



## TRAFFIC CALMING POLICY

### I. Introduction

Where a person lives is a very important part of how a person feels about their community. The noise, safety hazards, vehicular speeds, vehicular volumes, and existence of sidewalks all contribute to a neighborhood's integrity. As speeding and vehicular volume increases, walking to the neighborhood store or even across the street to a neighbor's house can be an uncomfortable event.

The City of College Station recognizes the usefulness of physical measures to effectively solve neighborhood traffic problems. The traffic calming guidelines outlined in this report provide a basis for establishing the selection and installation criteria.

Definition: "Program Coordinator" shall be defined as the City of College Station Traffic Engineering staff member currently assigned to manage the traffic calming program, unless a consultant has been selected and retained for the task of managing the program.

### II. Objectives

1. To promote safe and pleasant conditions for residents, pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists on local neighborhood and residential collector streets.
2. To reduce traffic impacts and speed on local neighborhood and residential streets.
3. To preserve and enhance pedestrian and bicycle travel within neighborhoods
4. To achieve efficient and safe movement of traffic within neighborhoods (including emergency response vehicles) consistent with the intended function of the residential streets.
5. To maintain acceptable levels of service on the city's arterial streets so as to avoid intrusion/diversion onto local neighborhood streets.

### III. Policies

The following policies are established as part of the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program for neighborhood streets:

1. Through traffic should use major thoroughfares as shown on the City of College Station's Thoroughfare Plan.
2. Emergency vehicle access should be preserved.
3. Neighborhood Traffic calming projects should encourage and enhance pedestrian and bicycle access to neighborhood destinations.
4. Traffic calming improvements should be limited to neighborhood through streets. This includes residential (local) and minor collector streets. A street designated as a Major

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Collector in the adopted City of College Station's Thoroughfare Plan may be eligible if at least 67% of the adjacent properties on both sides of the street are front-facing residential. Vertical Deflection is not allowed as a traffic calming device on a specified emergency response routes.

5. Reasonable automobile access should be maintained.
6. Traffic calming measures that result in diversion of traffic to other residential streets should be discouraged. However, a small amount of traffic diverted to other residential streets may be acceptable. The acceptable amount of traffic diverted to other residential streets shall be determined on a case by case basis.
7. Traffic calming measures should be planned and designed in keeping with sound engineering and planning practices.

#### **IV. Selection of Project Areas**

##### **A. Registration Period**

In order to ensure that a particular street or area is considered for neighborhood traffic calming, a citizen or neighborhood association must call or write to the City of College Station to request the problem street(s). Requests are submitted throughout the year, and all requests received by August 1st are considered for the following fiscal year, beginning October 1st. This August deadline provides adequate time for the City to collect data and rank each of the project areas in time to begin the study process shortly after the start of the new fiscal year.

##### **B. Project Areas Selected by City**

If fewer than 3 traffic calming requests are received by the August 1st deadline, the City may recommend a street or area to be included for consideration based on traffic calls and/or complaints if necessary. The City will also evaluate and consider additional areas that may benefit from traffic calming due to future projects that may have an adverse impact on a nearby neighborhood.

##### **C. Project Eligibility Review and Notification**

The program coordinator reviews the eligibility of each request based on program goals and policies. During the eligibility review, the program coordinator will determine the study area. The study area will be based on the facility being analyzed. A minor collector will have a larger study area than a local street. For eligible applicants, staff sends a study area map, an evidence of neighborhood support form template, program education materials, and the process for project prioritization. For project areas selected by the City, program materials and evidence of neighborhood support are sent to each business, property owner, and resident in the proposed project area.

##### **D. Evidence of Neighborhood Support**

The applicant of a traffic calming request collects signatures of households or property

owners within the proposed study area to indicate the level of neighborhood support. A minimum of twenty percent of property representatives within the study area are required to sign the support petition. A property representative is limited to one owner or occupant of a property. The level of neighborhood support for a traffic calming study is considered as part of the project scoring criteria. Property representatives within the proposed study area may also indicate their interest in serving on a project working group on the support petition form. A minimum of 3 property representatives must indicate on the form that they are willing to serve on the working group.

#### E. Data Collection and Scoring

The program coordinator facilitates the collection of project data to establish project criteria score. The data collection method and Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program Prioritization Criteria are included in Appendix A. The scoring criteria determines a project priority order. The street / area ranked 1st will be selected as the first project developed and funded within the funding year. Additional ranked projects may also be developed within the same fiscal year, depending on available funding.

#### F. Application Retention

Eligible project applications that are not selected and funded as the annual project(s) will remain eligible in the program for a period of two years. These project areas are reconsidered during the Data Collection and Scoring process beginning the following program year. Rescored applications are not required to collect evidence of neighborhood support petition signatures in a subsequent year.

### **V. Community Contact**

The Neighborhood Engagement process is expected to include a minimum of three meetings. Additional meetings may be schedule as necessary.

After the project location has been selected, City staff sends a letter to each business, property owner, and resident in the project area. In addition, letters are also sent to the president of the neighborhood association(s) within the project area. The letter describes the process, goals, timeline, and requirements and includes an invitation to attend a general meeting introducing the program. Also included in the letter is a survey for residents, property owners and businesses to fill in describing various traffic related problems in the project area. This survey can be mailed to the City or brought to the general meeting.

At this first meeting, a working group of volunteers is established. These persons agree to develop the traffic calming plan with the assistance of City Staff. See Section VI for guidelines of the working group.

When applicable, City of College Station staff notify the College Station Independent School District, Brazos Transit, TAMU Bus operations, Fire Department, Police Department utility companies and Solid Waste Services. A request for their routes in these project areas is made. They are invited to attend the meeting where the working group identifies possible measures

for problem street sections in order to express their concerns.

## **VI. Working Group and Meetings**

The working group is comprised of property representatives living within the project area and an officer of the neighborhood association(s), if applicable. Non-resident property owners and representatives of area businesses are also encouraged to participate in the working group. Working group members should represent the project street as well as other nearby streets in the neighborhood that could significantly be impacted by the project.

The maximum number of participants in the working group is 15 persons. It is expected that some of the members may not be able to attend every meeting. Minimum attendance in order to continue with the meeting is 50 percent of the working group, or 5 persons (whichever is greater). If the minimum attendance does not exist, the meeting is rescheduled. Every attempt is made to ensure that the meetings are scheduled for dates and times which work the best for as many members as possible.

At the first meeting, a chairperson is elected to serve as the leader of the working group. This person's role is to ensure that the members stay focused on the task, to be the spokesperson of the group, and to aid City staff in identifying meeting locations or other tasks.

Also occurring at this first meeting, ground rules are established for all the meetings. The list of ground rules may include items such as methods for communicating with each other and the project area residents, meeting start and end times, and any other rule that the group wishes to establish. Although future meetings could include the addition of new rules, this list will make up the basis for the future meetings. As such, it should be posted at every working group meeting.

Each of the responsibilities for members of the working group are intended to encourage input and involvement from the participants. By providing feedback on the development of the traffic calming plan, the working group members take more ownership of the finished product.

The following is the recommended working group meeting schedule and action items:

1. Introduction to Traffic Calming – Discuss existing neighborhood traffic issues, feedback from the initial neighborhood meeting, and potential traffic calming design concepts. This working group meeting is also an initial Public Meeting.
2. Development of Alternatives – City reports back findings from further study; working group reviews preliminary design options. Could take additional meetings to complete preferred design option to present at Open House, if necessary.
3. Open House / Approval of Preferred Concept – Working Group Chairperson or designee presents final concept based on feedback from meeting #2; Working group reviews and approves final preferred design option to be presented at the final neighborhood open house

## **VII. Problem Identification**

After the initial general meeting and before the first working group meeting, City staff summarizes the results of the survey and, if necessary, prepares a list of the possible traffic problem locations in the project area. Following the business items at the first meeting of the working group, the members review these traffic problems and brainstorm any additional locations needing attention. If necessary, the group prioritizes the street sections and intersections in the project area having the worst traffic problems.

City staff take the list from this meeting and, if necessary, collect traffic data to confirm problems mentioned.

## **VIII. Data Collection**

Data is collected in spring and fall months during regular school days. They consist of vehicular speed, traffic volume, pedestrian activity, and/or any other observation to confirm the traffic problems stated in the survey or at the first meeting. The length of the data collection depends on the type of data that is collected.

## **IX. Evaluation of the Traffic Data**

City staff evaluates the traffic data to determine levels of traffic volume, vehicular speed, pedestrian activity, and other observations. If specific problems are mentioned as a priority in the survey or at the first meeting, staff will assess them. For example, if speeding is said to be a problem on Street A, then City staff collects the speed data to determine the speed on Street A.

After traffic data has been collected and evaluated, the City will analyze the data to determine what traffic calming measures are appropriate to use in the study area. The results found in these data collection efforts are summarized and presented by the City staff at the second working group meeting. Members have the opportunity to take the information with them to review.

After studying the data, if no need for traffic calming is observed, City of College Station staff reserve the right to end the traffic calming program for this study area. The particular area that was requested for traffic calming will not be eligible to reapply for 5 years.

## **X. Menu of Traffic Calming Measures**

There are many measures currently being used to address neighborhood traffic problems. Some are used to address vehicular speeding and others to address cut-through traffic problems. The facility associated with each measure may have an impact on both the vehicular speed and volume. Others are intended to improve the safety of or give priority to non-motorized modes of transportation. Refer to the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Toolbox for diagrams, advantages, and disadvantages of some of the available traffic calming measures.

The City recognizes the desire to have measures that are aesthetically pleasing to the residents who live there. Traffic calming measures that include a raised curb allow for vegetation within the measure. In fact, the use of greenery to provide vertical sight restrictions is encouraged. City staff determines whether a proposed measure will provide any traffic enhancement and inform the working group of their findings. Although measures that involve the construction of a raised curb and landscaping are seen as more attractive than other devices, they are also more expensive and have greater impact to the adjacent properties such as the removal of on-street parking. Limited funds may restrict the number of measures including raised curb and gutter.

Every attempt is made to ensure that only the necessary signs and markings are installed. Excessive clutter is not the intent, rather it is to adequately warn, guide and protect the users of the roadway.

#### **XI. Traffic Calming Plan Development**

After reviewing the traffic data and the menu of measures available, the working group is responsible for brainstorming possible solutions to address the given traffic problems. City staff is present to guide this session. In addition to the transportation analyst, representatives from the College Station Fire Department, and any other relevant agencies are encouraged to attend. If routes in the project area are critical for their services, then the working group is advised of these streets at this meeting. Regular users of the roadway are considered when developing the type and design of the measures.

After some consensus is achieved on which measures the working group desires and the specific locations of the measures, City staff then analyzes the proposal. Each measure is evaluated for its likelihood of addressing the given problem. In addition, roadway alignment, driveway spacing, street width, and other factors are considered in order to determine whether the measure is feasible.

The evaluation may result in changing the proposed measure. The technical expertise of the transportation analyst will govern the selection and location of the proposed measures. For example, steep grades may preclude the installation of a measure. Staff identifies these barriers and informs the working group. After the evaluation is complete, the City develops a map showing the proposed measures and presents it to the working group. This plan is discussed and voted on by the working group. If modifications are requested, an additional meeting may be required to allow time for the staff evaluation of the proposed measures and/or location of measures.

#### **XII. Plan Approval Process**

After the working group approves the traffic calming plan, the next step involves a vote of all residents, businesses and property owners in the project area. An open house meeting is held to present the plan to all interested persons. The invitation to attend this open house meeting is included in a notice mailed by the City. This notification also contains details of the traffic calming plan, maps showing where the measures are proposed, verbal descriptions of each

measure, and a ballot. These notices are mailed to every resident, property owner, and business in the project area.

Each household or business is allowed one vote. In the event that a property is not owner occupied, it is possible to receive two ballots associated with one property (one from the property owner and one from the renter). In the event that two ballots are received, the ballot from the property owner is counted and the ballot from the renter is discarded. However, if a ballot is not received from the property owner, then the ballot from the renter will be counted. **At least 60% of the ballots received must be in favor of implementing the plan.** There is no minimum number of ballots that have to be returned.

The notice is mailed at least 10 days prior to the open house meeting and the deadline for receiving the ballots is one week following the open house meeting. This allows voters the opportunity to read through the material, return the ballot or attend the open house meeting and still have time to fill out the ballot before the deadline. The ballots will be available at the open house and can be returned during that time,

The traffic calming plan is voted on as a whole. Because the plan is a system of integrated calming measures, individual streets or measures cannot be taken out of the proposal as part of the vote. If one measure or one street were removed from the plan, the comprehensive nature of the plan would be lost, and residents on that street may experience higher traffic speeds and/or increased traffic volumes. The vote is either yes or no. Comments are welcomed, but do not change the complete package. This is the only opportunity to vote on the traffic calming plan, so every effort must be made in the planning stages to ensure that it is correct and complete. After neighborhood approval of the concept design no further changes will be accepted.

If the 60% approval is obtained, then City staff completes the design of the measures, and the project is ranked in a prioritized list of other traffic calming projects to be funded for construction in the prioritized order by funds established by the City Council in the fiscal year's budget. If the 60% approval is not obtained, then the City does not implement the plan and the project area is not be eligible for evaluation during the next five years.

### **XIII. Measure Location**

There are advantages and disadvantages of each traffic calming measure. The advantages could include reduced traffic speed or volume, increased safety, and beautification of the streets. The disadvantages include possible inconvenience to residents driving in the neighborhood, parking restrictions, unattractive measures, and increased noise for residents adjacent to the measure. Because many residents may object to having a measure immediately adjacent to their property, it is necessary to establish the requirements for the consideration of shifting a proposed measure. In some communities, no consideration is given to the resident when objections about the placement of the measure arise. Others give some leeway to residents if nearby locations are acceptable and adjacent residents approve. This decision is controversial and can lead to the downfall of the entire project.

If an agency gives property representatives veto power, then the plan can dissolve as everyone wants something to address the problems, but no one is willing to allow the placement adjacent to their property. A piecemeal plan soon develops and the comprehensive nature is then mute.

Therefore, the responsibility to make this decision on whether to give property representatives the ability to veto a measure location adjacent to their property will rest with the working group. This decision should be made prior to the development of the plan.

If deemed necessary, the City will modify the traffic calming plan to address problems discovered during the temporary or permanent installation period. In addition, if safety problems surface following the permanent installation, the City will take the appropriate action to address the problem.

#### **XIV. Landscaping**

Vegetation is chosen which requires minimal attention, such as xeriscape. Measures that include raised curb could contain 1-3 trees, low lying shrubs, and ground cover, depending on the size of the measure. The neighborhood association will have the responsibility of maintaining the landscaping. Adjacent residents could, in their routine lawn maintenance, water or trim the vegetation when the need arises. Failure to maintain the vegetation will result in its removal.

#### **XV. Impact to Adjacent Streets**

In order to ensure that the traffic calming plan does not merely shift traffic to other neighborhood streets within the project area, traffic volume data is collected on possible diversion routes before and after implementing the approved plan. If residential streets experience an increase greater than 300 vehicles per day, the City will attempt to address the volume increase. Example actions to mitigate the volume increase include the modification of the measure(s) that created the shift, or the installation of additional measures on the impacted street.

#### **XVI. Retention**

Once a traffic calming plan has been constructed and implemented, it shall remain in place for a minimum of five (5) years from the final date of construction for permanent measures. Traffic calming measures that are classified as temporary must remain in place for a minimum of two (2) years. In addition, a traffic calming plan may call for a test measure, in which case there is no minimum retention period. The decision to make a traffic calming measure permanent or temporary must be made in the planning process and should be explicitly stated in the final plan. If this distinction is not made in the traffic calming plan and concrete or asphalt construction is required for implementation, then the measure is considered permanent. If concrete or asphalt construction is not required, then the measure is considered temporary. Any effort to abort the traffic calming measures must be initiated prior

to funds being approved by City of College Station City Council. Aborting the traffic calming measures will disqualify the participating neighborhood from reapplication for 5 years.

**XVII. Conclusion**

This Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program offers effective solutions to address residential traffic problems. The comprehensive nature of the program allows for mitigation of potential impacts to all streets within the entire project area. It is a program in which all residents, businesses and property owners are allowed and encouraged to participate in the process. With technical assistance from the City of College Station, traffic calming plans can be developed and approved by those most affected.

As the population in the City of College Station continues to grow, city streets are experiencing increased traffic pressure. Residents, parents, school administrators, and neighborhood associations have avenues to consider when trying to address traffic problems. Evaluating streets in an entire project area can be a worthwhile activity to foster a sense of community and develop solutions that not only address traffic problems but also offer attractive areas of landscaping and textured pavement. These modifications can, in turn, result in increased safety, property values, and improve the overall quality of life.

**Approved and Effective on \_\_\_\_\_.**

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**Bryan Woods, City Manager**

## APPENDIX A

### NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC CALMING PRIORITY POINT RANKING

STREET: \_\_\_\_\_

FROM \_\_\_\_\_ TO \_\_\_\_\_

STAFF NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

CATEGORY	POINTS
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Draft Traffic Calming Scoring Process Update

Category	Criteria	Points Allocated	Max Points
Traffic	Traffic Volume	Average daily traffic volume (ADT)/250	35
	Speed (85th percentile speed)	One (1) point for each mph over 25 mph up to 30 mph; Plus two (2) points for each mph over 30 mph up to 35 mph; Plus five (5) points each mph over 35 mph	40
Safety	Crashes	One (1) point for each reported speed related crash in the past five years	5
Multi-modal Activity	Sidewalks	No points for detached sidewalks Two (2) points for back-of-curb sidewalks less than 8 ft in width Five (5) points for no sidewalks	5
	Bikeways	No points for buffered/protected bike lanes or for no bicycle facility designation Three (3) points for bike lanes Five (5) points for a designated bike route or shared lanes	5
	Activity Generators	Five (5) points for projects within one block of a school, park, neighborhood commercial/ mixed-use area	5
Neighborhood Support	Evidence of Neighborhood Support Signatures	% of households in support/10 Five (5) points for project areas with greater than 50% support	5
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>100</b>