

TRAFFIC CALMING

Traffic calming is quickly becoming the common term for addressing a wide range of citizen concerns that traffic engineers have grappled with for years. It includes a large number of tools used to achieve several specific objectives, including slowing traffic speeds, reducing cut-through traffic and traffic-related noise, improving the aesthetics of the street, and increasing safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles.



Curb extensions and crosswalks constructed of alternative materials improve the pedestrian environment.

The most successful approach to traffic calming integrates engineering, enforcement, education, and enhancement of the streetscape

recently, it has become increasingly clear that effective traffic calming must also incorporate enhancement of the streetscape. This includes design and landscaping features that not only improve the aesthetics and livability of a neighborhood but increase the effectiveness of many of the devices. This is accomplished by creating visual breaks in the streetscape and reducing the “raceway” appearance of wide, residential streets.

Most of the focus to date in traffic calming has been on the selection and design of various traffic calming tools. The implementation of these devices can be expensive, often following a campaign of education and enforcement intended to change the behavior of motorists. Physical changes to the roadway, however, are generally more self-enforcing than education and traditional enforcement efforts, and they may not require continued intervention. Because many of the concerns addressed through traffic calming rest with residents’ perceptions, it is essential that the devices enhance the neighborhood in addition to dealing with the traffic issues. Each traffic calming device has appropriate applications, addressing one or more of the objectives outlined above. Each, however, also has disadvantages or negative impacts. Very few devices are so effective and have so few negative aspects that residents are willing to accept those that do not enhance the neighborhood streetscape.

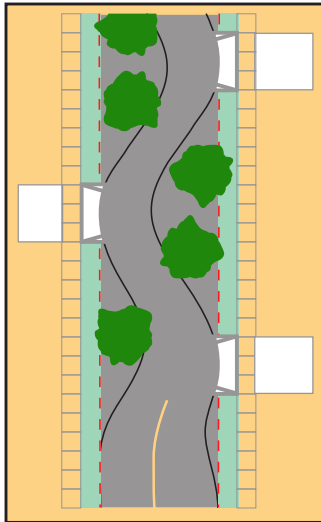
Integrative Approach

Traffic engineers and planners who have worked with neighborhood traffic issues over the years have learned the importance of an integrated approach referred to as the “three Es”: engineering, enforcement, and education. More

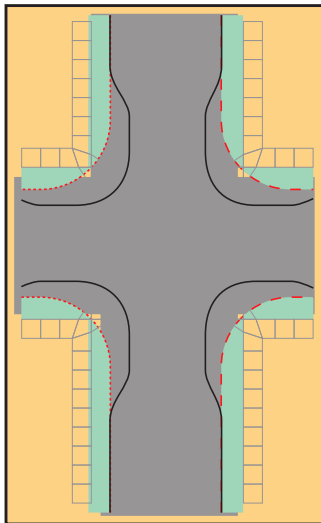


Landscaped medians can effectively reduce the actual and perceived width of a street, thus reducing vehicle speed.

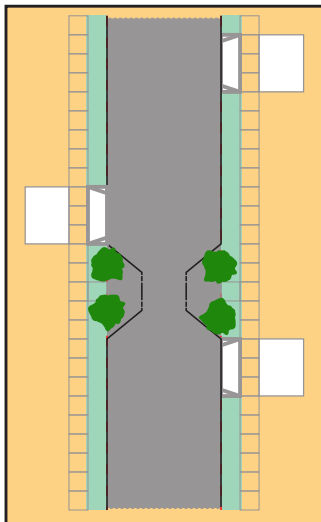
TRAFFIC CALMING (Cont'd)



Chicane



Narrowed Intersection



Mid-Block Choker

For example, speed humps are well suited for speed control but may negatively impact traffic noise. Therefore, if the residents are concerned with both speed and noise in the neighborhood, the installation of speed humps may not be the best choice. It is important to understand all of the issues associated with each tool to identify the most appropriate one for the circumstances.

Each agency or neighborhood organization should consider all of the aspects of each of these tools to develop a “toolbox” appropriate for the area. In addition to simply understanding what tools are available, however, agencies or organizations need to analyze traffic problems and residents’ concerns, decide what tools are appropriate, and determine how the various traffic calming techniques will be implemented. They should take into consideration funding availability, traffic calming project priorities, potential impacts to emergency response, and design and installation guidelines.

Traffic calming should be addressed in a comprehensive program to ensure consistency among applications within a jurisdiction. Extensive public involvement should guide the design of projects at the neighborhood level so that traffic calming projects not only change the behavior of motorists but address local issues and enhance neighborhood livability.

Sources:

Traffic Calming Primer, 1998, available from Pay Noyes and Associates (303) 440-8171

Traffic Calming by Citizens Advocating Responsible Transportation, 1993

Civilized Streets: A Guide to Traffic Calming by Carmen Hass-Klau, et.al, 1992

Both publications above are available from Citizens for Sensible Transportation, Portland, OR (503) 225-0003 - email/website: info@cfst.org / www.cfst.org

TRAFFIC CALMING DEVICES

- Geometric changes
- Roadway narrowing
- Neckdowns/chokers
- Medians
- One-lane sections
- Diverters
- Semi-diverters
- Closures
- Semi-closures
- Traffic circles
- Roundabouts
- Forced turns
- Speed humps
- Raised crossings
- Curved alignment