

Traffic Calming Plan Development, Approval Process, and Allocation of Funds

Preamble

Our goal is to make our neighborhoods safer and we see the primary function of traffic calming is to cause traffic to abide to the posted speed limits. With these principles in mind, we believe a process which achieves the proper balance between the need for relief from unsafe traffic and the wishes of those who may have to travel over traffic calming devices is necessary. Since it is hard to argue against improvements which will cause traffic to obey the posted speed limits, we feel the process should be weighted to benefit those seeking relief.

The Traffic Calming Plan Development and Approval Process

(In 10 easy steps...)

The process is broken down into sequential steps. As each milestone is reached, the next step in sequence is executed.

Step 1: A homeowners association or resident requests City Traffic Engineering to start the traffic calming process. City Engineering will recommend one or more Facilitating Agencies, such as the East Tennessee Community Design Center, to aid the neighborhood in building consensus and developing their plan.

Facilitating Agencies may or may not charge for their services, and should be independent third-parties to avoid conflict of interest. City Traffic Engineering must approve any Facilitating Agency.

Step 2: A neighborhood meeting is held with residents and the Facilitating Agency to discuss the traffic calming process and decide if they want to pursue traffic calming as a solution for their traffic problems.

Step 3: A Traffic Study Petition drive is conducted in order to demonstrate that there is some support for traffic calming in the area, with approximately 10% approval required to proceed.

Step 4: A meeting between representatives of the neighborhood, the Facilitating Agency, and the City Engineering Department is held to define the Traffic Calming Study Area.

Step 5: A Traffic Study is performed by Knoxville City Engineering to determine traffic problems within the Traffic Calming Study Area.

Step 6: The results of the Traffic Study with an explanatory cover letter is mailed

to residents in the Traffic Calming Study Area by the Facilitating Agency.

A Design Request Petition drive is conducted in order to demonstrate more widespread interest in traffic calming, with a minimum of 50% of property owners in the Traffic Calming Study Area signing in approval.

Step 7: A Traffic Calming Plan is developed by Knoxville City Engineering, who will identify problem areas and develop a comprehensive solution to address them.

Problem areas and the appropriate traffic calming solutions may exceed neighborhood boundaries or may impact only a portion of a neighborhood. Since neighborhood boundaries may not properly reflect those who will be impacted by traffic calming solutions, two distinct kinds of areas are identified in the Traffic Calming Plan:

Affected Area(s): The area(s) where traffic calming solutions are proposed to be deployed.

Impacted Area(s): All other areas which may be impacted by the use of traffic calming devices in the affected area(s), but are not in the affected area(s).

Engineering, working in conjunction with the Facilitating Agency and representatives of the neighborhood, will determine the Affected and Impacted Area(s) boundaries.

The Affected and Impacted Area(s) boundaries are significant in the Balloting Process described below.

Step 8: The Facilitating Agency will prepare a cover letter that includes the proposed Traffic Calming Plan, which is mailed to all property owners in Traffic Calming Study Area, and explains the balloting process.

Step 9: The Facilitating Agency will conduct a meeting for property owners in the Traffic Calming Study Area approximately two weeks after Step 8. Minor plan modifications are possible at this time provided they are approved by Knoxville City Engineering. This step may be repeated at the discretion of the Facilitating Agency.

Step 10: The Balloting Process

Traffic plans are approved by a community balloting process. The Facilitating Agency will mail the proposed Traffic Calming Plan and Ballot to residents and property owners in the Affected and Impacted Area(s) to determine approval or rejection of the plan.

Franchise

One vote is given to each residential property in the Affected and Impacted Area(s).

Multi-family residential properties, with up to 4 apartments, have ballots mailed to both the renters and property owner. If the property owner does not vote, then the votes of each apartment are tallied and the one vote for the property is assigned based on simple majority. If the renters' votes are split 50/50, then the vote for the property counts neither for nor against the Traffic Plan.

Multi-family residential properties, with more than 4 apartments are considered commercial, and the 1 vote for the property may be placed by the property owner.

Voting Period

Ballots are returned to the Facilitating Agency. The balloting process lasts for 6 weeks from the date of mailing.

Returns may be opened as received at the discretion of the Facilitating Agency, who at their option may divulge running tallies of the total vote prior to completion of the balloting process.

Weighted Vote Tally

Affected areas need relief, but a very small number of dwellings should not be able to hold an entire neighborhood hostage. Likewise, a neighborhood should not be able to dictate to a portion of the neighborhood that their street is to be used as a raceway. Traffic calming solutions make drivers travel at the posted speed limit, so it is difficult to oppose relief via traffic calming. A balance favoring those in affected areas is desired because our overwhelming goal in this effort is to make our neighborhood streets safer.

By distinguishing between Affected and Impacted Area(s), an equitable balance can be achieved. A Traffic Plan is Approved if the following criteria are met:

- Residential properties in Affected Area(s) must have 75% of ballots returned and 80% in favor of those returned. This ensures that there is overwhelming support from those who will benefit most from the traffic calming measures.
- Residential properties in impacted areas combined with affected areas must have 30% of ballots returned and 60% in favor of those returned. This ensures that overwhelming support exists from all who are impacted by traffic calming measures.

If a ballot fails, this Traffic Calming Plan Development and Approval Process may be repeated at the discretion of the Facilitating Agency.

Allocation of Funds to Implement Approved Traffic Calming Plans

Of the districts with approved plans, the city's total traffic calming budget shall be equally allocated to each district.

Traffic engineering shall provide a report to City Council for each budget period consisting of all traffic plans which have been submitted and approved by the community, along with cost estimates, and ranking of the traffic plans in order of need versus cost. Priority shall be given to plans with the highest need versus cost, and engineering shall provide public, written explanation of each ranking.

Need shall be assessed according to the following criteria (in no particular order):

- the number of homes in the affected area
- the number of traffic crashes in the impacted area
- the average speed and traffic volume at all study locations
- the number of significant safety problems
- the number of years that the plan has been approved, but not implemented due to lack of funding

No funding in excess of 50% of the district budget shall be allocated to a single plan until all other approved plans in the district have been fully-funded or there are no other approved plans in the district.

If a plan's cost exceeds its budget allocation for this period:

- it may be partially implemented at the discretion of City Engineering and the remainder of the plan may be re-submitted and ranked on its own merit for a subsequent budget, or
- money will be earmarked and the plan implemented when total sufficient funds are allocated.