

City of Ann Arbor Traffic Calming Program Frequently Asked Questions

Questions frequently asked throughout the City of Ann Arbor Traffic Calming Program are outlined below.

The City is currently in process of updating the Traffic Calming Program. Some answers provided below are contingent upon approval of the proposed Traffic Calming Program Update. FAQ responses may be subject to change depending on the outcome of the Program Update currently under review.

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Traffic Calming Device Overview

What is a vertical vs. a horizontal traffic calming device?

Vertical devices are those which extend vertically from the road surface to slow traffic, for example speed humps. Drivers pass over vertical devices. Horizontal devices slow traffic by extending horizontally, such as curb bump outs which create the perception of friction for traffic passing through the area. Drivers pass around or through horizontal devices.

Typically vertical devices (such as speed humps) are more effective at slowing speed than horizontal devices (such as bump outs and traffic circles). Vertical devices are typically effective at dropping the 85th percentile speeds to around 23-25mph. In general horizontal devices are not as effective, but have been shown to reduce the 85th percentile speed by a couple of miles per hour. A combination of both device types is often the best engineering solution for a community's concerns.

What is the preferred spacing between devices to maximize effectiveness?

The preferred spacing for maximum effectiveness is 350-400 feet between each device, though the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) spacing guidelines recommends that 250-650 feet is acceptable. To determine device locations City staff assesses the project area taking into consideration fire hydrants, street light locations, proximity to intersections, etc. Drivers should be able to see that they are approaching another device ahead, in order to limit acceleration between devices.

What are the size dimensions of speed hump, speed table, and raised crosswalks?

Speed humps are 12 feet wide, 3 inches high, have a parabolic shape, and extend the full width of the street. Devices are marked with painted chevrons to increase visibility to oncoming motorists. A yellow post, placed behind the curb line, is used to mark the location of the speed hump. Traffic calming device dimensions are based on the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) guidance; they are designed in a way that it should be comfortable for vehicles traveling at 25mph, and that those driving at speeds that exceed 25mph will feel discomfort. Some vehicles will need to travel even slower than 25 mph to pass over devices such as speed humps, speed tables and raised crosswalks with comfort.

Speed tables are typically 22 feet wide – including a 10 foot wide center platform and slopes tapering down on each side, 3 inches high, and extend the full width of the street. The center platform width is variable and can be customized to the location.

Raised crosswalks are 18 feet wide – including a 6 foot wide center platform marked with crosswalk striping and slopes tapering down on each side, 3 inches high and extend the full width of the street. All crosswalks are constructed in compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements and include a level landing for this purpose.

Where can I find examples where other traffic calming devices have been installed?

Refer to the traffic calming map on the City of Ann Arbor's website for a full list of traffic calming projects: a2gov.org/trafficalming

Can I park on speed humps?

Parking on top of speed humps and speed tables is allowed. Parking on top of a crosswalk (level or raised) is not allowable according to Michigan Compiled Law (MCL) 257.674 (I).

Has there been any removal of traffic calming devices once placed in the City?

Since the establishment of the current Traffic Calming Program the City has not received any requests for traffic calming device removal. Staff views this as a testament to the success of the community engagement approach. Due to the project area engagement and support criteria that must be met for installation, it seems neighbors are generally satisfied once an installation is completed.

Traffic Calming Device Impacts

Which device will be most effective at slowing speed?

Previous study results have been compiled by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) as the Traffic Calming ePrimer (https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/speedmgt/traffic_calm.cfm). This document shows wide ranges of speed results for each device. As site conditions vary, it is not feasible to predict the effectiveness of devices at a particular site. A general trend observed in the Federal summary is that speed humps may be more effective than raised crosswalks, and raised crosswalks may be more effective than speed tables in controlling travel speeds. In terms of reducing cut through traffic, a series of vertical devices is typically associated with a 20% reduction, while bump outs have little effect on traffic volumes.

Will devices impact emergency response time?

Staff from the City of Ann Arbor Fire and Police departments are involved in this process. The plans for the proposed traffic calming devices are shared with Police and Fire representatives for comment, and they are invited to attend the meetings. Typically, police and fire representatives report that emergency response time is increased by a few seconds (approximately 2-10 seconds) as police and fire have to slow down at device locations. Impacts to response time must be weighed against overall safety improvements from traffic calming.

Will devices impact snow plowing?

The street would continue to receive winter maintenance at the current rate. City of Ann Arbor street maintenance staff handle snow plowing in areas throughout the city where traffic calming devices such as speed humps and curb bump-outs have been installed. Vertical device locations are clearly marked by reflective posts so that snow plows are aware.

Will devices impact stormwater drainage?

Neighbors should not expect any change in drainage pattern due to traffic calming device installation.

Will devices impact school buses?

We don't typically hear complaints regarding impacts to school buses, but they do have to slow down the same as other traffic when passing over speed humps.

Will devices impact bicyclists?

Speed humps should not deter cyclists, as long as they are traveling under 25mph

Where can I find more information about Traffic Calming Devices?

www.ite.org/traffic/tcdevices.asp

Traffic Calming Options

Can devices be installed to deter traffic from cutting through the project area/neighborhood?

The program currently utilizes a series of devices in combination to discourage cut through traffic.

Can additional speed signs be placed along the street instead of traffic calming devices?

Speed limit signs are not generally posted on local streets. Speed limit signs have been found to rarely affect the 85th percentile speeds and are not considered an effective speed control device. It is expected that the general public knows that residential areas have a speed limit of 25 mph.

Could police presence for speed enforcement be pursued instead of traffic calming devices?

The best traffic control is an effectively designed street. Enforcement is not as effective. Police presence is a challenge because the Ann Arbor Police Department (AAPD) can't routinely be available on the street all of the time. Past experience has shown that there may be a reduction in speed while the officer is present, but when the officer cannot be there speeds return to previous conditions. Requests for targeted speed enforcement can be submitted via the [AAPD traffic complaint questionnaire](#).

Could a flashing sign for speed be installed?

Temporary signs that flash the speed of passing traffic can be used, upon request. When the flashing sign is used routinely it becomes part of the scenery and is not as effective. Requests for a flashing speed radar sign can be submitted via the [AAPD traffic complaint questionnaire](#).

Traffic Calming Program Process

Why are you here, in our neighborhood, making us go through the Traffic Calming Program?

The City responds to resident initiated petitions for the Traffic Calming Program. To be considered for traffic calming, the City must receive a petition with the signatures from 50% of the defined project area addresses. If a qualified petition area meets the program qualification criteria, the Traffic Calming process will move forward, including public engagement.

How is the project area determined?

The Traffic Calming program defines project area as all addresses adjacent to the defined project limits and addresses 100 feet from where the project street intersects a local cross street.

How are speed study results considered in project eligibility determination?

Speed data is typically collected at multiple points throughout the project area. The Traffic Calming Program operates such that a speeding problem at any point along the identified project area is sufficient to qualify the entire project area.

Who is invited to participate in the final survey?

The final polling form is provided to all addresses within the project area. The Traffic Calming program defines project area as all addresses with frontage on the street and addresses 100 feet back on interior cross streets. The limits of the project area are defined by the resident submitted petition.

How is the neighborhood decision about traffic calming made?

A final polling form is used to determine community preference. Greater than 50% of the responses must support the final plan to move forward.