

Neighborhood Traffic Operations: Traffic Calming Program

Under both state law and the Seattle Municipal Code, the speed limit on our non-arterial streets is 25 mph. Addressing community concerns when large numbers of drivers routinely travel much faster than the speed limit requires active participation by residents, working in a strong partnership with SDOT. This is always done in a phased approach, starting with ensuring that SDOT and the community have a clear and common understanding of the nature of the concern. We work together to educate drivers that use the street, whether they live in your neighborhood or elsewhere, and direct enforcement where it will have the most benefit. Moving through the process, we might identify relatively simple measures, such as reconfiguring parking on your street, or develop feasible and fundable traffic calming projects that address your concern.

Please read through the following information, which provides an overview of the steps we'll take in working with you, and let us know if you want to work with us to address speeding on your street.

Phase I

- **Step 1 – Application**

Concerned with speeding or volumes on your street? Then please fill out this online [Resident Request Form](#). Or you can call SDOT neighborhood Traffic Operations at (206) 684-0353. If you leave a message, please leave your phone number, email address and the street you are concerned about.

- **Step 2 - Preliminary Assessment**

SDOT staff will conduct a brief preliminary assessment and respond to you. If the preliminary assessment suggests that your street is suited for consideration under the traffic calming program, you will be provided with an enrollment form that begins your participation in the traffic calming program.

- **Step 3 – Enrolling in the Traffic Calming Program**

To ensure that there is broad community support for participating in the traffic calming program, we'll ask that you enlist the support of at least four of your neighbors. Once you return the [enrollment form](#) with their signatures, we ask that at least one of you attend a [Neighborhood Traffic Safety Meeting](#), which is held in the evening at alternating locations throughout the city. At the meeting, you will participate in a discussion of different traffic calming options, and you and/or your neighbors will be trained in the use of the radar speed gun.

- **Step 4 – Neighborhood Speed Monitoring**

[Neighborhood Speed Monitoring](#) is an important step in the educational and enforcement aspects of the traffic calming program. During this step, you will collect information, using a radar speed gun, about vehicle speeds on your street. This information serves as a good “snap shot” of how drivers are behaving as they travel through your neighborhood. We'll also send letters to drivers that were measured as traveling faster than 30 mph.

- **Step 5 – SDOT Review**

Next, SDOT staff will compile the results of your radar speed gun data. We will calculate the “85th percentile speed”. This is the speed that 85% of drivers are traveling at or below, and is a good measure of overall driver compliance with the speed limit. We also review your data to determine approximate traffic volumes and direction of travel.

At this point, we'll work with you on developing appropriate [community-oriented traffic calming measures](#). These measures may consist of signs, parking management, and educational tools that encourage drivers on your street to slow down.

Phase II

SDOT will conduct traffic studies to see if the measures implemented in Phase I were able to lower vehicle speeds. If speeds are still high, SDOT staff will work with your community in identifying which (if any) [Physical Traffic Calming Measures](#) may be effective at further reducing speeds. All physical traffic calming measures have advantages and disadvantages, but there may be measures that are suitable for use on your street.

Streets identified for potential traffic calming projects are prioritized based on speed, available funding and community support.

If speeds are not high enough to qualify for Phase II funding of traffic calming devices, SDOT may encourage you to apply for [Alternative Funding](#).

Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program: Traffic Safety Meetings

Neighborhood Traffic Operations (NTO), a workgroup within the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), holds bi-monthly community meetings that rotate throughout the city. These meetings are geared toward residents who have concerns with speeding on their residential street and are interested in working with NTO.

The meetings begin at **6:30 p.m.** and will conclude at 7:30 p.m.

The meetings will include a power point presentation, with a brief overview of different traffic calming options, what steps a neighborhood must take to be considered for traffic calming, criteria staff use to prioritize projects, and possible funding sources.

Residents will also become familiar with the proper use of radar speed guns.

If residents want to enroll their street in the traffic calming program, a representative from their street must attend one of these meetings.

Traffic Calming Program: Neighborhood Speed Monitoring

At the Neighborhood Traffic Safety community meeting, attendees will be trained in use of the radar speed gun. The radar gun can be reserved on a first come, first served basis.

At the time the equipment is picked up, a loan and usage agreement is signed. The equipment may be used up to three calendar days. You will also be given [Speed Data Forms](#) to record information about all vehicles traveling on the roadway segment under study. The information to be collected includes the date, time, direction of travel, vehicle license number, a brief description of the vehicle (i.e., red sedan) and the measured speed.

Typically, two people are needed—one person to measure the vehicle speeds and read out the license plate numbers, and the other person to fill out the forms. A minimum of 2 hours of data is required. The information collected during this phase will be used by SDOT staff to mail letters to people traveling over 30 mph and will be used to develop a traffic calming strategy for your street.

Traffic Calming Program: Community Oriented Traffic Calming

The following measures focus on bringing the community together to raise awareness and educate drivers that they are in a neighborhood where there is a strong desire for them to drive responsibly.

Traffic Calming Brochure - Distributed to residents along a block, this is often the first notice that your neighbors receive that there is a speeding and/or safety concern on their street. The brochure will create an opportunity to share your concerns with your neighbors and educate them on traffic calming. The brochure also raises awareness for those residents that may speed on your street.

Letter to Speeders – If you participate in the traffic calming program, you and your neighbors will be asked to monitor speeds with the radar speed gun for 2 hours. SDOT can send a letter to those drivers who were traveling at excessive speeds. This letter can be surprisingly effective, especially if younger drivers are borrowing their parent’s car!

Neighborhood Speed Watch Sign – Once a neighborhood enrolls in the traffic calming program, SDOT will install a Speed Watch Area sign at both ends of the block. The signs will stay in place for two months, while the community participates in the program. The Speed Watch Area signs are meant to increase driver awareness of the neighborhood’s concerns with speeding traffic.



Speed Watch Trailer – The speed watch trailer detects and displays the speed of oncoming vehicles. Placing the speed watch trailer on your street is another reminder to drivers to drive responsibly.

Enforcement – Getting a ticket is a strong deterrent to speeding. SDOT works closely with the Seattle Police Department (SPD) on periodic enforcement where speeds are excessive.

Yard Signs - Yard signs are intended to inform drivers that they are travelling on a neighborhood street and remind drivers to slow down. The sign features eye catching colors and the primary message “Slow Down”. You may choose from three secondary messages: “Kids live here, keep ‘em safe”, “Drive like you live here”, or “Respect our streets, respect our neighborhoods”.



Parking Management – Parking on both sides of the street can be an effective traffic calming tool. On wide open streets, some drivers can feel “encouraged” to travel at high speeds. Narrower streets force them to slow down. On this street, if a driver faces an on-coming vehicle, each driver must find a spot to maneuver so they can pass.

Painted Intersection - Also called “intersection repair”, consists of a mural painted by community groups on the pavement at the intersection of residential streets. This measure can help give your community a sense of place, and is a great way to organize your neighborhood around a common goal. They may also have indirect effects on helping to slow traffic in your neighborhood by making drivers aware that this is a socially organized neighborhood, and helping encourage them to be respectful of the people that live there while driving down your street. Additional information about painted intersections is available in [Client Assistance Memo 2506](#).



Traffic Calming Program: Physical Traffic Calming Devices

The following physical traffic calming devices, traffic circles, chicanes, and speed humps, are installed on **non-arterial streets** that are also non-emergency routes. The appropriate device depends on the roadway geometry, sight distance, and the traffic characteristics such as speed and volume.

Traffic Circles - Used primarily to reduce collisions at intersections, traffic circles can also reduce speeding along residential street corridors and improve bicycle and pedestrian safety. In addition to these safety benefits, many circles can be landscaped, which can provide aesthetic enhancements to the street.



Chicanes – A series of 2 or 3 curb bulbs, chicanes slow traffic by creating a narrow, winding section of roadway. Like traffic circles, many chicanes can be attractively landscaped. Since they result in eliminating some parking, they are generally only installed where there is low demand for on-street parking.

Speed Humps – 12’ long, 3” high mounds that extend the full width of the street, speed humps can be effective at reducing speeds. They are generally only used when speeds are very high as they can divert traffic to adjacent streets.

The following physical traffic calming measures, speed cushions, radar speed signs, and road rechannelizations are installed on **arterial streets** and non-arterial emergency routes.

Speed Cushions – Similar to speed humps, speed cushions are divided into sections so that wide wheelbase vehicles can straddle them. As such, they can more easily accommodate transit, fire engines, and other emergency response vehicles.

Radar Speed Signs – By displaying the speed of oncoming vehicles, these signs provide direct feedback to drivers and remind them to slow down. This can also be an effective device for multi-lane arterial streets.

Road Rechannelization – Sometimes referred to as “road diets”, a typical rechannelization project reconfigures the street from four multi-purpose lanes to two multi-purpose lanes, a center left turn lane, and bicycle lanes. This lane combination can decrease vehicle collisions, reduce vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian and bicycle safety.



Neighborhood Traffic Operations: Other Funding Sources

If your project does not qualify for funding through SDOT Neighborhood Traffic Operations, there are other funding sources for you to consider. One of those is the Neighborhood Park and Street Fund (NPSF), formerly called the Neighborhood Projects Fund.

The NPSF can be used to fund neighborhood transportation projects that cost less than \$90,000. The application window for this competitive process typically opens in November. Community members can submit applications to the Department of Neighborhoods until February. Each Neighborhood District Council selects three projects, which are then analyzed by SDOT to determine feasibility and to estimate cost. Funding decisions are based on recommendations from each Neighborhood District Council, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and SDOT, with the final decisions made by the Mayor. Projects are constructed the following year.

If you are interested in this funding source, go to <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/btgnsfcfr/>.

Many traffic circles are also built each year through the Department of Neighborhood's Neighborhood Matching Fund. This program allows the City to match dollars raised by the community for a variety of projects. A traffic circle usually costs \$15,000, so the community would need to raise \$7,500. A formal cost estimate will be prepared for you before you apply for funding.

If you are interested in this funding source, go to <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/nmf/>.

If you and/or your neighbors want to completely renovate the landscaping in the traffic circle, there are funding opportunities for small projects through the Department of Neighborhoods at <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/nmf/smallsparks.htm>.

For any of these funding sources, we **highly recommend** that you work with SDOT staff as you are developing your application.