



Takoma Park City Council Meeting – April 1, 2020 Agenda Item 1

Presentation

Presentation of the Takoma Park Complete Safe Streets Committee's Recommendations for Traffic Calming and Sidewalk Request Processes

Recommended Council Action

Listen to presentation and offer feedback on recommendations

Context with Key Issues

In June 2019, Council reestablished the Safe Roadways Committee as the Complete Safe Streets Committee with the purpose to advise Council on transportation related issues. An initial priority identified by Council was a review of the procedures for traffic calming and sidewalk requests through a lens which prioritizes safety and equity.

Council Priority

A Livable Community for All; Environmentally Sustainable Community; Engaged, Responsive and Service Oriented Government

Environmental Considerations

Changes to the sidewalk and traffic calming procedures could have environmental impacts based on changes in resulting vehicle speeds, reduction in vehicle miles traveled, and encouragement of non-motorized forms of transportation.

Fiscal Considerations

Changes to the current procedures could result in increased staff time to evaluate options other than speed humps for traffic calming. This could also result in an increased cost of materials. However, traffic studies could reveal no need for traffic calming elements which contributes to a reduced fiscal impact.

Racial Equity Considerations

The move away from a solely petition based process could lead to the more equitable distribution of sidewalks and traffic calming elements and does not unfairly prioritize blocks with single family homes. Locations with more native English speakers, people who have time to get petition signatures, and people who have more familiarity, trust, and connection to government institutions may be more likely to make requests for sidewalks and traffic calming elements.

Attachments and Links

- Complete Safe Streets Committee Recommendations
- Current Sidewalk Request Procedure
- Current Traffic Calming Request Procedure

Traffic/Sidewalk Petition – Summary Recommendations

A summary of the CSSC's Recommendations is presented here.

The Committee welcomes the opportunity to discuss our more detailed recommendations with the City staff who may be charged with revising the regulations to align with these recommendations, and to help craft the revisions.

REQUESTING ACTION

Procedural Consistency:

Make the process the same for requesting traffic calming and sidewalk installation

Procedural simplification and equity:

The **process for requesting action** should reduce the burden on residents seeking safer streets or improved mobility. To that end, remove the requirement for a petition and, instead, institute simpler options. The default methods of requesting a traffic-calming/sidewalk assessment should be for a stakeholder outside of city government to ask a council member to request the assessment and/or to ask city staff to initiate it. Such requests should be submitted in writing using a simple form. If these routes fail, stakeholders should have recourse to a petition with a lower number or percentage of signers than is currently required. Even without a request from stakeholders, city staff or council members should be able to initiate a request for a traffic-calming/sidewalk assessment.

Creative Approaches to achieving Enhanced Mobility:

Change the current language for 'speed hump' policy to be 'traffic calming' or 'mobility/safety' measures. Requesters should not be responsible for identifying the proper method of improvement; instead, city staff should make these recommendations; requesters should call for action using viable options, and not necessarily be asked to or encouraged to specify which measures to install/remove.

Community engagement in decision and design:

If a request or city-initiated proposal meets the criteria for action and scores high enough to merit action, the City should have a predictable process for posted notification at the proposed site and online, and for community consultation at or near the site and online, so that neighbors can easily learn about and offer feedback on proposals

DECISION-MAKING

Transparent and evidence-based decision making to enhance equitable results:

To be equitable, make the **criteria and basis for decision** about where/whether to adopt traffic calming or sidewalk installation *data-driven and evidence-based*.

Spell out the criteria that will be applied to any request/proposal, so that people can see in advance what criteria will be applied and decisions can be transparently and readily explained/justified. They can then use the criteria to fill in a simplified request form

Consider using a point / rating system based on appropriate factors such as volume of complaints; volume of pedestrians/cars/bikes usage; accident/near miss data; proximity to schools or school walking routes; inputs from relevant experts like crossing guards, police and emergency services; PTA concerns

Prioritize Equity and Inclusion along with Wise Expenditure

Be specific and wise about the budget available for mobility measures and how it is spent: There should be an annual budget that can be seen by all.

Where multiple less expensive actions have to be weighed against fewer more costly options, there should be an open and transparent process for selecting among these options.

The CSSC supports [the Equity Framework](#) adopted by Montgomery County DOT's Vision Zero. This framework calls for (in addition to the community engagement and enhanced access recommendations outlined here "invest[ing] in areas that are historically underserved ... and projects that improve safety for people walking, biking, and using mobility assistive equipment (wheelchair, canes, etc.)." This concept of prioritizing investments should be used in deciding which qualified projects to undertake with available funds, and in which order.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

Be Proactive in Evaluating Measures Holistically:

Consideration of large area scope approach vs. individual measures for problem streets/neighborhoods offers opportunities to avoid pushing a problem from one street to another; act systematically to avoid ripple effects

Be Innovative and Cost Conscious:

There is a broad array of low-cost options for traffic calming and mobility enhancement. Be creative and inclusive in considering them and presenting them to residents to enable the City to satisfy more requests that meet the transparent criteria

Traffic data proactively evaluated:

Takoma Park Police's accident data needs to be merged with County data so that the full scope of accidents can be considered in evaluating proposals

Be Innovative and Cost Conscious:

There is a broad array of low-cost options for traffic calming and mobility enhancement. Be more creative and inclusive in considering them to enable the City to satisfy more requests that meet the transparent criteria

Introduced by: Councilmember Schultz

CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND

**RESOLUTION 2012-16
A RESOLUTION SETTING A POLICY FOR
NEW SIDEWALK DESIGN AND INSTALLATION**

WHEREAS, the City Council has identified a goal to create and maintain a livable community that is vibrant, healthy, and safe, with convenient transportation for all residents; and

WHEREAS, the City of Takoma Park's Strategic Plan (FY2010 – FY2015) establishes, as a shared goal, the creation of a community that is “fiscally, environmentally and economically sustainable;” and,

WHEREAS, one of the strategies endorsed by the Council in support of that goal is to “expand and enhance existing infrastructure to provide access to, and promote increased use of, alternative modes of transportation and walking;” and

WHEREAS the City Council wishes to formalize its intent in this regard and to provide direction to the City Manager relative to the process to be followed to initiate the planning process for new sidewalk locations in the City; and

WHEREAS, by Resolution 2010-14 (attached hereto and incorporated by reference herein), the City Council adopted the Toole Design Group Priority Ranking System for prioritizing sidewalk installation and ADA compliance projects.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAKOMA PARK, MARYLAND THAT this resolution and policy supercede the Priority Ranking System adopted by Resolution 2010-14 for prioritizing new sidewalk installation projects; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the City's policy regarding new sidewalk design and installation shall be as follows:

1. There are two ways to initiate a planning process for sidewalks:
 - A. The City Council or City Manager identifies a particular location and deems it a priority or a safety concern, or
 - B. Residents request the initiation of a sidewalk planning process via:
 - i) a request by an active and recognized neighborhood association; or
 - ii) a request by residents of the affected area that the City perform a survey of the households in the affected area and at least 50% of the responders provide a yes vote.

2. The affected area is defined as both sides on the block(s) where the potential sidewalk is to be considered, any continuation of the same street for one block in each direction, and the cross streets, one block in each direction, unless unique neighborhood features dictate a modified configuration as determined by City staff.
3. City staff will review the request and determine the appropriate length of the proposed sidewalk, to ensure that it will function effectively and be in compliance with Federal and State regulations.
4. Once a request is received by any of the methods listed above, the City will schedule a community meeting. All households in the affected area will be mailed a notice notifying them of the meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to provide factual information about the requirements for the size, location and construction impacts of a sidewalk and inform residents of the City's planning process for new sidewalk requests.
5. After the meeting, the City will mail a survey to the households in the affected area. If at least 50% of the responses received are positive, the project will be assigned to a design engineering firm for development. The design development process will be dependent on funding and requests will be placed in a queue based on the date the request was received or survey was completed.
6. Unless the City Council, by majority vote, decides to override the majority vote of the affected area, the project will proceed to the design phase.
7. The selected design firm will perform a right-of-way boundary survey and develop design proposals for the proposed sidewalk. The firm will prepare drawings of the proposed sidewalk location to the 30% detail.
8. The City has established the following recommendations to be provided to the design firm for consideration when developing sidewalk designs:
 - A. The sidewalk is to be located in the right-of-way when possible. If right-of-way is not available, the City will need to enter into an agreement or receive an easement from the property owner to place a portion of the sidewalk on private property.
 - B. When roadway width is adequate, consideration will be given to locating the sidewalk partially or completely within the existing street pavement to reduce the amount of impervious area added by the new sidewalk and decrease the impact on adjacent residential property.
 - C. The new sidewalk design will minimize tree removal to the maximum extent possible. The condition of the trees will be noted and an inventory of trees in the affected right-of-way or within 50 feet of the proposed sidewalk will be developed. Methods to protect trees shall be incorporated into the design and may include building extensions into the street or right-of-way to allow the sidewalk to pass around existing trees.

- D. If a tree is removed for the new sidewalk, the City will follow the Tree Ordinance requirements for replanting and the cost of replanting will be included in the project.
 - E. The location of utility lines and poles will be noted as they limit the planting of large shade trees. The side of the street with the utility poles will be considered first for the sidewalk, as it already limits the impact on future tree planting, and may have street lighting.
 - F. The City shall coordinate any sidewalk development with planned work by public utilities, traffic safety projects, or City tree planting.
 - G. If the property owner has vegetation, a lead walk, retaining wall or other item located in the right-of-way, the project will include the cost for removal and relocation of that item when appropriate.
 - H. The City has established stormwater management requirements that will be followed and will be included in the design development. These require providing for infiltration of stormwater runoff through grassy swales, bio-retention areas, or other methods.
 - I. The standard width of new sidewalk will meet or exceed ADA accessibility standards. The sidewalk may be wider if a wider width is specified in a master, sector, development or site plan or design guidelines; connects existing wider sidewalk segments; is needed to accommodate heavy pedestrian traffic (e.g. adjacent to storefronts, institutions or transit access); or is requested by the community during the design process.
 - J. When the right-of-way space is wide enough, the design preference will be to include a green strip between the curb and the proposed sidewalk. A green strip provides for runoff infiltration, sufficient space for new tree planting, and provides a buffer from the street which is particularly beneficial during snow removal operations.
 - K. Depending on the size of the new sidewalk, the City may need to apply for a sediment and erosion control permit (if the project will disturb over 5,000 square feet) and a Forest Conservation Plan (if the affected area is 40,000 square feet).
9. The City will hold a community meeting to present the proposed design. All households in the affected area will be mailed a notice of the meeting. The purpose of the meeting will be to solicit responses to the design, allow residents to comment and suggest changes and notify residents of the next step in the process. If there are significant changes proposed by the community during the meeting, those proposals will be discussed by City staff and, if supported, the design firm will be asked to incorporate the changes into the design. Another community meeting will be held to review the revised design.
10. Following the review meeting, the City will mail another survey to the households on the side of the street where the proposed sidewalk is to be located in the affected area asking if they support the construction of the sidewalk as designed. If at least 50% of the responses

received to the survey are positive, the City staff will request the design firm to finalize the drawings to construction ready documents.

11. Unless the City Council, by majority vote, decides to override the majority vote of the affected area, the project will proceed to the construction phase.
12. If, at the end of the process, a new sidewalk request does not receive support from at least 50% of the respondents in the affected area and the Council chooses not to override the decision, then a period of at least two years must pass before a new request is submitted for the same area.
13. Actual construction of any new sidewalk will be based on funding established by the Council. Approved new sidewalks will be placed in a queue based on approval date.

Adopted this 19th day of March, 2012.

Attest:

Jessie Carpenter
City Clerk

SUBJECT: Guidelines and Procedures for Traffic Calming Devices Installations

EFFECTIVE DATE: April 8, 1996; **REVISED April 15, 2003**

Traffic Calming Devices - Petition Process and Installations

PURPOSE/SCOPE:

To provide written guidelines for the administration of *Takoma Park Code* Chapter 13, Vehicles and Traffic, as amended, pertaining to the installation of traffic calming devices.

Traffic calming devices include signs, pavement markings, speed humps, raised walkways, flat-top speed humps or speed tables, and other physical devices placed or installed on a highway which limit access, restrict traffic flow, or channel or slow vehicle movement for the purpose of reducing traffic hazards and improving pedestrian safety.

PROCEDURES:

I. Request for Speed Hump Installation.

A request for installation of one or more traffic calming devices can be made by petition.

A. Petition Request.

1. Residents of one or more blocks of a street can submit a petition to the City Manager indicating that the residents of at least two-thirds (2/3) of the households want one or more traffic calming devices to be installed on that street. This petition may also include a description of the specific locations of the proposed traffic calming devices, or may indicate that the locations will be determined in consultation with the Public Works Department. Proposed locations of traffic calming devices shall comply with the requirements of the *Takoma Park Code* and relative State and County laws, and shall not obstruct manholes or other accesses to utilities.
2. If a traffic control device installation is being requested for only one block of a street, the petition must also be circulated to the residents living on the street within one (1) block of the requested installation site or block.
3. The City Clerk will validate the petition, will determine the total number of eligible households residing on the street, and will compute the

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City Clerk

APPROVED: _____/s/_____ DATE: _____
City Manager

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percentage of households signing the petition. If that percentage is two-thirds (2/3) or greater, and after the requirements of Section I.B. have been complied with, the City Clerk will so inform the Council, who shall schedule a public hearing.

B. Citizens' Association Meeting / Information Sheet.

1. When a traffic control device request is made by petition, and after the petition is verified by the City Clerk, the City Clerk shall notify the citizens' association or associations in whose area the request is located, and shall instruct the petitioners to contact the citizens' association most affected by the proposed traffic control device installation to request that the association place a discussion of the traffic control device request on the association's next meeting agenda.
2. If the citizens' association most affected by the proposed traffic control device installation meets within 60 days of the date the association is notified, the petitioners shall ask the citizens' association to discuss the proposed traffic control device at that meeting. The citizens' association may submit a letter to the City Clerk within the 60 days either supporting, opposing, or taking no position on the proposed traffic control device. If the citizens' association does not submit a letter, no assumption shall be made about the position of the citizens' association on the traffic control device.
3. If the affected citizens' association does not meet within 60 days of the date the association is notified, or if there is no citizens' association covering the area where the proposed traffic control device would be located, the petitioners shall call a meeting to discuss the proposed traffic control device. The President of the affected citizens' association, if one exists, shall be consulted about the time and place of the meeting, but petitioners shall be responsible for notifying residents of the affected "traffic impact area" as defined by the Traffic Impact Areas map that is adopted as part of these regulations. The traffic impact area includes the residential arterial roads within and immediately surrounding the area. If there is no citizens' association in the area of the proposed traffic control device, the petitioners shall advise the City Clerk about the time and place of the meeting. The petitioners shall provide a letter to the City Clerk indicating the number of people attending the meeting and the sentiment

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of the attendees toward the proposed traffic control device.

4. In order to advertise the meeting, petitioners are encouraged to prepare a one-page information flyer concerning the request. This flyer should include a sketch and description of the proposal, including the specific locations or numbered street block of the proposed traffic control devices as indicated in the petition, and a phone number of one of the petitioners to call for more information. Petitioners are encouraged to distribute this flyer to residents of the affected "traffic impact area" as defined in Section I.B.3.

C. City Clerk Authorized to Develop Standard Forms.

To assist residents in petitioning for traffic control device, the City Clerk is authorized to develop and distribute a standard "Request for Traffic Control Device Installation" petition form and a standard "Information Sheet" form.

II. Procedures for Public Hearing and Speed Hump Installations.

A. Conduct of Public Hearing.

1. After having been notified by the City Clerk that a valid petition requesting a traffic control device installation has been received, and after the requirements of Section I.B. have been complied with, the Council will schedule a public hearing to solicit the opinions of the entire neighborhood and the City at large.
2. The City clerk shall send notice of the public hearing to all residents of the street which is proposed to receive a traffic control device installation, to the local neighborhood citizen association, and to adjoining neighborhood citizen associations. The public hearing shall be advertised in the Takoma Park newspaper of record.
3. After conducting the public hearing and declaring the hearing record closed, the Council shall announce its decision within fifteen (15) days of the close of the hearing record. Under extraordinary circumstances, this time limit may be extended by majority vote on the Council.
4. The Council may approve, approve with modifications, or deny the

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requested traffic control device installation.

5. The City Clerk shall notify the petitioners, and their neighborhood or civic association of the Council's decision, which shall also be published in the Newsletter.

B. Guidelines for Evaluating the Public Hearing.

The following criteria are intended to guide the Council in determining whether a request for a traffic control device installation is reasonable and justified. These should not be considered exclusive criteria.

1. The street has not been identified and is not used by the Takoma Park Volunteer Fire Department as a primary fire and rescue route into a neighborhood.
2. The impact of traffic control devices on adjacent neighborhoods be assessed.
3. The petitioners have made efforts to provide broad notification to potentially affected residents.

III. Procedures for Removing a Traffic Control Device Installation.

A. Removal of Traffic Control Device Installations.

1. Upon request of two-thirds (2/3) of the households of a street containing a traffic control device installation, and after six months have elapsed from the initial installation of the traffic control device(s), the Council may consider removing the traffic control device installation, except as provided in Section III.B.
2. The request for removal must be made by petition, subject to the procedures specified in Sections I.A. and I.B. above.

B. Exception to Petitioned Removal of a Speed Hump.

Speed humps installed prior to December 2, 2002, the adoption date of Ordinance #2002-36, shall not be removed or altered pursuant to the provisions of Section III.A(1). The

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City Council adopted Ordinance #2002-36 to revise Chapter 13, Vehicles and Traffic, of the *Takoma Park Code*, to define traffic calming devices, including raised walkways, and to expand the scope of existing provisions to encompass traffic calming devices. Pre-existing speed humps may be altered, replaced, or substituted with another form of traffic calming device at such time as the speed hump is removed, destroyed, or deteriorated and scheduled for replacement by the Public Works Department.

IV. Miscellaneous.

A. Placement of Traffic Control Devices near Parks and Playgrounds.

The Council may initiate the installation of traffic control devices on streets adjacent to neighborhood parks, playgrounds, and schools.

B. Authority of City over Traffic Control Devices.

1. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed as preempting the City at its initiative from installation, altering, maintaining, or removing a traffic control device or installing a traffic control device. The City Clerk will notify the appropriate neighborhood association and the affected residents of any proposed new traffic control device installations or changes to an existing traffic control device installation. The residents and the association will have an opportunity to discuss the proposed changes with the Council at a regular Council meeting before the changes are adopted and implemented.

V. Implementation Responsibility.

The Public Works Director or designee shall be responsible for advising the Council and public on the proper placement of traffic calming devices on City streets, and for overseeing the installation and maintenance of traffic calming devices in the City.

PROPOSED: _____/s/_____
City Clerk

DATE: _____

APPROVED: _____/s/_____
City Manager

DATE: _____
