

Tools and Ideas

Neighbourhood Traffic Calming



What is Traffic Calming?

Traffic calming involves slowing the speed or reducing the volume of vehicular traffic on local residential streets to increase safety and livability in the neighbourhoods. Traffic calming measures could include traffic circles, corner bulges, partial diverters, diagonal diverters, signs prohibiting a vehicular movement, street closures, street narrowing, and speed humps (see illustration).

Examples of many of these calming measures can be found in Mount Pleasant and other neighbourhoods in Vancouver such as the West End, Strathcona, Grandview-Woodland, Kitsilano, Hastings-Sunrise, Shaughnessy, and Kerrisdale.

How are Priorities Established for Starting Traffic Calming Plans?

It begins with an individual or group contact by phone, e-mail, in person, or letter to the Greenways and Neighbourhood Transportation Branch at City Hall to describe a traffic speed or volume concern on their neighbourhood street.

City staff evaluate the concern. This would involve reviewing existing traffic in terms of speed, volume and accidents, doing field checks, and acquiring more data which can provide a measure of the "before" condition in the event that calming measures are implemented.

In the past, neighbourhood traffic calming plans were initiated on

either a first-come, first-served basis or were generated from City initiatives such as Local Area Plans. Due to increasing demand for these traffic calming plans, there is a current backlog of neighbourhoods waiting for a plan.

Thus, priorities have been established for developing traffic calming plans. To be equitable, priorities are based on the criteria which objectively measure the problem. The primary criteria for setting priorities are speed and volume. Other factors include proximity to a school zone, Greenway or Bikeway, and/or a "pedestrian generator" (e.g., SkyTrain station, bus loop or retail area), or a lack of a sidewalk.

What is The Process for Implementing a Traffic Calming Plan?

There are three possible processes for traffic calming depending on the problem and potential solutions: the Local Improvement Program; a "neighbourhood-wide" traffic calming plan; or a "street segment" traffic calming plan.

- The Local Improvement Program is available for residents willing to pay for the cost of traffic calming measures - like traffic circles, street trees, or corner bulges - when their street is not deemed to be a problem by the City or they are very low on the priority list. In this process, at least 2/3 of property owners must agree (by

signing a petition) to pay for the traffic calming device. Corner bulges can often be added at no extra cost when a street is being curbed.

- A neighbourhood-wide plan is City-funded and is used when the problem is caused by non-local, external traffic short-cutting through the neighbourhood, or if the solution involves diversionary measures. Frequently the problem on one street cannot be addressed in isolation from other streets in the neighbourhood so the neighbourhood-wide plan is necessary. The planning process is a fairly long one as extensive neighbourhood consultation and consensus is required. Measures including speed humps, traffic circles, and corner bulges are used to slow down traffic and reduce short-cutting.
- A street segment calming plan is also City-funded and is appropriate if the problem is localized on a particular street segment and the solution involves non-diversionary measures. Only immediately affected residents are consulted because traffic diversion to adjacent streets would not be expected. However, traffic counts would be done on adjacent streets to ensure there is no diverted traffic.

In addition to these processes, the Bicycle Network Program utilizes traffic calming measures on the

City's bike routes to help give cyclists some priority on the street and to keep the route from becoming attractive to commuting motorists.

The Greenways Program provides paths for pedestrians and cyclists. Traffic calming measures are used as tools for creating Greenways.

Landscaping of Traffic Calming Projects

The City will put basic landscaping in as part of traffic calming (e.g., in

a traffic circle). However, residents may make arrangements with the City to do the landscaping themselves if they would like to personalize it more to the neighbourhood.

Traffic Calming and Management in Mount Pleasant

In 1987 the Mount Pleasant Traffic Planning Committee was formed to evaluate and recommend measures to address traffic issues on arterial and local streets in Mount Pleasant.

The resulting Mount Pleasant Traffic Management Plan was adopted by City Council in 1989.

Many local streets have traffic circles and corner bulges. Some have partial or full street closures (e.g. 10th Ave at Quebec and Ontario Street at 11th). There have also been traffic calming measures associated with existing bike routes (e.g. Ontario, Windsor, 10th Ave. and Off-Broadway).

Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Measures

