City of Friendswood

Traffic Calming Policy

January 2021

Engineering Department

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Background and History

Traffic calming involves the use of physical measures to reduce traffic speeds and cut-through volumes. Non-engineering measures such as enforcement, signage and striping are not included. Traffic control devices such as stop, speed limit and children at play signs require increased enforcement whereas traffic calming measures are intended to be self-enforcing. Municipalities with traffic calming programs will typically offer the installation of speed humps. Currently, the City of Friendswood does not provide such devices as studies have indicated a greater adverse impact upon installation.

The City regularly receives traffic concerns from residents; most often speeding is the primary concern. The City responds to warranted concerns in two ways, installing signage and/or striping, and enforcement. The Engineering Department is responsible for providing traffic analysis and determining whether or not a regulatory traffic control device is warranted based on state standards provided in the latest version of the Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. The Police Department is responsible for enforcing traffic regulations under the City's Ordinance 300. Ordinance 300 provides for and establishes rules and regulations governing traffic on public streets within the City. Please note that the City does not have the authority to install traffic control devices on TXDOT right-of-ways that include FM 2351, FM 518, and FM 528.

Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this Traffic Calming Policy is to clearly inform residents of the City's process of responding to traffic concerns and to guide Homeowner Associations (HOA) interested in constructing privately funded traffic calming measures.

City Procedure for Responding to Traffic Concerns

Exhibit 1 illustrates the City's current process for responding to traffic concerns. City staff receives traffic related concerns from citizens by phone and email. Enforcement related items are directed to the Police Department while traffic control device items are directed to the Engineering Department. Since each item relies on the other, communication between both departments is necessary.

The Engineering Department begins their response by evaluating the area of concern. The evaluation may include an assessment of existing signs, sight distances analysis and traffic volume counts. Data and observations are then interpreted for warrant based on the Texas Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. Proposed installation of signs significantly affecting surrounding residents are presented to the HOA for feedback. However, staff reserves final judgment in matters of public safety.

A recommendation from the Engineering Department is sent to the City Manager for final approval. The Public Works, Engineering Department, and Police Departments are then notified of the City Manager's decision. If approved, Public Works is responsible for executing the installation of the recommended devices.

Speeding – Common Traffic Concern

The City's initial response to speeding complaints is to inform the Police Department. When speeding persists on a residential road, citizens will often request additional speed limit signs, speed humps, and children at play signs from the Engineering Department. The City provides the materials and labor for the installation of speed limit signs. Since there is not a state standard for spacing of speed limit signs, warrant is determined by the City Engineer's judgment with consideration of public safety and financial impact on a case-by-case basis. Speed limit signs may not be placed on streetlight poles owned by CenterPoint Energy or on sign poles with an existing sign. Although, speed humps exist at various locations throughout the City, current policy suspends the installation of new speed humps. The disadvantages of speed humps include delay in emergency vehicle response times, a potential increase in speeds midway between humps, increase in traffic/road noise, prioritization challenges and expense. Finally, children at play signs are not recognized by state standards. Therefore, the City does not provide this type of signage. However, the City will provide installation should an HOA wish to purchase the signs, poles, pole base and mounting devices. City approval of the sign specification, message and proposed locations is required. City standard specifications for signs may be found within the "Barricades and Miscellaneous" standard detail document, available on the City's website under Business Services > Projects, Engineering, and Storm Water Management > Publications.

Traffic Calming Measures

Traffic Calming Measures consist of volume control and speed control. Volume Control Measures are physical modifications that result in a reduced number of vehicles traveling a roadway. Examples of such modifications include:

- Full Street Closures – constructed obstruction that limits vehicle access, often includes landscaping, pedestrian and bicycle pathway
- Half Street Closures – constructed obstruction to block one side of the street, one direction of traffic is diverted to another route
- Forced Turn Islands – prevent traffic from certain movements when approaching an intersection

Speed Control Measures may be either vertical or horizontal. Vertical speed control measures are elevated segments of a roadway that require vehicles to slow down. Horizontal speed control measures alter the typical straight line of travel or narrow a roadway in an effort to reduce vehicle speed. Examples of such modifications include:

- Vertical
    - Raised Crosswalks – flat raised areas, with ramps on all approaches
    - Raised Intersections – flat raised areas covering entire intersections, with ramps on all approaches
    - Speed Humps – rounded raised areas of pavement, typically 12 to 14 feet in length
    - Speed Tables – long raised speed humps with a flat section in the middle and ramps on the ends

- Horizontal
    - Roundabouts – require vehicles to circulate counterclockwise around a center island at an intersection
    - Center Island Narrowing – use of center islands to narrow the path of travel
    - Chicanes, Lateral Shifts, Chokers – a series of narrowings or curb extensions that alternate from one side of the street to the other, forming S-shaped curves

Recommendations for HOAs Pursuing Traffic Calming

At this time the City does not have funds available for commissioning an engineered traffic calming study, design plans or construction, nor are the resources available to complete such tasks in-house. Limited studies may be undertaken in-house to determine if an issue exists. However, prior to implementing any physical modifications to public roadway, a comprehensive study is needed.

Should an HOA or group of residents desire a comprehensive traffic engineering analysis be conducted, the following options are available:

- Present their interest and detailed proposal to City staff. Staff will provide a preliminary judgment on the feasibility of the proposal. If the proposal appears to be feasible, a request can be made of City Council for the funding of a Traffic Calming Study developed by a licensed professional engineer and/or traffic professional. Please note all requests for study should include the support of the HOA and its members; or
- Present their interest and detailed proposal to City staff. Staff will provide a preliminary judgment on the feasibility of the proposal. If the proposal appears to be feasible, the HOA can commission their own Traffic Calming Study developed by a licensed professional engineer and/or traffic professional.

Note, the provision of a Traffic Calming Study does not guarantee City approval. If the study is accepted by the City, the development of construction plans is needed prior to implementation of any traffic calming measures. In the event a completed study warrants modifications to a public roadway, a determination of available funding is needed. Requests of Council can be made for funding, much like the request for a study. Similarly, such requests should include the support of the HOA and its members.

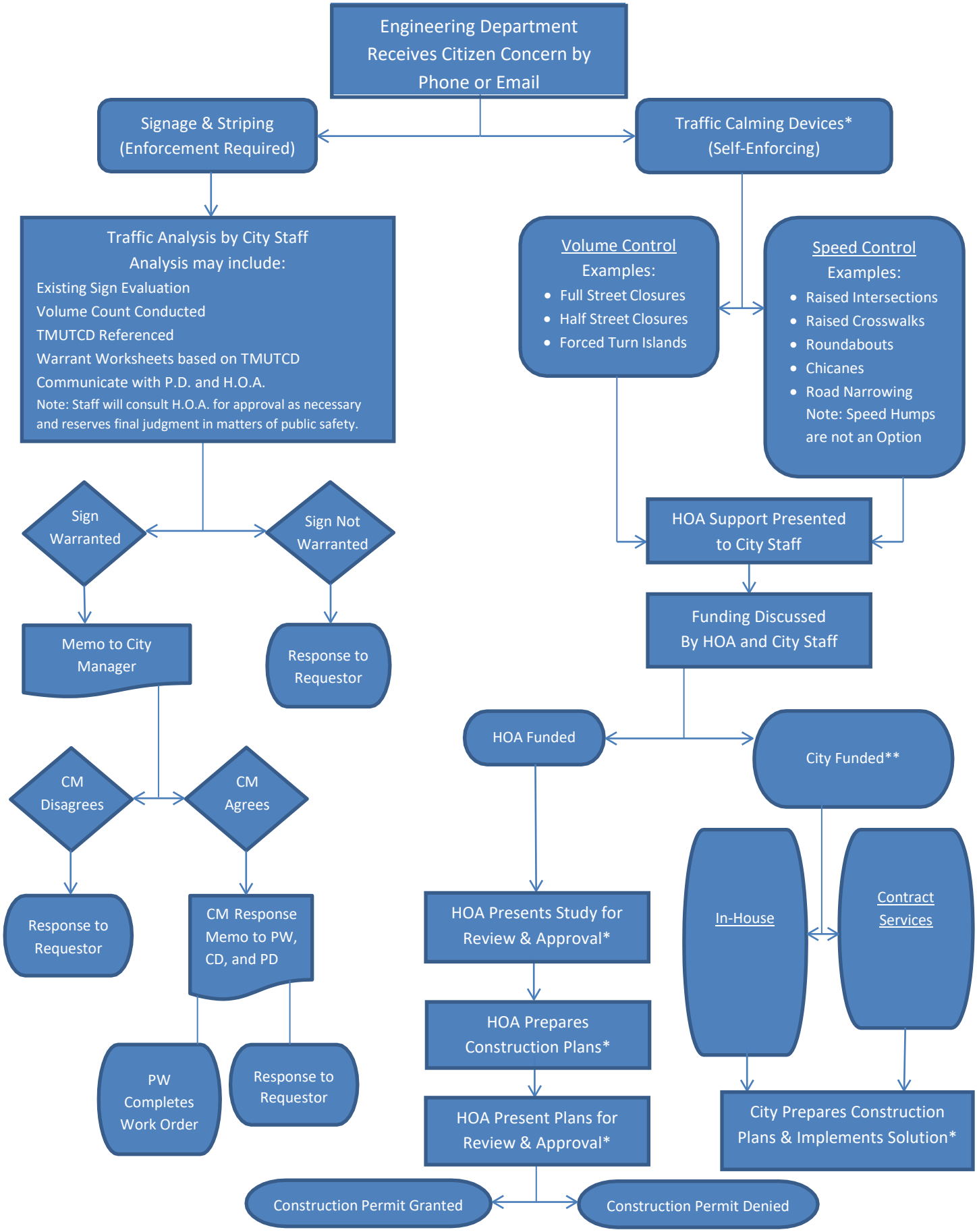
If the HOA wishes to fund the enhancements outlined in a study, a written agreement with the City, providing for all design costs, construction costs, and maintenance of the traffic calming measure will be required. In addition, the HOA must obtain a performance bond, and contractors will be required to submit for a Right-of-Way Construction Permit and provide a Certificate of Liability Insurance.

Summary

This Traffic Calming Policy shall serve as supporting guidelines for the City of Friendswood in response to citizen inquiries on traffic control and traffic calming devices. City staff will continue to work in cooperation with Homeowners Associations to develop a response to neighborhood traffic concerns.

Reference

"Traffic Calming." Institute of Transportation Engineers. ITE Canon of Ethics, 2012. Web. 16 March 2012. <http://www.ite.org/traffic/index.asp>.



* Traffic Calming Studies and Construction Plans are to be developed by a licensed professional engineer and/or traffic professional.

** Requests for City-funded studies and improvements must garner the support of the affected HOA and its members.

Exhibit 1 – Traffic Concern Response Process