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# Traffic Calming Fact Sheet

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The term “traffic calming” is simply a device to put a favorable spin on tactics used to obstruct, divert and slow traffic.

Although proponents usually couch their complaints in terms like “speeders” and “reckless drivers,” the true irritant for “traffic calming” advocates is “heavy” traffic. Their desired objective is to divert traffic to other streets outside their neighborhood. The devices employed to accomplish this diversion of traffic include stop signs, speed humps and bumps, lane narrowing obstructions, and absurdly low speed limits.

Increased traffic on residential streets is often caused by misguided and ill-informed management of the main arterials and collector streets. These streets are designed to carry most of the traffic, keeping it off of residential streets.

The solution to this problem is not to further obstruct traffic flow by pushing the problem into someone else’s neighborhood. The real solution is to upgrade and improve the traffic handling capabilities of main thoroughfares.

This means implementing physical improvements, as well as raising speed limits and synchronizing traffic controls to accommodate actual vehicle speeds. If main streets provide convenient access between home, work and shopping destinations, motorists will use them, versus alternate routes through residential neighborhoods.

There are several specific reasons why traffic calming should be avoided:

**1) Traffic obstruction devices can increase response time for emergency vehicles.**

When seconds matter, having to slow to pass over speed bumps and humps or navigate narrow roadways can mean the difference between life and death, or the loss of one’s home. The fact that some of these devices can seriously damage emergency vehicles and other vehicles along the roadway is also a concern.

**2) Traffic obstruction devices can increase congestion on other streets and create problems in other neighborhoods.**

If traffic obstruction devices divert traffic to other streets, they may compound congestion problems that already exist in those areas. If not successful in diverting traffic to other streets, traffic obstruction devices will compound congestion problems on the streets on which they are installed.

**3. Traffic obstruction devices will increase vehicle wear and tear, air pollution, and noise.**

Braking and accelerating in response to speed bumps, speed humps, stop signs, and traffic signals increases fuel consumption and emissions. This can contradict other efforts to reduce emissions and contribute to a community becoming or remaining a “non-attainment” air quality zone, thereby being subjected to federal mandates and restrictions.

**4. Traffic obstruction devices can increase street maintenance costs.**

Speed bumps and humps impede plowing and street cleaning equipment. Removable devices may soon be available, although they will require additional labor to install and remove them. Municipalities must maintain and repair stop signs and traffic signals, at taxpayer expense, of course.

**5. Traffic obstruction devices increase a community’s liability for accidents attributed to such devices.**

**6. Traffic obstruction devices may cause physical discomfort, even pain, for disabled persons or persons with physical ailments.**

Being jolted or jostled by speed bumps and humps can be painful for persons with injuries or painful illnesses.

**7. Traffic obstruction devices create neighborhood friction.**

Not all persons (not even most persons) on a given street will appreciate having to run an obstacle course every time they drive to or from home. Some traffic obstruction opponents blow their horns or yell verbal insults when having to slow or stop for speed bumps or humps. Frequently, the response to unnecessary stop signs is to ignore them.