CITY OF LAGUNA HILLS

CITY COUNCIL POLICY
SUBJECT: RESIDENTIAL STREETS TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT POLICY
POLICY NO. 350

Effective Date: *January 1995*
Last Revision: *August 28, 2018*

PURPOSE:

The City Council, Traffic Commission, and staff of the City of Laguna Hills have developed this policy to provide guidance and uniform procedures to address resident concerns regarding traffic safety in our neighborhoods. We desire to resolve, to the extent feasible, our residents' concerns for residential street traffic safety issues. These issues will be documented and addressed through the use of available traffic engineering standards and police enforcement tools. The involvement of the neighborhood in fostering a consensus view of the issues and their resolution will be encouraged. Solutions to documented traffic safety issues will be addressed on an incremental basis from least to greatest actions as necessary to resolve the issue based upon traffic engineering practices.

POLICY:

I. INITIATING AN EVALUATION

The Traffic Engineering Staff shall initiate an evaluation of a traffic safety issue on a residential street when any of the following occurs:

a. A resident has contacted City staff by telephone, letter, or e-mail. Residents are encouraged to utilize the City's website at www.lagunahillsca.gov to access the Request Tracker system to bring issues of concern to the staff's attention.

b. A resident has addressed the City Council or Traffic Commission raising a traffic safety issue on a residential street.

c. The Traffic Commission requests, or the City Council directs, an evaluation of a traffic safety issue on a residential street.

d. The Staff observation of a traffic safety issue.

A single contact by a resident, with concurrence of the City's Traffic Engineer, is sufficient to initiate an evaluation of the stated concern. If the identified issue had previously been evaluated in the prior 18-month period, then the resident will be informed of the results of that previous

evaluation. No further evaluation will be performed until additional time elapses or the Traffic Engineer determines a need has arisen or the City Council so directs. If the traffic safety issue of concern is of a routine nature involving the adjustment, removal, or placement of minor traffic control devices as defined by the Traffic Engineer, then staff will address the issue directly without further evaluation. All other traffic safety concerns on residential streets will proceed through The Evaluation Process.

II. THE EVALUATION PROCESS

When a resident raises a traffic safety concern on a residential street involving the speed of traffic, the total volume of traffic, the amount of pass through traffic, traffic collision events, or pedestrian access issues, the following will occur:

a. The Police Services Department will be advised of the issue for potential enforcement, as resources permit. Police enforcement of traffic laws is recognized as a first line of defense in resolving certain traffic safety issues. If, in the opinion of the Traffic Engineer, police enforcement is the primary solution to the issue, further evaluation will be suspended until the results of the enforcement activity can be reviewed. The Traffic Engineer will make a review of the impact of enforcement within 90 days of the initiation of enforcement.

b. An evaluation of the traffic safety issue will be undertaken following the determination of the need for, or results of, enforcement as described above. An evaluation may involve the collection of traffic speed data, volume data, pass through volume data, traffic collision history reviews, and field reviews that will typically be performed within 60 days of the request.

c. An evaluation report by the Traffic Engineer will be scheduled before the next available meeting of the Traffic Commission. If the issue of concern can be documented by data collection, traffic collision history and/or field reviews as being a traffic safety issue, then an incremental approach to a resolution of the issue will be recommended to the Traffic Commission.

d. The resident raising the issue will be presented a copy of the staff report prior to the Traffic Commission meeting and will also be invited to attend the meeting to address the issue before the Traffic Commission.

e. Following any action of the Traffic Commission that results in implementation of a change on a residential street and requires a legislative action by the City Council, a staff report will be prepared and presented to the next available City Council meeting for approval or modification of the recommendation. Otherwise, staff will proceed to implement non-legislative changes on a residential street in accordance with the budget and Traffic Engineering standards. The Traffic Commission meeting, and subsequent City Council meeting process, is typically completed within a 30-day time frame. Should changes to traffic control devices be approved by the City Council, the subsequent work is typically completed in the following 30-day time frame.

III. DATA COLLECTION

The evaluation and data collection effort of a traffic safety issue on a residential street will follow established traffic engineering practices and procedures as outlined within the State Traffic Manual, California Vehicle Code, and other professional literature. The evaluation and traffic data collection effort will typically include the following:

a. A field review of the location to confirm that the street meets the California Vehicle Code definition (CVC Section 515) for a Residential Street and that the designated speed limit is 25 mph.

b. An evaluation of the roadway geometrics to determine if appropriate visibility exists (sight distance) on the approach to intersections and to document any unusual conditions that may raise traffic safety concerns.

c. A review of the most recent three or more year history of available traffic collision records to determine if there are any significant trends in collisions.

d. Collection of 24-hour traffic volumes.

e. Collection of peak hour pass through traffic volume counts by manual methods. The peak hour pass through traffic volume count will be assumed to be typical of daily conditions.

f. Performance of spot speed studies by radar to determine the prevailing speed of traffic. The spot speed studies will be performed during off-peak times of the day to represent normal driving conditions of the reasonable driver. For information only, as needed, when the traffic safety issue of concern is believed to be occurring

at a particular time of day, a 24-hour Speed Profile will be collected. The spot speed radar studies will be performed for periods of time sufficient to collect the number of vehicles necessary for a valid statistical sampling of the traffic speed on the street. Alternative traffic speed data collection methods may be used as deemed appropriate by the Traffic Engineer. The prevailing speed of traffic, the 85th percentile, will be considered to be the normal traffic speed on the street unless there is prevalent speed-related traffic collision history.

IV. APPROACH TO SPEEDING ISSUES

The speed limit on residential streets in the State of California is, whether posted or not, 25 mph. For a street to have this speed limit, it must meet the definition of a residential street that is found in the California Vehicle Code (CVC) in Section 515. That Code Section requires a certain number of fronting residential homes on the street within a specified distance. Some streets that are "residential in character" are actually not residential streets within the meaning of the CVC. However, if the street does meet the definition of a residential street, then the 25 mph speed limit will be presumed for all analysis.

Through numerous studies of traffic speeds on residential streets in the City, it has been found that the typical prevailing traffic speed range is between 32 and 34 mph. The prevailing speed is the speed at which 85% of the motorists drive at or below. If motorists are driving on a residential street in the 32 to 34 mph range, and they are doing so safely as evidenced by a lack of documented speed-related traffic collisions, and a field review of the location did not reveal any unusual conditions raising other concerns for traffic safety, then that speed range will not automatically trigger implementation of this Policy. Accordingly, actions to address speeding issues on residential streets will only be recommended when the prevailing speed of traffic on the street has been found to be greater than 32 to 34 mph or other unusual conditions exist on the roadway that raise traffic safety concerns as determined by the Traffic Engineer.

For residential streets that have been found to have a speeding issue meeting the above criteria, an incremental approach to controlling the speed will be undertaken. The first action will be traffic speed enforcement. The enforcement of traffic laws will be the primary tool to gain compliance of the speed limit and will also be supplemented by the placement of the radar speed trailer. The radar speed trailer is an electronic display device utilized to advise motorists of their vehicle speed

as an education effort. To the extent that a motorist is not paying attention to their speed, the use of the radar speed trailer will remind them of that condition. The reasonable driver is then expected to adjust their speed downward into the prevailing speed range.

Upon the implementation of a recommendation to address a speeding issue on a residential street, a period of time will lapse to allow the implemented action to take effect on the traffic speed. Typically, a six-month period of time will be allocated and then a follow-up review of the traffic speed will be performed, if determined necessary by the Traffic Engineer. Should the speeding issue remain; the next incremental action will be recommended.

Following the use of traffic speed enforcement and the radar speed trailer for speed control, the use of traffic control devices, regulatory signs and markings, warning signs, and striping, will be used in an effort to reduce vehicular speed. On a case-by-case basis, the Traffic Engineer will recommend signing and striping which is appropriate for the particular residential street and the issue to be addressed. Signing, for example, supplemented with striping, will be used to guide vehicles around curves or through an area which otherwise requires delineation. All signing and striping shall be consistent with established Traffic Engineering standards.

The traffic control devices to be considered for use in addressing the speed of traffic will include, but not be limited to, the following:

a. 25 mph speed limit signs.

b. White “25” pavement legends. Oversized legends may also be used.

c. Curve warning signs with speed advisory plates.

d. “Watch Downhill Speed” signs.

e. “Strict Enforcement Area” graphic and letter sign.

f. Ceramic raised pavement markers as rumble strips.

g. Perpendicular painted white bars with increasing frequency to represent a speed condition.

h. Centerline striping.

i. Supplementary reflective raised pavement markers.

j. Other traffic control devices as approved in the manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices and/or the California Traffic Control Device Committee.

Stop signs are not included in the above list. Stop signs are not intended for use as a speed control device. The primary purpose for a stop sign control is the assignment of right of way. The State Traffic Manual and professional literature repeatedly identify that stop sign controls are not appropriate for speed control. Several studies have shown no appreciable change in the prevailing speed of traffic on a street by the use of stop signs. The analysis for the need for stop sign controls takes into account the volume of traffic at the intersection, the accident history at the location, and any extenuating circumstances that, in the opinion of the Traffic Engineer, add to the need for the control. The evaluation of speed on a street is not a part of this analysis. If used improperly, a stop sign may contribute to increased occurrences of collisions and a general disregard for the traffic control device. The prudent placement of stop sign controls can improve traffic safety in an area when there is a determination that the control will be perceived by the reasonable driver as an appropriate device where placed.

Only after the installation of the above described traditional and incremental techniques, and the evaluation period, will the City consider the utilization of physical controls to address the identified traffic safety issues.

V. APPROACH TO VOLUME ISSUES

Traffic volume issues typically are either concerns for the total volume of traffic or the volume of pass through traffic. While not distinctly defined, experience suggests that low volume residential streets typically carry 1,500 or fewer vehicles per day, medium volume residential streets carry typically 1,500 to 3,000 vehicles per day, and higher volume residential street typically carry greater than 3,000 vehicles per day. Many moderate to high volume residential streets have been designed as, and are expected to act as, collector streets and carry higher traffic volumes. An evaluation of traffic volume issues will attempt to determine the causes of the volume and whether or not the traffic can be distributed to other non-residential streets.

Pass through traffic volumes vary greatly and must be considered on a case-by-case basis. The primary method to address the traffic volume on a residential street will be to keep it on the arterial streets with traffic flow improvements. Measures, which shift traffic volume from one residential street to another one, are undesirable and will be avoided. The use of physical devices are to cause a shift in traffic volumes and patterns and will only be considered after careful evaluation and an environmental assessment as to the impacts of such a shift in traffic may have on other locations.

VI. PHYSICAL DEVICES

Physical devices will only be considered as a last use effort to resolve an identified traffic safety issue that has been documented as not being resolved by other means described in this Policy. Physical devices are roadway features and may include barricades, chokers, cul-de-sacs, medians, one-way streets, semi-diverters, speed humps and related improvements.

One of the physical devices most often requested for speed or volume control is a speed hump. Speed humps have been documented in certain but not all cases, to reduce the prevailing speed of traffic depending upon their spacing and frequency of use. While not specifically designed as a traffic volume control device, speed humps can cause some reduction in traffic volumes as motorists seek other routes due to the inconvenience factor caused by speed humps.

A speed hump, in contrast to a speed bump, is an elongated, gentle roadway feature typically 12 feet across with a height of approximately 3 inches, which gives the traversing vehicle a gentle rise and fall as a reminder that the 25 mph speed for the street should be followed. A speed bump, typically two feet across with a height of approximately 4 inches, can jolt vehicles and their passenger, motorcycles, and bicycles, is to be avoided.

Speed humps are typically placed in not less than groups of three at approximately 400-foot spacings in order to achieve the desired result of addressing the upper speed of vehicles. Speed humps are always coupled with extensive signing and striping and may be objectionable to residential neighborhoods.

Physical devices, including speed humps, will only be considered for use where other appropriate traffic controls have failed to address the

documented traffic safety issue, where an environmental assessment has been considered and where the following minimum criteria are met.

a. At least 67% of the affected residents of the street and adjacent area streets support the implementation of the physical device. The streets to be used to evaluate the support for the physical device will be those that reasonably can be inferred to draw traffic to the street of concern.

b. The prevailing speed of traffic has been documented to be greater than 34 mph for at least two radar speed surveys taken 90 days apart as part of the follow-up evaluation of all other traffic controls used to address the issue.

c. At least 1,500 vehicles traverse the street in a 24-hour period.

d. The location meets the approval of the Police and Fire Department related to adequate response time of safety vehicles.

e. The grade of the street shall not exceed 6%.

f. The street must have a length of at least 1,300 feet and be able to accommodate a minimum of three speed humps unless otherwise directed by the City Council.

g. Other issues related to traffic engineering will be considered as deemed appropriate by the City Traffic Engineer.

ATTACHMENTS:

- None