

Traffic Calming Policy and Procedure
Transportation Commission
Village of Wilmette
Approved 12-09-97
By Village Board

PREAMBLE:

Motor vehicle traffic on Village streets is often viewed as a threat to the quality of life in Wilmette. This policy on traffic calming was developed by the Wilmette Transportation Commission to provide an effective and consistent response to the complaints about intrusive vehicle traffic.

Traffic calming is the act of balancing the need for vehicular access with neighborhood needs for safe, quiet environments. Calming actions include traffic regulations, signing, pavement marking, police enforcement, and various physical devices placed in and near the streets to discourage unreasonably high speeds and/or unnecessary traffic volumes (e.g., traffic which should and could be on other streets). The need to protect neighborhoods from unreasonable traffic intrusion must be weighed against the need for vehicular access for all residents and those who serve them. Our streets are community property, owned and used by all. Just as we expect and need to use the streets of other neighborhoods and communities, we must accept the need for others to share our streets, as long as their use is safe and reasonable.

The role of specific streets in Wilmette is defined by their functional classification: local (slow speed, low volume land access streets), and arterial streets (busier, faster streets which primarily serve the through movement of traffic, but commonly in Wilmette are residential as well). This classification as defined in the Comprehensive Plan reflects the current use of streets: it is not merely theory, it is fact. Often we may want to discourage "foreign" traffic on our street, when the street actually serves to collect (collector street) or move (arterial street) that traffic. Unless there are alternative routes for traffic which do not pose a problem for other residents, something that is rare in Wilmette, we cannot change the functionality of a street by declaration.

POLICY:

It is the policy of the Village of Wilmette to investigate, seriously and objectively, complaints about excessive traffic and vehicle speeds. Such complaints will be evaluated, and, if warranted, interventions will be proposed and –with neighborhood concurrence—adopted. Those interventions chosen for

implementation will be those which minimize negative side effects, and which are affordable. The standard procedure for responding to requests for traffic calming actions is outlined below.

PROCEDURE:

1. The process is initiated by complaints received by the Engineering or Police departments from residents, business representatives, or Village Staff (Police Department, Engineering Department, Community Development, etc.)
2. Objective data are collected by Village professional staff on street configuration and traffic conditions, including volumes and speeds. Data should be collected over several days, preferably a full week, to reveal temporal cycles, and at appropriate times of day and seasons when problems are known to occur.

Where cut-through traffic is a known or likely source of the problem, conditions (volumes, speeds, delays) on officially preferred routes should also be measured, along with vehicle routing patterns through the affected street network.

3. The following criteria are used, singularly and in combination, to determine whether there is an objective problem worthy of further study:
 - A. Volume greater than 1,200 vehicles per day on a local street; or
 - B. 85th percentile speeds more than 7 miles per hour over the posted speed limit; or
 - C. An excessive accident experience in a pattern, which is related to unreasonable volumes or speeds.
 - D. Other facts and circumstances which, in the judgment of the Village Engineer or the Chief of Police, establish the existence of a problem which warrants consideration by the Commission, despite the failure to satisfy the criteria listed in A, B or C of this section.
4. Cases meeting these criteria will be referred to the Transportation Commission, initially through discussion with the Chair or his or her designated representative. Needs for further data collection or analyses of alternative actions will be discussed, and such actions taken to provide input to the Commission.
5. The Transportation Commission will hold a public meeting, inviting residents of the affected neighborhood. The complaint, objective measures of the problem, alternatives, and their costs and effectiveness will be evaluated using resources of the Commission, the professional

staff of the Village, the published technical literature, national standards and guidelines, and evidence of best practice. The Commission will make a decision to adopt an action, do nothing, or pursue further studies.

- A. The first priority on actions to be considered will be those which directly address the cause of the problem. In particular, in the case of excessive cut-through traffic, priority will be placed on solving the problems on the preferred routes to make cutting-through less attractive.
 - B. Options to be considered on the affected streets will be focused on actions proven to reduce excessive speeds or discourage unnecessary traffic volumes, such as periodic enforcement, changes in traffic regulations, signs and pavement markings, speed humps and traffic circles.
 - C. The four primary criteria used to select options will be (1) the degree to which the original problem is solved; (2) assurance of reasonable access for all, and especially for emergency and service vehicles; (3) the safety implications of the proposed action, and (4) the extent of spillover problems on other streets caused by the action on the subject street. This process should not solve one problem by causing others.
 - D. Signs and markings to be implemented should meet the warrants established in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
 - E. Street closures will not normally be considered. Closures are an unreasonable impedance to residents and others; they restrict emergency and maintenance access. A well-utilized street indicates the need to satisfy or alter the demand, rather than to cut off the supply of access.
6. If the Commission recommends an intervention, (a fixed physical change to a street such as an intersection circle, traffic hump, or diverter), a brief description of this action and its expected impacts will be prepared and distributed by mail to neighborhood residents affected by this intervention in the form of a ballot. A favorable vote of 60% of the households on the affected street(s) will be necessary to proceed with the action. For this purpose, the affected street is defined as the block on which the intervention is applied, or the single blocks adjacent to an intersection where a change is to be made. Only one vote per household is permitted; apartments will be counted as a single household.

Responsibility for approval of any fixed physical changes rests with the Village Board; a favorable vote by the neighbors and/or the Commission does not deprive the Board of this final power of approval.

Simpler interventions, such as an enforcement program, signs, or pavement markings, may be implemented directly after the public meeting on the recommendation of the Commission.

7. The Engineering Department will collect data after the implementation of calming actions and will conduct before-after evaluations, which will be reported to the Transportation Commission to build a knowledge base for future decision making. These evaluations will be conducted when traffic operations have stabilized after implementation, sooner if problems occur and later if it is necessary to match seasonality of the problem.

Requests for traffic calming will be considered at any time and recommendations for signing, marking and enforcement can be implemented at any time. Proposals for capital investments (e.g., humps, circles, diverters) will be collected and considered at an annual project programming meeting normally in mid-summer, so that a specific budget request can be presented to the Village Board.

Proposed Experimental Program Procedure

The traffic-calming program will begin with an experimental implementation to gain experience and get community reactions. The experimental procedure is as follows:

1. Use complaints on file to identify several candidate streets.
2. Staff collects and analyzes current objective data (speeds, volumes, routes).
3. Commission meets to select two (2) test sites and the interventions to be applied to each. At this point we have apparently narrowed the actions to humps (on one street) and circles (on the other).
4. Commission holds public meeting, inviting residents of candidate streets to discuss the proposed actions.
5. Use the balloting process described in step 6 above to verify neighborhood acceptance.
6. Implement the interventions. Target: Spring, 1998.
7. Collect data and conduct before-after study. Collect data within one week of construction completion, and again three and six months later. Survey the neighbors after six months. Report periodically to the Commission.