

Information Item

Date: October 12, 2021

To: Mayor, Mayor Pro Tempore, and Members of the City Council

From: Aaron King, Interim Assistant City Manager
Toneq' McCullough P.E., Director of Transportation

Subject:

Information on a Policy for Sign Placement on Traffic Calming Speed Hump Projects

Strategic Focus Area: Quality Transportation

Strategic Objective: No

Strategic Plan Action Item: No

Key Work Item: No



The Reynolda Park neighborhood had a Traffic Calming plan approved by City Council in June which included placing speed cushions on East Kent Road, West Kent Road and Arbor Road. Residents in the neighborhood have requested that “Speed Hump” signs be placed only at the entrance to the neighborhood to advise of the speed cushions (speed humps), rather than having a sign placed adjacent to each device as is the current standard. This item describes the current practices and reasoning behind it.

When a speed hump project is approved, the installation of the devices also includes the installation of an adjacent “Speed Hump” warning sign placed on each approaching direction. These signs are installed to warn drivers of the road obstruction and are in accordance with the recommendations in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) for Streets and Highways. The MUTCD is “the standards used by road managers nationwide to install and maintain traffic control devices on all public streets, highways, bikeways and private roads open to public travel. The MUTCD is published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) under 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Part 655, Subpart F.”

The MUTCD provides a compilation of national standards for all traffic control devices, including road markings, highway signs and traffic signals. The MUTCD provides Standards, Guidance and Options for design and applications, but deciding to use the recommended devices should be on the basis of either an engineering study or the application of engineering judgment. The MUTCD is not a legal document. City staff use the MUTCD for all traffic control planning.

As it relates to signage for speed humps, the MUTCD gives the following guidance:

Section 2C.29 SPEED HUMP Sign (W17-1)

Guidance:

01 The SPEED HUMP (W17-1) sign (see Figure 2C-6) should be used to give warning of a vertical deflection in the roadway that is designed to limit the speed of traffic.

02 If used, the SPEED HUMP sign should be supplemented by an Advisory Speed plaque (see Section 2C.08).

Option:

03 If a series of speed humps exists in close proximity, an Advisory Speed plaque may be eliminated on all but the first SPEED HUMP sign in the series.

04 The legend SPEED BUMP may be used instead of the legend SPEED HUMP on the W17-1 sign.

Support:

05 Speed humps generally provide more gradual vertical deflection than speed bumps. Speed bumps limit the speed of traffic more severely than speed humps. Other forms of speed humps include speed tables and raised intersections. However, these differences in engineering terminology are not well known by the public, so for signing purposes these terms are interchangeable.

In the document the MUTCD, defines the text headings of Standard, Guidance, Option, and Support differently. The descriptions are listed as follows:

A. Standard—a statement of required, mandatory, or specifically prohibitive practice regarding a traffic control device. All Standard statements are labeled, and the text appears in bold type. The verb “shall” is typically used. The verbs “should” and “may” are not used in Standard statements. Standard statements are sometimes modified by Options.

B. Guidance—a statement of recommended, but not mandatory, practice in typical situations, with deviations allowed if engineering judgment or engineering study indicates the deviation to be appropriate. All Guidance statements are labeled, and the text appears in unbold type. The verb “should” is typically used. The verbs “shall” and “may” are not used in Guidance statements. Guidance statements are sometimes modified by Options.

C. Option—a statement of practice that is a permissive condition and carries no requirement or recommendation. Option statements sometime contain allowable modifications to a Standard or Guidance statement. All Option statements are labeled, and the text appears in unbold type. The verb “may” is typically used. The verbs “shall” and “should” are not used in Option statements.

D. Support—an informational statement that does not convey any degree of mandate, recommendation, authorization, prohibition, or enforceable condition. Support statements are labeled, and the text appears in unbold type. The verbs “shall,” “should,” and “may” are not used in Support statements.

Staff does not support limiting signage for the speed hump devices. Speed humps are designed to assist with reducing the traveling speed on roadways. If the signs are not in place, the roadway traveler may not see the devices until they hit it, or at the last minute when they are right upon them. The limited visibility of the devices may be due to their placement on winding roadways, on rolling terrain or due to coverage during adverse weather conditions. Last minute adjustments to travel speeds can potentially lead to a loss of control of the driver’s vehicle or by a bicyclist traveling on the roadway. Having the signs at each device provides a visual cue to the obstruction which should give the traveler adequate time to adjust their speed accordingly. The signage can help to limit the accident/incident potential on these projects. The City’s Risk Management Department also supports the additional signage to assist with reducing potential claims by individuals reporting damage to their vehicle or themselves contributed by lack of awareness of the devices in the roadway.