III. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On December 14, 1999, the Belmont City Council directed the Public Works Department to form a Traffic Calming Task The first Task Force meeting was held on March 9, 2000. There were a total of 7 meetings where the content of this program was discussed and workshops examined the application of traffic calming The final two meetings on June 15, 2000 and June 29, 2000 focused on finalizing the Final Draft Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program to be ready for Planning Commission review on July 18, 2000 and City Council adoption on July 25, 2000.

Objectives

The objective of a Traffic Calming Program is to calm traffic, as opposed to controlling traffic. Devices such as signs, striping, pavement messages, traffic signals and police enforcement control traffic, according to laws, rules and regulations passed to legally control the conduct of drivers. Traffic calming consists of physical measures designed to influence the behavior of drivers.

The Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program deals with residential and collector streets only. The primary objective of this program is to enhance the safety and livability of Belmont's neighborhood streets. The program enables the City of Belmont to respond to neighborhood traffic issues using a defined formal process.

Measures

Traffic calming measures are "self-enforcing" because they influence behavior. The measures are effective because drivers instinctively comply. Traffic calming measures work 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. The new "toolbox" of physical traffic calming measures has been successful in communities around the world.

The current focus of traffic calming is to alter the physical shape of the roadway to inhibit speed. This is accomplished by vertical (such as speed humps) and horizontal (such as narrowing the street) measures which make the roadway more difficult to travel at high speed, either because of discomfort or the need to maneuver the vehicle more in order to negotiate the street.

Criteria

The minimum criteria for installation of traffic calming measures are:

- "Critical" speed in excess of posted speed by 5 mph
- Peak Hourly volume (PHV) over 1000

Either of these base criteria can be adjusted by each of the following:

- Every 1 mph of "Critical" speed in excess of 5 mph over posted can equal 200 vpd
- Every 200 vpd over 1000 can equal 1 mph of "Critical" speed

- Every 5 mph of peak speed over the posted speed can equal 2 mph or 400 vpd.

Every 5% of cut-through volume over 20% can equal 1 mph or 200 vpd

Speed

The most commonly used speed criteria for traffic calming is the "85th Percentile" or "Critical" speed, which is the speed only 15% of drivers exceed. If the 85th Percentile exceeds the speed limit, usually 25 mph on residential streets, by a set amount, traffic calming is appropriate.

The criteria followed by this program will have as its primary objective the reduction of peak speeds. If measured peak speeds exceed the speed limit by a certain amount, traffic calming is appropriate.

Volume

Traffic calming installations also reduce traffic volumes by making a route less attractive as a high traffic street. By making the street appear to be a neighborhood street or a pedestrian friendly street, motorists will be less inclined to use the street as a through roadway. This is accomplished by measures which add pedestrian linkages and landscaping along the roadway.

Traffic volumes are measured by Average Daily Traffic (ADT), which measures the congestion felt on the street. Residential streets are designed to accommodate peak hourly volumes of approximately 1000 vpd.

Cut-Through Traffic

Both speed and volume reduction measures apply to streets with significant "cut-through" volumes. By making the residential street take longer, or appear to handle less traffic, "cut-through" traffic will return to the collector or arterial which was designed to accommodate the traffic volumes.

Emergency Response Routes

Many of Belmont's neighborhood streets are designated emergency response routes. Emergency vehicles are affected most by vertical measures, those which cause a vehicle to experience an uncomfortable vertical movement. Measures sufficient to cause discomfort to automobiles will cause a serious effect on much larger vehicles, such as fire engines, and medical emergency vehicles carrying patients.

Impacted Areas

A traffic calming measure installed to solve a problem in one location may move the problem to another location. This is not a desirable or acceptable result. City staff will

evaluate the impact of implementing traffic calming at the requested location or area on adjacent intersections, street sections or street systems.

Speed Hump Policy

The City of Belmont passed a Speed Hump Policy on April 9, 1996 (see Appendix D). The policy prohibits speed humps on designated local emergency vehicle routes.

The Speed Hump Policy may be revisited in the future based on new technologies for vertical measures, such as speed cushions, split speed humps, speed tables and raised intersections. Revisions to this policy will require separate action by City Council in cooperation with the South County Fire Department and the Belmont Police Department.

Priority

The City of Belmont program will initially be request driven, where priority will be based on the date of the request.

The Task Force has recommended that a City-wide traffic calming study be considered to determine where traffic calming is needed the most, and implement in the order of priority by score

Quality

This program recommends that the low budget designs for traffic calming measures will usually not be appropriate in Belmont. The high aesthetic/low maintenance designs should be proposed for all traffic claming measures

Implementation Process (See Flow Chart Page 8)

When a request for traffic calming is received, staff first determines whether a simpler procedure could be used. The City will make an effort to resolve an identified traffic issue without having to embark on the traffic calming process.

Application / Petition

A request for traffic calming must be received from a neighborhood association or by a petition signed by 25 percent of the households on each block where action is requested.

Study Phase

A letter is sent to all households within the impacted area to notify residents that a project is beginning, to share the data gathered so far, and to ask if there are other traffic issues that should be addressed. Traffic data, including speeds, volumes and accident history will be routinely collected for each traffic calming request. A residents meetings will also be held to discuss the project, with working groups to develop traffic calming plans.

Survey Phase

The preferred plan and alternative(s) are mailed to impacted area residents along with announcement of a meeting. Staff prepares a survey for residents asking if they would support undertaking a six-month trial. Staff prepares an environmental assessment to help assess impacts during the trial.

Trial Phase

Staff prepares a report to the Planning Commission in order to request approval to conduct a trial of the traffic calming plan. The recommendations of the Commission are then forwarded to the City Council for final approval. The detailed plan for the trial is then designed and constructed. The typical trial period will be six months.

Permanent Installation

After six months, staff evaluates the results of the trial plan. Staff distributes a survey to determine if residents believe that the trial was successful and if the project should be considered for permanent installation. Support must be indicated by a super majority (67+ percent) of survey responses.

Staff prepares a report to the Planning Commission on the outcome of the trial plan. The Commission recommends to the City Council if the trial plan should be removed, modified or made permanent. Final approval rests with the City Council. The permanent installation is designed constructed.

Removal

Removal of a previously approved traffic calming plan will require the same process be followed that was used to install the plan initially. Traffic calming measures may also be subject to removal for various reasons, including conformity with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), impacts on emergency services, accident problems, or safety problems determined by the Traffic Safety Committee.

Funding

The City of Belmont has identified $25,000 per year in the Capital Improvement Budget for 2001 and following years funding for initial studies and for limited trial installations of traffic calming measures. Funding for permanent installations will be considered by the City Council after successful completion of trial installations. If residents desire to speed up the final construction process, the City will consider full (not partial) resident or property owner funding of a traffic calming project.

Maintenance

The City has determined that high aesthetic/low maintenance designs are preferred to reduce the future burden on City forces to maintain traffic calming measures. These type of measures will include landscaping and irrigation systems, both of which require continuous maintenance in perpetuity.

If residents desire to speed the final approval of project funding by reducing the long term fiscal impact of the project, individual property owners, groups of property owners or a homeowners association may “adopt” the traffic calming landscaping and irrigation.

Next Steps

The first candidate streets, Hastings Drive and Chula Vista Drive, have already been determined according to the directions of the City Council. These streets are now ready to enter into the public participation and approval element of the official approval process pursuant to the program, as soon as it is approved by the City Council.