



CITY OF KIRKLAND
Department of Public Works
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033
425-587-3000 www.kirklandwa.gov

MEMORANDUM

To: Transportation Commission

From: Joel Pfundt, AICP CTP, Transportation Manager
Victoria Kovacs, AICP, Transportation Planner

Date: January 19, 2023

Subject: Neighborhood Traffic Control Program Policy Revisions

I. RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a briefing on the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program (NTCP) and proposed revisions to the corresponding Roadway Pre-Approved Policy to streamline the community engagement process and refine engineering criteria to better implement neighborhood traffic calming projects as part of reviving the program.

II. BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:

The Neighborhood Traffic Control Program (NTCP) was established in 1993 to address Kirkland resident concerns about high traffic volumes and speeds on residential streets. The program had dedicated part-time staff and a capital budget to respond to resident requests. Solutions provided by the program included traffic calming education and infrastructure ranging from low level intervention measures such pavement markings and striping, signage, and deploying the portable speed radar trailer; to high level intervention measures such as speed humps/cushions, traffic circles, and curb bulbs. The level of intervention was determined by City traffic studies of vehicle speeds and volumes, as well as neighborhood support measured through a voting process.

With the funding cuts due to the Great Recession, the program was discontinued in 2009. In 2011, the City annexed the areas of Finn Hill, North Juanita, and Kingsgate which added 7 square miles to Kirkland. To address the impacts of budget cuts to transportation programs and increased service needs, a Levy for City Street Maintenance and Pedestrian Safety was put on a ballot measure, which Kirkland voters approved in 2012. This ballot measure provided funding to hire a part-time Neighborhood Traffic Control Coordinator in 2014 to revive the NTCP, as well as create the Neighborhood Safety Program (NSP) to re-energize neighborhood associations through partnerships on capital project implementation.

Though NTCP gained a part time coordinator and a bi-annual capital budget of \$50,000, with a larger city in terms of geographic area and population, these resources were not sufficient for implementing more complex traffic calming devices such as speed cushions or traffic circles given the time-intensive community engagement process needed to meet the high threshold of neighborhood support, as well as the cost of infrastructure. Inexpensive traffic calming measures

such as striping or signs were accommodated through other existing program budgets, and more costly devices such as radar speed signs were often proposed for funding through the NSP. Conversely, traffic calming projects suggested through the NSP process often did not meet the NTCP technical speed and volume criteria for implementation, nor had adequate time for the neighborhood engagement process for community acceptance. Thus, traffic calming projects suggested in the NSP program often did not make the final project selection or ranked low in the prioritization process and did not receive funding. While the NSP program has implemented some traffic calming devices including median islands, curb bulbs, and speed radar signs on Collector and Arterial streets, no speed cushions or traffic circles have been pursued nor implemented on Local or Collector streets through NTCP since 2008 when the program was smaller in scope and more actively managed.

The part time Neighborhood Traffic Control Coordinator retired in 2020, and with budget shortfalls due to the COVID-19 pandemic, funding for replacement staff for the NTCP was eliminated and the program was put on hiatus as of August 1, 2020. Since suspension of the program, resident requests for traffic calming received through [Our Kirkland](#) are addressed on an ad hoc basis by Transportation Engineering staff, and minor traffic calming interventions such as signs and striping are accommodated where possible through other program budgets including sign maintenance and the annual striping program.

In June 2022, Council adopted the [Vision Zero Action Plan](#), which outlines a list of objectives and strategies in order to reach the goal of zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries by 2035. These objectives and strategies follow the safe systems approach, which is a holistic method of reducing fatal and serious crashes by recognizing that humans make mistakes and focusing on the systems in place to create redundant layers of safety and minimize the impact a human error can make. The four objectives outlined in the Action Plan to address these systems are as follows:

- Objective 1: Prioritize Safe Street Design
- Objective 2: Operate Safe Streets
- Objective 3: Build a Robust and Transparent Data Framework
- Objective 4: Promote and Institutionalize a Culture of Safety

While the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program is not explicitly identified as a strategy in the Vision Zero Action Plan, implementing traffic calming measures in response to speeding problems supports the plan Objective 1: Prioritize Safe Street Design, and Objective 2: Operate Safe Streets.

With Council adoption of the [2023-2024 budget](#), dedicated funding in the 2023-2028 Capital Improvement Program for the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program has been increased to \$50,000 per year. This will provide the funding resources necessary for a select number of NTCP related intervention measures to be implemented each year. To support use of these funds for traffic calming projects, Staff recommends revising the current NTCP [Policy R-20](#) to streamline the community engagement process and refine the engineering criteria for implementation.

III. NTCP COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS:

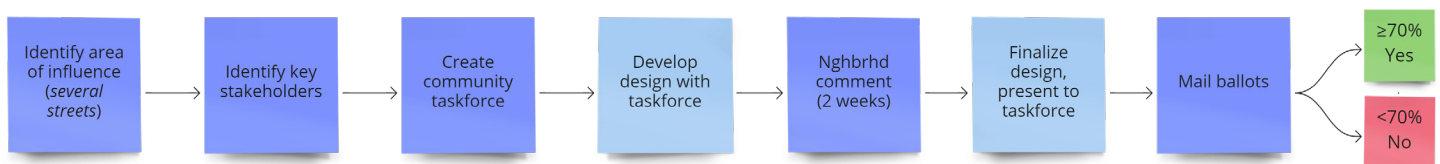
Policy T-4.7 of the [2015 Transportation Master Plan](#) and the corresponding Action T-4.7.1, *Help citizens solve neighborhood traffic concerns by maintaining a program focused on addressing such*

concerns, highlights the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program and its focus on public involvement and traffic calming projects across neighborhoods. This policy recognizes that lower speed limits have a significant safety and quality of life benefit for neighborhoods, and that changing speed limits and police enforcement in isolation are not enough to reduce speeding drivers.

The planning and community engagement process for NTCP traffic calming measures is outlined in Roadway Pre-Approved Plans [Policy R-20](#). Traffic calming measures for a particular street are determined by City conducted traffic studies of roadway speeds and volumes; and are implemented using a three-phase approach. The first phase involves low-cost tools such as education, signage, or striping. The second phase involves more costly measures such as radar speed signs. The third phase involves traffic calming devices which make physical changes to the street, such as speed cushions, traffic circles, and curb bulbs.

In addition to engineering criteria of roadway speeds and volumes, Phase Three measures currently require **70% approval from the broader neighborhood** prior to implementation. Typical neighborhood stakeholders to engage in the process are listed in Policy-20, including residents on the street of the improvement, residents on adjoining or connecting streets, and other stakeholders such as schools, neighborhood associations, and HOAs. The current NTCP engagement process involves creation of a neighborhood task force to develop a traffic calming plan with City staff, mailing of the draft traffic plan to the neighborhood for a comment period, revising the traffic plan to incorporate comments, and mailing a final traffic plan with a ballot to the neighborhood. The final traffic plan would be approved for implementation if the neighborhood votes tally 70% in favor. This process is outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Current NTCP Community Engagement Process for Phase Three Measures



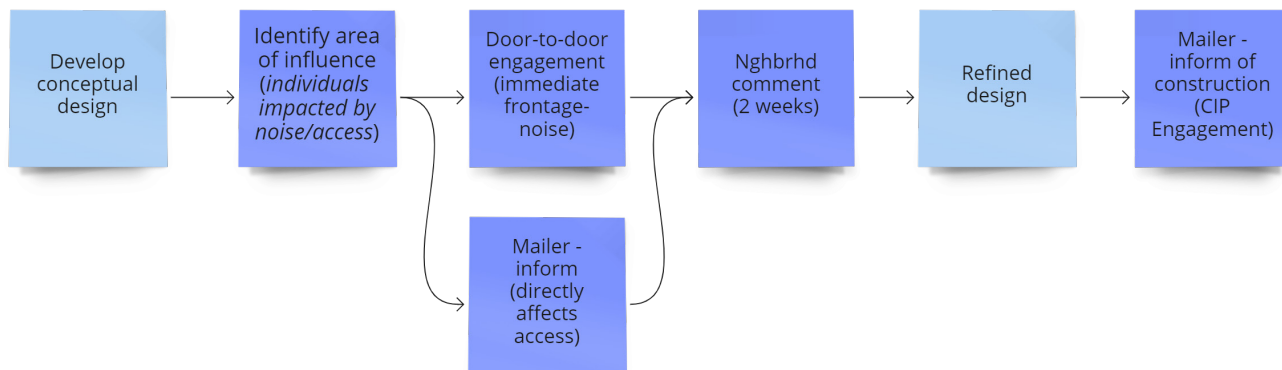
While this process empowers the neighborhood to have control over design decisions of a particular street or neighborhood, it requires dedicated City staff resources to facilitate the process, and strong **community commitment over the course of a year or longer**. For example, the speed cushions adjacent to Rose Hill Elementary were discussed, approved, and implemented over a seven-month process in 2004, but the initial neighborhood discussion for traffic calming plan was proposed and rejected in 2002. From 2014-2020 when the NTCP had one part time coordinator responsible for citywide NTCP service requests, facilitation of the neighborhood engagement process was posed as a responsibility to the community requestor. Unfortunately, when presented with Policy R-20, no community requestor took upon this engagement duty in order to advance their traffic calming request. As a result, no Phase Three traffic calming measures have been pursued through NTCP since 2008 when the program was more actively managed by dedicated City staff, and the program covered a city that at the time was significantly smaller in both geography and population.

Today, there is greater urgency to take a more authoritative approach to reduce neighborhood speeding given the City's commitment to Vision Zero. While more intrusive Phase Three physical

traffic calming devices such as speed cushions may have some perceived undesirable local effects, such as visual or noise impacts for adjacent property owners, the safety benefits of reduced speeds outweigh any potential negative side effects.

Additionally, while an annual capital budget is now available to revive NTCP, there is not a dedicated NTCP Coordinator to manage the program, so management of NTCP will be done by a team of Transportation Engineering staff. As such, Transportation Engineering staff have proposed amending the NTCP community engagement process for Phase Three traffic calming measures to more of a “consult” level of public participation with a more focused group of neighborhood stakeholders. This process would include door to door consultation with those who are directly affected by visual or noise impacts of a traffic calming device and mailed notification to residents of the street of the proposed traffic control device and residents of connecting local streets. This proposed process would still invite neighborhood input to influence the design or placement of traffic calming devices, but the project would proceed to implementation without the neighborhood-wide balloting process once any comments have been addressed. This revised process would support the City’s new emphasis on a safe systems approach for roadway design by allowing the City to address neighborhood speeding complaints more proactively without a protracted community approval process, match the expected level of public participation with current staffing allocated to the program, and add physical traffic calming measures back into the practical “toolbox” of NTCP. The proposed engagement process is outlined in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Proposed NTCP Community Engagement Process for Phase Three Measures



Note engineering criteria of vehicle volume and speeds would still be required prior to consideration of Phase Three traffic calming measures. Additionally, the NTCP would first consider less intrusive Phase One or Phase Two interventions, such as signing and striping, prior to recommending any Phase Three devices. A black line markup of the proposed changes to the community engagement process in Policy R-20 is included as Attachment 1.

IV. ENGINEERING CRITERIA

In addition to a streamlined community engagement process for physical traffic calming measures, Transportation Engineering Staff are also proposing revised engineering criteria to allow broader application of traffic calming in support of reducing neighborhood speeds and advancing the City’s Vision Zero goal. Revised engineering criteria for application of traffic calming measures include:

- Expanding application to Collector streets with residential land use contexts,
- Increasing the allowable traffic volume on a particular street to 4,000 vehicles per day

- For Phase One and Phase Two measures, reducing the speeding criteria to at least 15% of vehicles exceeding the speed limit by at least 5mph (reduced from 7mph). Phase 3 measures would still require speeding of at least 7 mph over the posted limit.
- Clarifying that criteria of primary emergency response routes, bus routes, or long wheel vehicle volumes would only inhibit phase three measures that apply physical restrictions to a given street. Phase One and Phase Two measures such as signing and striping could still be considered for these routes.
- Clarifying that before and after traffic studies would be conducted on the proposed street and adjoining local streets for Phase Three measures.

A black line markup of the proposed changes to the engineering criteria in Policy R-20 is also included as Attachment 1.

V. NEXT STEPS:

Staff seek feedback from Transportation Commission on the proposed policy change prior to presenting the proposal to City Council.

Attachments:

1. Black line mark up of proposed changes to Roadway Pre-Approved Plans Policy R-20: Neighborhood Traffic Control Program (NTCP) Traffic Planning and Community Acceptance

CITY OF KIRKLAND

123 FIFTH AVENUE KIRKLAND, WASHINGTON 98033-6189 (425) 587-3800

PRE-APPROVED PLANS POLICY

Policy R-20: NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC CONTROL PROGRAM (NTCP) TRAFFIC PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ACCEPTANCE

The Neighborhood Traffic Control Program (NTCP) uses a three-phase approach to calm traffic on neighborhood access roads; i.e., local, residential streets.

The first phase involves low cost, easy to implement tools, such as education, pavement striping and markings, signage, and the portable radar trailer– each as appropriate to address the issue at hand.

The second phase involves more costly devices, such as radar speed signs or low-cost tactical urbanism approaches that do not restrict the travel lanes but encourage drivers to travel at the legal speed limit.

The third phase involves restrictive physical changes to the street, such as speed cushions and traffic circles. Because restrictive measures require driving over or around these devices on a daily basis, the City ~~will not implement them unless these are in a traffic plan that has strong support from them~~ must notify and solicit comment from local residents and key stakeholders prior to implementation.

Guidelines for traffic calming, community outreach, ~~acceptance~~ and funding are outlined below. Variances from these guidelines might be allowed, depending on the specific circumstances.

Traffic Calming Guidelines

Traffic studies (speed and volume) and crash history are elements to consider when deciding if traffic calming should be implemented and the types of measure that might be appropriate. In addition, general guidelines for implementing traffic calming measures include:

- The maximum legal speed limit is 25 miles per hour.
- The street is not an arterial ~~or collector~~.
- ~~The street is not on a primary emergency response route or bus route.~~
- The street has measured average daily traffic volumes of at least 300 but less than ~~3,000~~ 4,000 vehicles per day.
- At least 15% of the vehicles must be exceeding the posted speed limit by at least ~~7~~ 5 miles per hour as determined by traffic studies.
- ~~Traffic calming changes should not adversely affect neighboring streets; i.e., result in significant changes in speed or traffic volume.~~

- ~~• Traffic volumes should include no more than 5 percent long wheel-based vehicles.~~

Additional guidelines for Phase Three measures include:

- The street is not on a primary emergency response route or bus route.
- Traffic volumes should include no more than 5 percent long wheel-based vehicles.
- At least 15% of the vehicles must be exceeding the posted speed limit by at least 7 miles per hour as determined by traffic studies.
- Pre and post implementation traffic studies are conducted on the street of the traffic calming device, and on connecting local streets to determine network impacts.

Community Engagement

Traffic calming plans that include only Phase One or Phase Two measures require minimal community engagement. If the proposed measures create new noise or visual impacts, the City might notify residents most directly affected. Notifications are typically informational, providing these residents an opportunity to ask questions but are not a voting process.

The process that includes Phase Three restrictive devices requires community engagement, as follows:

1. Public Works will develop a recommendation for a traffic calming intervention.
- 1.2. Public Works will identify the boundaries of the affected neighborhood area of the traffic calming intervention, which should typically include:
 - Residents who live on the street.
 - Residents on local streets that feed into the street in question.
 - ~~c. Nearby residents that would likely use the street to reach other destinations because it is the most direct route. The boundary does not usually include residents or businesses from outlying areas that use the street as an alternative to a more direct but more congested route (i.e., "cut-through" traffic).~~
 - c. Businesses on the street or on local streets that feed into the street in question.
- ~~2. City staff will identify key stakeholders that could be affected and should be included in the traffic planning process. Examples of key stakeholders are homeowner associations (HOAs), neighborhood associations, Kirkland Police, the Kirkland Fire Department, schools with bus routes, transit agencies and businesses within the community boundary, as appropriate.~~
- ~~3. The City will solicit residents from within the community to be part of a neighborhood task force that works with City staff to prepare a traffic calming plan.~~
- ~~4. The City will work with HOAs and the task force to help keep the community at large informed of progress.~~
- 5.3. Once a final draft traffic plan is prepared, the City will mail or conduct door-to-door outreach this to the neighborhood seeking comment ~~and ask HOAs and neighborhood associations (if applicable) to post it to their websites, social media~~

~~and add to newsletters, if available.~~ The comment period is typically two weeks from the date of mailing.

- ~~6. After the comment period, City staff will finalize the traffic plan and present it to the task force. The final plan will be mailed out with ballots, and the results of the balloting will determine community acceptance.~~
4. Based on neighborhood comments, the City will revise the design or location of the traffic calming measure(s) as appropriate, and develop a plan for funding and implementation.

Community Acceptance

~~Traffic plans that include Phase Three traffic-calming tools need strong community support. The community engagement process described above will help prepare the community for voting to approve the final traffic plan. Balloting guidelines for approving a proposed traffic plan are:~~

- ~~• Ballots will be mailed to each household or business with an address that is within the community boundary defined by Public Works.~~
- ~~• Only the City can distribute the ballots.~~
- ~~• Each household or business is allowed one vote.~~
 - ~~○ For balloting purposes, each unit in a multi-family complex is a household.~~
 - ~~○ Each business is allowed one vote.~~
- ~~• When the community at large is 100 households or less, at least 70% of those who receive a ballot must vote "yes".~~
- ~~• When the community at large is more than 100 households, at least 70% of those who return a ballot must vote "yes".~~
- ~~• Abstaining votes or undeliverable ballots are subtracted from the total number of ballots when calculating the percentage of "yes" votes.~~
- ~~• Official city-issued ballots signed by the voter can be returned by fax, mail, email, or hand-delivered. All responses must include the voter's name, phone number, and address for verification purposes only.~~

Funding

Phase One measures are usually low cost and can commonly be incorporated into other City-funded programs. Examples include the annual striping program or installation of standard signs by City crews. Phase Two and Phase Three measures are more costly and typically outside the scopes of existing City programs. Other funding opportunities might be possible, depending on the cost and types of measures, such as the annual Neighborhood Safety Program, which awards grants to City neighborhoods, and the Capital Improvement Program. Other City initiatives might apply at the time a traffic plan is developed and approved. ~~Most programs, though, allocate funds based on a prioritization process, so funding might not be immediately available when a traffic plan is approved.~~ Traffic plans cannot be implemented until funding is secured.