

TOWN OF DEDHAM

TRAFFIC CALMING POLICY



ADOPTED JANUARY 26, 2012

INTRODUCTION

Speeding traffic and cut-through traffic on neighborhood streets is a major concern in the Town of Dedham because of its detrimental impacts on the safety and livability of our streets.

Neighborhoods where speeding occurs experience unsafe conditions for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other drivers, as well as the negative environmental impacts of noise and air pollution. Many communities around the state and nation have turned to engineering solutions for speeding commonly known as “traffic calming”.

The Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) defines traffic calming as, “the combination of mostly physical measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use, alter driver behavior and improve conditions for nonmotorized users”.

In plain English, traffic calming is building or retrofitting roadways with certain features and characteristics that induce drivers to slow down and pay more attention to their surroundings.

The Transportation Advisory Committee has adopted this comprehensive policy to guide the implementation of traffic calming in the Town of Dedham.

HOW WILL TRAFFIC CALMING BENEFIT DEDHAM?

Reduced vehicle speeds and increased driver attentiveness obtained through the appropriate use of traffic calming offer Dedham the following benefits:

- Reduction in the probability and severity of crashes.
- Increased safety for other drivers, including those entering/exiting the roadway at intersections or driveways.
- Increased safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users promoting greater use of these sustainable modes of transportation.
- Reduction of dangerous driving behaviors.
- More attractive streets and neighborhoods through the addition of sidewalks, trees, street furniture and other aesthetic features of traffic calming.
- Reclaiming streets so that walking and biking are safe and attractive options throughout the Town.

HOW IS TRAFFIC CALMING ACHIEVED?

The Massachusetts Highway Department divides traffic calming into three major categories of design measures.

1. Narrowing the real or apparent width of the street.
 - a. Pavement cross-section features including on-street parking, spot narrowing, bike lanes, travel lane width reduction, medians, islands, and road diets.
 - b. Placement along the street of buildings, trees, signage, and street furniture (e.g. lights, benches, bike racks, bus shelters, etc.).
 - c. Pavement edge treatments like raised curbs, neckdowns, chokers, and bulbouts.
2. Deflecting (introducing curvature to) the vehicle path.

- a. Mid-block deflection measures including chicanes, lane offsets, short medians, crossing islands and mini-traffic circles.
 - b. Intersection measures including roundabouts, traffic circles, curb bulbouts, lane offsets, crossing islands, and neckdowns.
3. Altering the vertical profile of the vehicle path.
 - a. Speed humps and speed tables.
 - b. Raised crosswalks and intersections
 - c. Textured pavement (e.g. pavers, stamped concrete, etc.)

WHAT TRAFFIC CALMING IS NOT

Citizen complaints about speeding traffic are often accompanied by requests for new Stop signs, traffic signals, turn restrictions, speed limit signs and the like. These are not traffic calming devices, but rather regulatory traffic controls that are governed by either national engineering guidelines, state laws, or both.

The Town frequently receives requests for new Stop signs to “slow down traffic” and “improve safety” on a local street. Not only are Stop signs not a traffic calming measure, but research shows that installing unnecessary Stop signs can often result in more collisions and more speeding.

Another common traffic-related request involves the lowering of posted speed limits on Dedham roadways. This is another regulatory control governed jointly by the Massachusetts Highway Department and the Registry of Motor Vehicles through a state approval process that requires documented speed and engineering studies. Again, most research concludes that driver speed is less a function of posted speed limits and more a function of real or perceived driving conditions.

Unlike the aforementioned regulatory traffic controls that require some form of legal enforcement, traffic calming measures are designed to be self-enforcing. Drivers are slowed down by the physical characteristics of the roadway, not by an artificially imposed speed limit or Stop sign.

Traffic calming is also not specifically aimed at reducing the volume of traffic, though it may have that effect when installed on local streets subject to speeding cut-through traffic.

OBJECTIVES OF THE DEDHAM TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM

- Improve the safety and livability of Dedham’s streets and neighborhoods by using appropriately designed and implemented traffic calming measures to mitigate the impacts of traffic while creating safer streets for residents, motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists;
- Maintain a traffic calming project selection process guided by objective, needs-driven criteria to ensure that limited Town of Dedham resources are utilized in a cost-effective and efficient manner;
- Implement traffic calming measures that are appropriate and effective for a given situation or roadway and improve public safety without jeopardizing emergency response needs, creating hazards or nuisances, or impeding public transit or commercial truck routes;
- Ensure that any proposed traffic calming installation has public support in the affected neighborhood(s) before it is implemented.
- Welcome citizen input and involvement in all phases of the program.

PROCESS FOR INITIATING AND IMPLEMENTING TRAFFIC CALMING PROJECTS

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the following process will be followed when considering requests for developing, designing, and implementing traffic calming measures on Dedham roadways.

This process provides for the submission of traffic calming requests and their evaluation by the Town; the investigation of potential traffic calming solutions and potential development of traffic calming designs by Town of Dedham Engineering Department or consultants; and the continual input and review by the affected neighborhood, the appropriate Boards and Commissions, and elected officials.

The process does not apply to:

- Traffic calming measures that may be required on Town streets to comply with State and Federal standards or warrants;
- Temporary changes in traffic patterns needed to stage special events or accommodate construction;
- Experimental traffic calming measures installed temporarily for research and evaluation by the Town and/or a partner agency or consultant;
- Installation of traffic control devices (e.g. signals, Stop signs, roundabouts, etc.);
- The installation of traffic calming devices that may be required on a Dedham roadway as mitigation for a commercial, residential, mixed-use, or other development project.

SUBMISSION OF TRAFFIC CALMING REQUESTS

Citizens, Town Boards, and Departments may make requests for traffic calming. A Dedham Traffic Calming Request form must be completed and submitted to the Transportation Advisory Committee. A minimum of one resident signature on the form is required, but additional space is provided for the signatures of multiple residents of a given area or neighborhood.

A copy of the Traffic Calming Request Form appears at the end of this manual or is available online at www.dedham-ma.gov.

ELIGIBILITY FOR TRAFFIC CALMING PROJECTS

Only residential neighborhood streets are eligible for traffic calming projects. Arterials, truck routes, major emergency response routes, and bus routes will generally not be considered appropriate for traffic calming. Also, roads not under the jurisdiction of the Town of Dedham are not eligible. (e.g. State Roads, MDC, Private Ways, etc. are not eligible).

PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF TRAFFIC CALMING REQUESTS

Requests for traffic calming will be reviewed by the Town of Dedham Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC will review the request to determine if the problem meets the eligibility requirements of this policy and whether or not traffic calming is likely to resolve the problem(s) identified in the application. Valid requests which have the potential to be mitigated through traffic calming will be forwarded to the Engineering Department for an initial evaluation. If a request does not

meet eligibility requirements or is not likely to be solved through traffic calming the request will be denied and the petitioner(s) notified.

Following initial evaluation by the Engineering Department the TAC shall hold a public meeting and notify the petitioner(s) and property owners in the affected area of the date of said meeting to allow for public input.

Following public comment, the Transportation Advisory Committee will make a determination as to whether or not the request for traffic calming merits further consideration under this process. In making said determination, the Committee will consider the availability of Town funding and resources and give priority to addressing traffic and safety concerns in the following areas:

1. Streets that provide access to a public school, or represent major walk-to-school or bicycle-to-school routes;
2. Streets that are/could be heavily traveled by pedestrians and bicyclists seeking access to a public park, public/government building, downtown or commercial area;
3. Streets that have been programmed by the Department of Public Works for reconstruction in the near future and thereby present opportunities to realize cost savings by undertaking traffic calming installation simultaneously.

For those streets which speeding is identified as an issue, speeding as measured by the 85th percentile must be observed to be at least 5 mph over the posted or prima facie speed limit to remain eligible for traffic calming.

No further action may be required under the Dedham Traffic Calming Program on issues that can be reasonably addressed by alternative solutions (e.g. low-cost engineering improvements, new signage or markings, expanded enforcement, etc.), or when eligibility requirements are not met.

If appropriate, the Engineering Department, DPW, Police Department, or other Town agency will pursue agreed upon solutions and provide periodic updates to the Committee on their progress.

TRAFFIC CALMING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

If the Committee determines that a request for traffic calming merits further consideration under the Dedham Traffic Calming Program, it shall request that the Engineering Department prepare a "Traffic Calming Needs Assessment" report for presentation at the next regular meeting following its completion.

The Engineering Department, working in coordination with other relevant Town departments (e.g. Police, Fire, DPW, etc.), shall compile the following data in a standardized report form on the subject area of the traffic calming request:

- Physical Description (width, grade and alignment, number of lanes and width, pavement condition, parking, sidewalks, crosswalks, school crossings, bike lanes, and any other relevant descriptors).
- Street classification (e.g. local street, major collector, etc.).
- Posted speed limits and other regulatory signage or traffic controls.
- Status of roadway as a designated route for:
 - Walking access to a public school
 - Emergency vehicles

- Transit buses or commercial trucks
- Existing/potential demand for pedestrian and/or bicycle access.
- Proximity to community facilities, schools, parks, and commercial areas.
- Traffic Volume.
- Traffic Speeds (average and 85th percentile).
- Crash and Traffic Enforcement Data.
- Estimated cut-through traffic on street (if applicable).
- Alternative routes that traffic may seek out to avoid traffic calming measures.
- Determine the area to be affected by potential traffic calming (including area on the immediate street(s) and within the area).
- Engineering recommendations:
 - Is the problem area a viable candidate for traffic calming installation?
 - Which traffic calming measure(s) may be appropriate?
 - Could the measures be designed and implemented by the DPW or would outside engineering services be required.
 - Approximate design and installation costs based on local experience or state and national averages.
 - Does the problem merit experimental installation of temporary traffic calming measures before a final determination is made?

REVIEW OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND FINAL RECOMMENDATION

The Engineering Department will present the findings and engineering recommendations of its Traffic Calming Needs Assessment to the Transportation Advisory Committee.

Once again, the petitioner(s) and affected neighborhood property owners will be given advance notification of said presentation. The Committee may choose to hear additional public comment during this meeting.

Upon review and discussion of the Needs Assessment, the Transportation Advisory Committee must vote to “Recommend” or “Not Recommend” that the requested traffic calming project be placed on the Town of Dedham’s “Priority List of Traffic Calming Projects”.

In the event that the Committee does not have sufficient information to make a final recommendation, or a traffic problem first merits a test of experimental traffic calming measures, a vote on the matter may be tabled for a period not to exceed ninety (90) days.

Traffic calming requests that receive a “Not Recommend” vote remain eligible for future consideration, but must wait one (1) year before they can be resubmitted.

If the TAC votes to “Recommend” the traffic calming project, ballots will be sent to the property owners on the street and within the affected area (as determined during the needs assessment and as a result of public comment). A traffic calming project will be placed on the priority list if at least 75% of the residents on the street and 60% of the residents in the affected area are in favor of the project.

PRIORITY LIST OF TRAFFIC CALMING PROJECTS

The Town of Dedham may have more potential traffic calming projects than it has funding and staff to implement them in a given year.

A priority ranking of traffic calming projects will be created and maintained by the Transportation Advisory Committee based on a set of objective, needs driven criteria.

Each fiscal year, the Engineering Department will submit a formal request to the Town of Dedham's Capital Expenditure Committee (CEC) for funding of the design and/or construction of recommended projects in ranked order on the Priority List of Traffic Calming Projects.

Traffic calming projects will compete for funding as part of the Town's annual Capital Expenditure Committee (CEC) process. High priority traffic calming projects, if successful in that process, will then be placed on the approved CEC list as recommended to the Town Administrator by the Capital Expenditures Committee.

Funding of traffic calming projects, like all other proposed expenditures of Town funds, will be subject to final approval and appropriation by Town Meeting.

Town of Dedham Traffic Calming Request Form

What is traffic calming? The goal of traffic calming is to make streets safer and more comfortable for pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers and transit users by implementing roadways with features that induce drivers to slow down and pay more attention to their surroundings. Three major categories of traffic calming include: (1) narrowing the real or apparent width of the street, (2) deflecting or introducing curvature to the vehicle path, and (3) altering the vertical profile of the vehicle path. Traffic Calming does not include the installation of regulatory traffic control devices such as signals, stop signs, and roundabouts or lowering a speed limit because they are not self-enforcing.

Traffic Calming Request Form Directions: Please fill out this form and mail it to the address listed below. By using this form you will help us assess the type of issues or concerns you are having with a street in your neighborhood. We will place your request on the agenda for the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC will make a determination how to best address the request and prioritize the request with other requests. If recommended for further study the request will be forwarded to the Engineering Department for further study and evaluation. Results of the study or evaluation will be presented to the TAC at their next scheduled meeting following the completion of the study.

1. Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone (day) _____ (night) _____

2. Please list the street(s)/ location/ intersection that concern(s) you most:

3. What time of day do the concerns you have seem most noticeable?

4. Please check each item below that applies to the referenced street(s):

___ Pedestrian/ Bicyclist Safety ___ Speeding Vehicles ___ Sign placement

___ High traffic volume/ trucks ___ Parking Issues ___ Difficult to cross street

___ Sight Distance Issues (for drivers) ___ Poor Road Condition ___ Other (describe):

5. Please encourage others in your neighborhood to sign the second page of this request form to help the Transportation Advisory Committee determine the level of neighborhood interest. Additional neighborhood support will help gain a higher project priority.

Please return this completed form to:

Transportation Advisory Committee
Town Administrator's Office
26 Bryant Street
Dedham, MA 02026

Signature /Address

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