



CITY OF KIRKLAND

123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033 (425) 587-3000
www.ci.kirkland.wa.us

MEMORANDUM

To: Dave Ramsay, City Manager

From: Noel Schoneman, Neighborhood Traffic Control Coordinator

Date: March 20, 2008

Subject: Letter to Mr. Robert Style regarding his objection the use of speed bumps

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council authorize the Mayor to sign a letter responding to Mr. Robert Style who has objected to the City's use of speed bumps because they slow or divert emergency response vehicles.

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION

Mr. Robert Style sent a letter to the City Council by e-mail on March 10, 2008 expressing objections to the City's use of "speed bumps" on residential streets. Mr. Style believes such devices slow or divert emergency response vehicles.

The letter drafted in response to Mr. Style explains that the Public Works Department has changed its design standard from solid speed humps to slotted speed cushions. The slots in the speed cushions are spaced so that these devices have virtually no impact on emergency response while still slowing general traffic. The letter further explains that the Public Works and Fire Departments work closely together on the application of speed cushions. Mr. Style cited 10 Avenue S. between State Street S. and Lake Street South as an example, however this street has a series of 3 speed cushions, not the solid speed humps.

From: RLSTYLE@aol.com [mailto:RLSTYLE@aol.com]

Sent: Monday, March 10, 2008 2:13 PM

To: KirklandCouncil

Subject: Speed bumps

Honorable Councilmembers:

I've noticed more speed bumps being installed on residential streets. Speed bumps are designed to prevent speeding. I remind the council that residential streets have a speed limit of 25 mph; so, any speed bump on residential streets that does not allow traffic to proceed at 25 mph may be illegal. If lower speeds are desired, then post a new speed limit but first adopt street standards that pertain to the entire city, not special interest.

I have already documented two cases of emergency responses from Station 22 in Houghton where they did not take the shortest route to the emergency on Lake Washington Blvd, NE. There are speed bumps on 10th Ave South so the driver elected to select a longer route. I hope it doesn't happen to me when I need help. You can be sure I'll be timing the response and the route they take.

If the Fire Chief wants to provide the best service in the least amount of time, I cannot believe he would condone speed bumps. But he likes his job so he has and will placate his profession in order to satisfy the council's efforts to install special interest speed bumps. The council needs to change it's policy, not the Fire Chief.

Sincerely,

Robert L. Style
6735 Lake Washington Blvd, NE
Kirkland, WA 98033
425-827-0216

April 1, 2008

DRAFT

Robert Style
6735 Lake Washington Blvd NE
Kirkland, WA. 98033

Subject: Speed Cushions

Dear Mr. Style:

Thank you for the e-mail you sent to the City Council expressing your views on speed humps and the importance of emergency responses in Kirkland.

Please know that the Fire and Public Works Departments routinely work together to enhance emergency response on arterials and on primary emergency response routes. For example, street improvement projects that improve traffic flow, reduce traffic congestion, and which allow the Fire Department to preempt traffic signals are big assists to emergency responses.

These departments also work closely together when new traffic calming devices are being considered – even on streets not designated as Emergency Response Routes. Since speed cushions do impact general traffic, as you noted, the City sets a high threshold before these devices are even considered. Prevailing traffic speeds must be at least 5 mph over the speed limit and there needs to be a 70% support rate from the residents in the impact area as determined by a neighborhood voting process.

We agree that if every driver obeyed the speed limits traffic calming devices would not be needed. However, that ideal doesn't exist, so the right balance between slowing motorists for traffic safety and improving response times for fire and medial safety must be found.

As part of our effort to strike the best balance between these two safety responsibilities, our design standards were changed so that slotted speed cushions are installed instead of the solid speed humps. The Public Works and Fire Departments worked together to develop this new standard for the City by testing the three types of vehicles that the Fire Department uses: the Aid Unit, Engine, and Ladder Truck. These vehicles were timed over a series of solid speed humps and again after the speed humps were converted to slotted speed cushions. Both sets of data were compared with times for no traffic calming devices. This study revealed that the slotted speed cushions, like those on 10th Avenue S., were effective in controlling general traffic but they caused virtually no delay for emergency vehicles. Because of the success of this test, Public Works changed its design standards and, over time, will convert the solid speed humps to speed cushions as streets are repaved.

Thank you again for expressing your concerns to the City Council.

Sincerely,
KIRKLAND CITY COUNCIL

James L. Lauinger, Mayor

cc: Jeff Blake, Chief, Fire Department
Daryl Grigsby, Director, Public Works