There is therefore the concern of an unending demand for traffic calming until all residential streets are treated. Again, because the City program is only 4 years old, there has not been enough information that confirms this result. After studies indicate that the desired reduction of speeds is being

achieved. The program is also effective at changing behavior that reduces undesired traffic volume on treated residential streets. However, it is also anticipated that this change would result in drivers taking alternate routes through other neighborhoods. Eventually there will be a point when the time savings of cut through traffic is lost and drivers shift to arterial streets which are designed for higher speeds and volumes. Staff is just beginning to collect data on locations where potential diversion of traffic may result.

5. Inequitable Distribution of Traffic Calming Services. Councilmembers expressed concerns that not all districts are benefitting from the City's traffic calming program. It is expressed that the program's support process may require too much time commitment from residents. Not all residents are able to commit the time to drum up support for their neighborhood traffic calming plan and therefore not all residents are able to participate in the traffic calming program. Whenever a petition received is prioritized by Council, staff supports the plan development and support process as much as possible, including providing food at community meetings and translation services. Staff also helps residents with flyers and extra printed information for residents to use in their work to communicate with neighbors. Staff continues to provide support and information to residents during the plan development and support processes. Staff is attempting to partner with community organizations that provide advocacy assistance to disadvantage neighborhoods to assist with residents' efforts.

Given these concerns, the Finance Committee may wish to begin consideration of the proposal to defund the Traffic Calming Program and instead recommend increasing traffic enforcement in residential areas. A police officer dedicated to traffic enforcement in residential neighborhoods can encourage the desired behavior as well as provide a security presence in the neighborhoods.

There are a few considerations:

1. Council had already prioritized traffic calming projects for 2019-20. The prioritization process was inclusive of residents. Staff would like the Council to consider ensuring support and funding for the projects currently in line for improvements.
2. Traffic Calming has been shown to be a community requested amenity in recently approved community plans or in community plans that are currently in development. It is important to consider the delivery mechanism to satisfy the community desired improvements. Traffic enforcement may provide the deterrent that negates the need for traffic calming.

Traffic Calming are recommendations in the following plans:

- a. East Alisal Corridor Transportation Plan
 - b. Alisal Vibrancy Plan
 - c. Chinatown Revitalization Plan
 - d. Blue Zones
3. The existing Traffic Calming budget uses transportation funds (Measure X) that are not eligible for traffic enforcement. Should the Traffic Program be de-funded, these

transportation funds can be re-allocated to eligible projects such as street maintenance or other transportation improvements. Funding for traffic enforcement has to be identified.

4. Since the Traffic Calming program provided an alternative city response for the need for traffic enforcement, it is important to ensure that there is a commitment in funding the traffic enforcement program long term. In addition, shifted city investment to traffic enforcement needs to supplement the existing City traffic enforcement program and not replace the existing resources dedicated to the Police Department's traffic enforcement program. Otherwise, there would be an overall reduction in city services that addresses quality of life issues in residential areas.

This report focuses on the traffic calming program. Next steps should include assessment of the traffic enforcement program with the proposed supplemental support from shifting priority away from the City's traffic calming program.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Resolution Traffic Calming Policy

Attachment 2 - Traffic Calming Map