

# TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM

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# CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM

## **INTRODUCTION**

The City of Virginia Beach Traffic Engineering Bureau has instituted a Program to try and improve the quality of life to our neighborhood streets. Studies have shown that motorists may drive over the 25 mph speed limit by 10 miles per hour or more on residential streets. Those who exceed the speed limit come from all age groups.

Motorists in Virginia Beach may drive faster than they should on residential streets. Why does this occur?

- Local residents may drive faster on their local streets because they feel familiar and comfortable.
- Outsiders may use local streets as short cuts to busy arterial roads or to access an attraction inside the neighborhood.

## **WHAT IS 'TRAFFIC CALMING'?**

### Definition

Traffic Calming is defined as “the combination of non-physical and physical measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use, alter driver behavior and improve conditions for non-motorized street users.” Traffic calming measures are tools which attempt to slow traffic within residential communities with minimal or no restriction to access.

### Purpose

The purpose of Traffic Calming is to address speeding conditions in residential neighborhoods on streets classified as local or residential roads.

### Goals

1. Improve the quality of life.
2. Help reduce the negative effects of motor vehicles on the environment.
3. Achieve slower speeds for motor vehicles.
4. Increase perception of safety for non-motorized users of the street.
4. Reduce the need for police enforcement.
5. Enhance the street environment.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION**

- A. OFFICIAL REQUEST - the neighborhood association, civic league, or appointed representative writes a formal request to the Traffic Engineering Bureau.
- B. ELIGIBLE STREETS - *this program is restricted to streets classified as local residential streets, with posted speed limits no greater than 25 mph, and a two-lane road, with a minimum of 12 dwellings fronting the street per 1,000 feet of roadway.* Traffic Engineering will determine if the street is eligible.
- C. DOCUMENTED SPEEDING PROBLEM - the average speed is at least 29 mph, or the 85<sup>th</sup> Percentile speed at least 33 mph.
- D. APPROVAL AND IMPLEMENTATION - if the neighborhood qualifies for the program, then a plan is developed and implemented. Traffic volumes and resultant speeds on the chosen street will determine the appropriate traffic calming measures.
- E. PHASES OF THE PROGRAM - depending on the volumes and resultant speeds, neighborhoods could complete up to four phases:
  1. Community awareness and education
  2. Selective enforcement
  3. Non-physical devices (non-prepayable fine)
  4. Physical devices

F. PROGRAM EVALUATION - each phase of the program is evaluated for effectiveness. Evaluation consists of several traffic studies of the selected street. An initial evaluation is performed prior to implementation of the traffic calming program. This initial study is used to document the speeding problem, establish the controls, and determine benchmarks to measure program effectiveness. Subsequent traffic studies will be performed to determine compliance with the program objectives.

### **TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM PHASES**

1. Community Awareness and Education - Traffic Engineering discusses the traffic calming program with civic league leaders or similar representatives. The neighborhood or civic league selects one street and location for evaluation.
2. Selective Enforcement - Traffic Engineering performs a speed study on the selected street to see if it qualifies. Traffic Engineering and the Police Department schedules selective enforcement on the designated street during the highest violation periods. Selective enforcement is conducted weekly for twelve or more weeks, after which a traffic study will be performed to determine if program compliance has been achieved.
3. Non-prepayable Fine - If a street remains in non-compliance after selective enforcement, Traffic Engineering requires 75% of the neighborhood to sign a petition agreeing to a non pre-payable fine of up to \$200 for speeders on selected streets. Once the petition has been submitted and verified, Traffic Engineering will conduct studies in the neighborhood to select the streets that will be covered. When the studies are complete, signs will be posted to cover the streets that are included in Phase 3. Police enforcement is scheduled for a twelve or more week cycle, after which a traffic study is performed to determine if program compliance has been achieved. This non-prepayable fine would apply to residents and non-residents.
4. Physical Measures - If a street remains in non-compliance after the Phase 3, Traffic Engineering again requires 75% of the neighborhood to sign a petition supporting physical devices installed on the designated street. Once the petition has been submitted and verified, Traffic Engineering designs and schedules the installation of the physical devices. *Installation of the physical devices occurs only if the Police Dept., Fire Dept., and EMS approve of the design.* After installation of the physical devices, Traffic Engineering performs another traffic study to determine the effectiveness of the devices in reducing speeds.

## HOW CAN YOU HELP?

### **DRIVE SLOWER**

Drive 25 mph or less to give yourself more time to react to the unexpected, such as children darting out from behind parked cars, pets or obstacles in the road, and pedestrians. Unless you make a conscious effort, you may drive faster than you should on residential streets.

Remind neighbors to drive 25 mph. Make sure that others who use your vehicles also drive 25 mph. Do not speed on major streets, and avoid bad driving habits.

Studies show that driving at a lower and more responsible speed on residential streets has very little effect on the time it takes to complete your journeys.

### **AVOID USING NEIGHBORHOOD STREETS AS SHORT CUTS**

The more we use residential streets as short cuts, the more we disrupt the quality of life in neighborhoods.

### **OBSERVE ALL THE RULES OF THE ROAD**

Don't take chances, even on short trips. As statistics show, most accidents occur close to home. In particular, make sure you and all of your passengers buckle up.

### **BE AWARE OF YOUR PERCEPTION**

To a person standing still in their front yard, cars that go 25-30 mph may only appear to be going 40 mph or greater. When cars accelerate, it may also sound like they are going faster than 25 mph. Often, residents perceive vehicles traveling much faster than they actually are. One way to determine if a street has a legitimate speeding problem is to do a study.

## FAQS:

Q: Where will you put the speed study?

A: Usually, the neighborhood selects the location for the speed study since they are the most familiar with their neighborhood. However, if they wish it, Traffic Engineering will select a location based on observation of the most likely site for speeders. Only one location at a time can be chosen; therefore, it is advisable that the neighborhood choose the site that experiences the worst-case scenario, or the highest perceived number of speeders.

Q: Can you install speed bumps on our street?

A: Physical devices such as speed humps are one of the many options considered in Phase 4. Physical devices are installed only as a last resort, after all other attempts are unsuccessful. There are strict criteria that must be met, and all devices must be approved by emergency services.

Q: Can you install STOP signs to slow speeders?

A: The City installs STOP signs to indicate right-of-way. Installing STOP signs for speed control goes directly against federal guidelines. The guidelines are based on previous engineering practices and studies, and have determined that STOP signs can actually exacerbate problems after extended use. First, people tend to speed in between STOP signs, to "make up" for their perceived lost time. Second, when drivers must constantly stop for traffic, but do not see good reason to, they will develop contempt for STOP signs.

Q: Can "Children At Play" signs be put up?

A: "Children At Play" signs and similar caution signs do not slow vehicles down. Many municipalities no longer install "Children At Play" signs because these signs give parents a false sense of security that the City cannot provide. The City does not condone children playing in the street, and this is further reinforced by City Code.