



# Traffic Calming Update

by the  
Municipality of Anchorage—Traffic Engineering Division

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## Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program

The summer season is here. To most Alaskans this means the return of salmon to their native streams and the swarming of mosquitoes. To traffic engineers, this means that it is speed study time. The traffic calming program was dormant for a couple of years, but it is now fully operational again. We have set the ambitious goal of evaluating 100 streets in 100 days. The data team is currently hard at work in a neighborhood near you helping us to meet that challenge. We hope to reduce the backlog of traffic calming requests from 3 years to 1 year by the return of snowfall. Once we have obtained data on a larger number of streets we will be able to rank and prioritize these sites for traffic calming improvements.

## Radar Speed Sign Pilot Program

The Traffic Engineering Division has purchased a handful of portable, battery-operated radar speed signs for use as a traffic calming tool. We researched their use in the lower 48 and found that they have proven effective for specific applications on higher volume roadways. Although some other communities have used them on local roadways, no publicly available data exists as to their effectiveness for those applications. Nonetheless, many municipal engineers consider them successful in the sense that after they install them, people on that street “stop complaining” for a while.

It is the Traffic Engineering Division’s intent to come to a more scientific basis as to their effectiveness so that we can determine whether limited funds should be devoted to permanent installations, and if so, which streets they should be considered for in the future. With that in mind, we are installing some temporary signs on streets this summer with proven speeding problems so that we can measure the effect that they have on motorist behavior. Ultimately, we will prepare a report that will guide us, and other communities across the nation, on how best to incorporate these devices into the traffic calming toolbox.



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Test Site at Cathedral Place

## Livable Streets Initiative

The Traffic Engineering Division is challenging the Community Council's in the Anchorage Roads and Drainage Service Area (ARDSA) to propose some Neighborhood "Livable Streets" projects. In this sense, a neighborhood would refer to an interconnected series of streets that have speeding problems.

The winning neighborhoods would become designated as "Slow Zones". The streets in these "Slow Zones" would be redesigned for low speed travel. Engineers will work with the Municipal Engineer and Traffic Engineer to identify the best ways to accomplish this.

This program is conceptual at this point, but it is anticipated that various methods that have been shown to naturally influence driver behavior will be incorporated, and unnatural measures such as speed humps will be avoided. Some of the measures taken may be narrowing of paved widths, reduction of sight distances, vertical confinements such as street trees, reduction of excessive block lengths, reduction of under-utilized on-street parking, introduction of horizontal curvature, and improvements in pedestrian/bicycle amenities.

Besides the obvious effect of slowing traffic down in residential areas, these will be "Livable Streets" because they will promote more positive interaction between neighbors, increased attractiveness of the neighborhood, an increase in property values, and peace of mind for parents that will no longer have to worry every time they let their kids out of the house.

At this point, we hope to fund design work for two of these projects within ARDSA. Various factors will be used in ranking which proposals get first consideration, such as number of people served, severity of existing problem, etc. Top consideration will go to those projects that can identify a funding source for construction. For example, perhaps a major sewer or drainage overhaul is on tap that would require substantial roadway reconstruction. The Director of the Public Works Department (PWD) has indicated a willingness to help identify various funding sources.

We would like to evaluate some rough proposals from the Community Councils by the end of 2013. Tim Myland of the Traffic Engineering Division will be available to help facilitate the discussion at the Community Council level.

We anticipate receiving more proposals than we will be able to fund. However, areas that do not get chosen may still be eligible for expedited traffic studies and review as part of the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program.

## Funding Available for Eagle River, Chugiak, Girdwood, etc.

Up until about a week ago, the traffic calming program was entirely limited to operation in the ARDSA area due to the constraints placed upon the municipal bond and state grants that fund it.

Thanks to the efforts of Assembly members Bill Starr, Amy Dembowski, and PWD Director Ron Thompson, a funding source has been found that will allow the traffic calming program to operate across the entire municipality! This will enable us to start performing the speed studies and corridor analysis necessary to justify the installation of traffic calming measures. It will still be up to the road management agency in the particular area to allow traffic calming measures and to identify any funding sources for construction.

## Contact Us

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