

City of Vestavia Hills

Traffic Calming Policy for Residential Streets

PURPOSE:

The purpose of the Traffic Calming Policy for Residential Streets is to address safety concerns related to vehicular traffic in residential neighborhoods in Vestavia Hills. The Policy will outline a process by which citizens can request consideration of traffic calming measures and a set of criteria that, if met, will allow them to be installed. The Policy will be utilized by the Vestavia Hills Engineering Department with assistance from the Vestavia Hills Police Department to evaluate traffic calming needs and make a determination as to whether or not traffic calming measures are warranted on a case by case basis and, if so, how they are effectively implemented.

GOAL/OBJECTIVES:

- To reduce the speed and volume of traffic to an acceptable level based upon the functional classification of street and surrounding land uses.
- To reduce crash frequency and severity
- To provide an environment where pedestrians and bicyclists feel safe
- To reduce cut-through vehicular traffic where feasible
- To ensure overall safety and livability of residential neighborhoods
- To modify driver behavior along residential streets through education, enforcement, and engineered traffic calming solutions
- To ensure that emergency vehicle access is preserved at levels that meet national response standards
- To ensure that traffic calming measures are designed in conformance with sound engineering practices

Traffic calming measures to be considered may include:

Signage/Striping Modifications

- Reduction in lane widths with striping
- Transverse rumble strips
- On-pavement signing
- Turn/entry prohibitions with signage
- One-way signs
- Warning signage

Roadway Design Modifications

- Traffic circles and roundabouts
- Raised landscaped medians

- Reduction in lane widths with curbing
- Road closures
- Turn restrictions with channelization
- Diverters to prevent through movements and force turns
- Chicanes

PROCEDURAL STEPS:

The following procedures are considered typical for receiving, responding to, and managing citizens’ requests for traffic management on neighborhood streets. Variations in this process may be approved by the City Council when deemed appropriate due to unique circumstances.

STEP 1: Initiate Traffic Calming Request

Resident who lives on the street of concern completes a Traffic Calming Request Form and submits it to the City Engineer’s office. A minimum of one resident signature on the form is required, but additional space is provided for additional signatures from the given area or neighborhood. If the street is located in a community with an active Homeowners Association (HOA), the Form should be completed by a representative of the HOA. These forms are available online at www.vhal.org or by contacting the Public Services Department at (205) 978-0150.

STEP 2: Eligibility for Consideration as a Traffic Calming Project

Once the Traffic Calming request has been initiated, the City Engineering staff will determine the study area and then collect preliminary information, including traffic volumes, speed data, existing signage/stripping and other pertinent information. Based on preliminary information, the following criteria must be met to warrant further evaluation and consideration of traffic calming measures:

- Posted speed limit is 30 mph or less
- Traffic volume between 500 and 4,000 vehicles per day
- Two-lane road
- Not a primary access to a commercial site
- Not a primary emergency response route or transit route
- Request has not been made within the last three (3) years (unless determined that a nearby major development or changing environmental conditions warrant a new review)

If criteria for further evaluation are not met, a letter will be sent to inform the resident that the street or area is not eligible for consideration as a traffic calming project. If met, Engineering will notify the resident that they can proceed to Step 3.

STEP 3: 1st Petition

If criteria are met for traffic calming measures to be considered, a neighborhood petition from the “study area” is required. The “study area” is defined as those properties along streets that could potentially receive traffic calming measures, those streets whose access is substantially dependent

upon the streets to be calmed, and any streets expected to receive significant increases in traffic volume or type as a result of the implementation of traffic calming measures.

It is the responsibility of the applicant to submit a proposed “study area” and petition to the City Engineer for review and approval. Once approved by City engineering staff, the applicant shall circulate the petition within the approved “study area”. The petition must be delivered (in a legally acceptable manner) or offered to all property owners within the “study area”. A positive response must be obtained by 70% or more of the total number of properties in the “study area” to proceed further with traffic calming project design and implementation.

Once a completed petition with at least 70% positive responses has been returned to the City Engineer, an engineering analysis will be completed by City Engineering staff to determine what types of devices/measures are appropriate or what further studies might be warranted (Step 4).

STEP 4: Evaluation and Determination

In the evaluation and determination phase, Engineering will use all available data to evaluate each of the following criteria.

Speed

Table 1 identifies the traffic speeds considered to be ideal, acceptable and not acceptable on local streets. (PSL = Posted Speed Limit). Table 2 identifies those speed ranges for 25 mph, which is the typical speed posted for most residential streets.

Table 1: Vehicle Speeds on Local Streets

| | Ideal | Acceptable | Not Acceptable |
|------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Average Speed | ≤ PSL | ≤ PSL + 5 mph | > PSL + 5 mph |
| 85 th Percentile Speed | ≤ PSL + 5 mph | ≤ PSL + 10 mph | > PSL + 10 mph |
| 95 th Percentile Speed | ≤ PSL + 10 mph | ≤ PSL + 15 mph | > PSL + 15 mph |
| % of Vehicles in 10 mph Pace Speed | 70% | 60% | 50% |

Table 2: Vehicle Speeds on Local Streets (25 mph)

| | Ideal | Acceptable | Not Acceptable |
|------------------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Average Speed | 0-25 mph | 26-30 mph | 31-35 mph |
| 85 th Percentile Speed | 0-30 mph | 31-35 mph | 36-40 mph |
| 95 th Percentile Speed | 0-35 mph | 36-40 mph | 41-45 mph |
| % of Vehicles in 10 mph Pace Speed | 70% | 60% | 50% |

Cut-Through Traffic

To determine the estimated amount of cut-through traffic on a particular roadway, typically a trip generation analysis is performed for the subject road or neighborhood based on the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Handbook to obtain an expected daily volume based on number of homes in the study area. The expected daily volume obtained is divided by the actual daily traffic volume counted to calculate the percent of cut-through traffic.

The acceptable and not acceptable percentages of cut-through traffic are as follows:

Table 3: Cut-Through Traffic

| Classification | Acceptable | Not Acceptable |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Local Street | 0%-25% | ≥ 25% |
| Collector Street | 0%-50% | ≥ 50% |

Crash Data

A crash problem is considered significant when there are three (3) or more reported crashes along a residential street or within a neighborhood during a period of twelve (12) consecutive months. This is inclusive of all pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle crashes.

Street Grades and Alignment

Roadway grades and alignment will be evaluated to determine if traffic calming measures can be implemented. Certain traffic calming techniques are not typically installed on roadways with grades exceeding eight (8%). Additionally sight distance has to be taken into account in the design. There may be other site-specific conditions that also need to be reviewed as part of the evaluation and determination process.

Based on the initial review, additional information may need to be collected. Such information could include:

- Turning movement counts at intersections
- Origin/destination studies

Utilizing all data gathered and analyses performed, City Engineering staff will determine if traffic calming measures are appropriate and if so, what type or combination of types should be installed.

STEP 5: 2nd Petition

Once a proposed technique(s) is determined, a 2nd petition package is required for circulation through the same study area previously determined. The petition must be delivered (in a legally

acceptable manner) or offered to all property owners within the “study area”. A positive response must be obtained by 70% or more of the total number of properties in the “study area” to proceed further with traffic calming project implementation. Public meetings may be scheduled during this phase, if necessary.

STEP 6: Implementation

When a traffic calming project has been approved and has received the necessary petition support, the City Engineering staff will schedule design and implementation of the project within budgetary constraints. Public/private partnerships may expedite priority. All designs shall follow ITE or other nationally recommended guidelines, if available. Depending upon the number of traffic calming requests received, a project may be placed on a waiting list and prioritized based on relative need. Certain techniques may be installed for a “test period” while others may be installed in a permanent fashion.