



Traffic Calming Work Session

BACKGROUND:

The safety of residential streets became the focus of many comments during the review of three development proposals in the spring of 2023, (South Green, Jade Creek and 904 Homestead Road). Comments emphasized safety at the interface of new and existing neighborhoods and how and whether traffic calming could be used to mitigate safety concerns. Council members requested work sessions on these topics. This work session on these topics focuses on traffic calming which is partially administered through the Residential Traffic Management Plan (RTMP). See the attached supporting materials for additional information:

- B. Residential Traffic Management Plan (RTMP)
- C. Map of Traffic Calming Installations
- D. Carrboro Connects Traffic Calming Project Excerpt

WHAT ARE THE PURPOSES OF STREETS; WHAT ARE THE STANDARDS FOR STREETS?

Streets serve as a principle framework for movement and activity in a place providing for circulation, connection and access on routine basis and in emergencies. Streets physically define areas of Town and connect people with places. Carrboro has long embraced transportation choices and has worked to create spaces that can serve many types of travelers.

Recent Land Use Ordinance (LUO) updates included the addition of a Complete Streets Policy in Section 15-209:

(1) Complete Streets are designed and operated to provide safe and accessible travel for all modes, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, motorists, commercial vehicles, emergency vehicles and for people of all ages and all abilities.

(b) Based upon the findings set forth in subsection (a), the Council declares that it is not only desirable but essential to implement a Complete Streets policy to construct equitable streets and networks that prioritize safety, comfort and connectivity to destinations for all people who use the street network and to encourage healthy, active living, reduce traffic congestion and fossil fuel use, and improve the safety and quality of life of residents of Carrboro.

[Article XIV of Carrboro's LUO](#), outlines the Town's standards for streets and sidewalks. It provides street classifications and then design specifications for each street type including minimum right-of-way width, minimum pavement width, provisions for curb and gutter or vegetated ditch/shoulders, and locations and types of bike lanes sidewalks.

Detailed specifications for street design and construction are included [Appendix C](#). The bulk of the dimensional and construction standards were established as a result of residential street



design workshops in 1999, with exceptions and amendments that have followed. The Town Code further defines play streets, on which “...no person may drive a vehicle upon such street or part thereof unless they reside there, or have business there...” (Town Code, Sec. 6-12). No street, or portion of a street, in Town has been designated as a “play street.”

WHAT IS TRAFFIC CALMING?

Traffic calming is the use of physical design or other measures to reduce vehicle speeds and improve safety for users.

HOW DOES CARRBORO CURRENTLY CALM TRAFFIC?

New Developments

Section 15-217(e) provides requirements for traffic calming as part of the design for new streets.

To the extent practicable, portions of subcollector and collector streets that consist of stretches of 800 feet or more uninterrupted by intersections suitable for stop signs shall contain design features intended to discourage speeding and cut-through traffic, including but not limited to one or more of the following:

(1) Curves with radius of 800 feet or less; or

(2) Design features described in the town’s Residential Traffic Management Plan.

(AMENDED 9/16/97)

Existing Developments – Residential Traffic Management Plan (RTMP)

In June of 2023, In June 1996, the Board of Aldermen adopted the Residential Traffic Management Plan (RTMP) in response to community concerns about speeding vehicles. The RTMP provides a process for residents to identify concerns related to speeding, excessive traffic volumes and safety on town-maintained residential streets, and to request the installation of traffic calming measures.

Over the years, the Town’s Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) has taken a leading role in reviewing and recommending amendments to the RTMP to reflect changing trends in traffic calming designs and technologies. A brief timeline is provided below:

- 1993 - Townwide staff evaluation of traffic controls and neighborhood protection. Results reported to TAB.
- May 1994 - TAB makes recommendation to Board of Aldermen (Town Council) based on staff evaluation
- June 1996 - Board of Aldermen (Town Council) adopts Residential Traffic Management Plan (RTMP)
- May 1997 - Update to RTMP adopted by Board
- August 2000 - Board of Aldermen requests TAB review of RTMP
- May 2002 - Board of Aldermen requests TAB review of RTMP
- 2004-2005 - TAB makes recommendations to Board of Aldermen
- June 2005 - Updated to RTMP adopted by Board
- June 27, 2023 - Town Council requests work session on traffic calming



The RTMP outlines a number of ways for community members to take action aimed at slowing vehicle speeds on town-owned residential streets, central to which is a community led petition-based process with a 75% threshold for consideration of implementation of traffic calming measures. The process involves several steps as outlined below:

Current Process:

1. Resident reports problem using request form (representative)
2. Staff identifies an Area of Influence (AOI) based on the description of the concern in request
3. Representative collects signatures of 75% of residents in AOI supporting request (petition) thereby documenting neighborhood consensus
4. Data collection/ analysis done by Town staff (this involves multiple departments)
5. Review by Town staff to determine if street is eligible for Stage 1 Traffic Calming alone (primarily education and enforcement measures) or both Stage 1 and Stage 2 (physical modifications of the street) Traffic Calming
6. Neighborhood meeting
7. Staff recommendations – including conceptual design if appropriate
8. TAB review (required mailing to neighbors)
9. Town Council Consideration/Approval
10. Town Engineer prepares construction plans (if applicable)
11. Identification of necessary budget
12. Installation/construction
13. Follow-up evaluation

Since the adoption of the RTMP in 1996, the Town has received approximately 60-70 inquiries into the traffic calming process.

- Some neighborhoods have submitted multiple requests
- Traffic calming measures were installed at approximately 17 locations (can include multiple devices in a single location e.g. Stratfor Dr.)
- The most common device installed has been speed humps or tables.
- See Attachment B for map of existing traffic calming installations around town

WHAT DOES CARRBORO CONNECTS SAY ABOUT TRAFFIC CALMING?

- Chapter 5: Transportation and Mobility
 - Strategy 2.2: Continue to create safe streets and trail networks for pedestrians, bike riders, and transit riders (Design to reduce speed)
 - Project 2.2 E: Restructure Residential Traffic Management Plan (RTMP) and incorporate a Bike-Ped Safety Assessment Process
 - *"...This process is piecemeal, in that it only responds to requests as they arise and does not take a systemic approach to assessing traffic calming and safety issues on Town-maintained, residential streets. The current process also has concerning implications for equity, as an update of the plan is needed..."*
 - The full, 6-part project, is included in the attached excerpt (Attachment C)
- Chapter 6: Green Stormwater Infrastructure, Water, and Energy
 - Strategy 3.1: Coordinate transportation and public infrastructure improvements with green stormwater infrastructure.



- Project 3.1 A): *Priority Project* Integrate green stormwater infrastructure dual solutions that improve stormwater management practices and traffic calming in transportation infrastructure

CONSIDERATIONS FOR POSSIBLE STREAMLINING

- One year moratorium on new traffic calming requests – May be permanent based on guidance.
- Formulate programmatic response to speeding concerns to observe and collect initial data and intervene depending on findings.
- Evaluate street classifications and design standards for alignment with Complete Streets and Vision Zero and Green Infrastructure – text amendments if needed.
- Revise or incorporate RTMP in other processes:
 - Establish a baseline of data on travel behavior town-wide.
 - Engage residents to identify preferences for types of traffic calming, where there are options.
 - Implement traffic calming based on a multi-factor prioritization including racial equity.
 - Evaluate petition approach to determining community interest and add or substitute other engagement methods to check in if data indicates/recommend changes.
 - Determine any updates to list traffic of calming devices based on current best practice; current process leads with a solution and almost always results in a speed table, which can have negative consequences for safety and timeliness of emergency response and service delivery.
 - Include funding as part of streets maintenance.
 - Develop schedule and process for regular monitoring.

