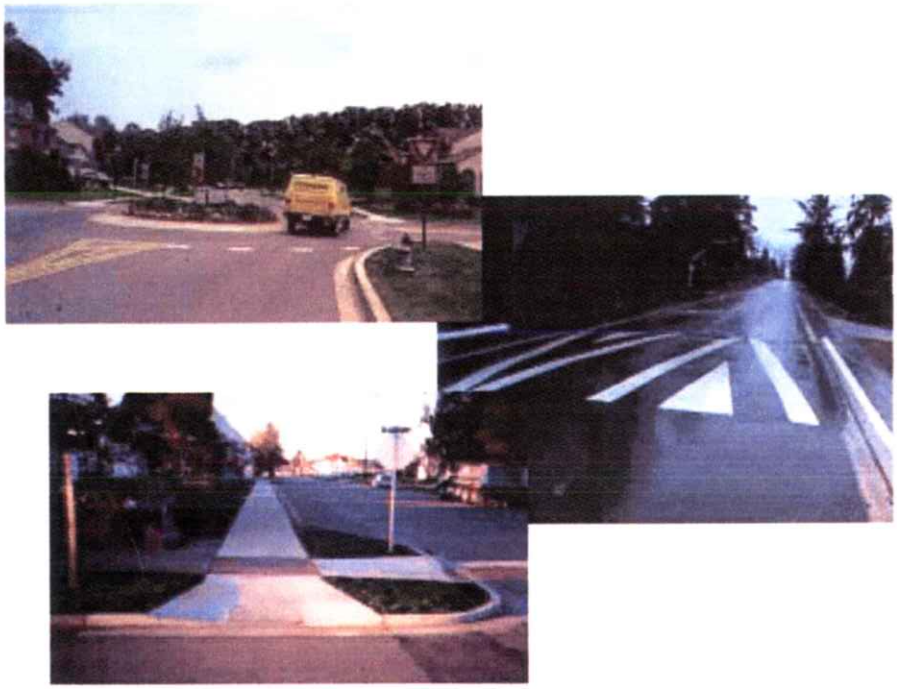
City of Morgan Hill
NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT POLICY



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Introduction

The steady growth in Silicon Valley has resulted in increased traffic volumes on regional facilities such as U.S. Highway 101 and other major arterial roadways including Monterey Highway and Santa Teresa Boulevard. Overall increases in congestion throughout the City have resulted in the diversion of commute traffic to residential streets in some areas. In other areas, the design and interconnection of collector and local streets encourage vehicles to travel at speeds in excess of the typical residential speed limit of 25 miles per hour. High vehicle volumes or excessive speeds can affect a single block or an entire neighborhood. Resident complaints regarding these issues and other safety concerns have been addressed by the City on an individual basis without a formal process for review, implementation, and monitoring.

To ensure a consistent approach and provide an effective means of communicating with residents, the City of Morgan Hill has developed a Neighborhood Traffic Management Policy (NTMP), which is a standardized set of procedures and guidelines for addressing traffic complaints on local and collector residential streets. Traffic management, or traffic calming as it is also known, is the use of physical, educational, and enforcement measures designed to enhance traffic and pedestrian safety, alter driver behavior and expectations, and preserve neighborhood character and livability. Use of all three types of measures is imperative to successful implementation of traffic management. The NTMP unifies and formalizes existing policies and programs relating to the protection of neighborhood streets from the negative impacts of vehicle traffic. Of equal importance is that the policy presents a clear process for residents and the City to address traffic volume and speeding problems.

NTMP Goals and Objectives

It is important to find a balance between improving the livability of residential streets and allowing the public street system to serve its main functions: mobility and access. Numerous studies have shown that the ideal roadway network from a transportation perspective is a grid-based system that allows the maximum distribution of traffic, but includes enough "friction" points to maintain reasonable travel speeds. Thus, the NTMP is not intended as a means to create numerous cul-de-sac streets to minimize traffic volumes and speeds. Conversely, the NTMP is intended to maximize use of the existing street system and implementing only those measures needed to preserve neighborhood safety and livability. The specific goals of the NTMP are:

1. Improve pedestrian and bicycle safety and neighborhood livability by maintaining appropriate travel speeds and traffic volumes through the use of enforcement, education, and engineering measures.
2. Maintain reasonable and efficient traffic flow on neighborhood streets.
3. Provide a formalized process for residents to identify volume and speeding-related issues, and to participate in the development of potential solutions.
4. Focus the involvement of the City Council on the major decisions required to implement traffic management projects.

To realize the NTMP goals, the following objectives were identified:

1. Develop a detailed procedure for addressing residents' concerns.
2. Establish criteria for identifying unacceptable volume/speeding problems and other traffic violations.
3. Prepare a list of acceptable traffic management tools that can be applied without significantly affecting emergency response.

Policy Development Issues

Development of a NTMP is based on the following themes that are prevalent in many jurisdictions that have not formalized a neighborhood traffic management process:

- Overall, Citywide traffic volumes are going to increase.
- Congestion on freeway and arterial roadways will continue to cause diversion into some neighborhoods.
- Some of the older areas of the roadway network were not designed with traffic management in mind.
- There is often a lack of consensus among residents as to what should be done to address a neighborhood traffic problem.
- Installation of physical improvements to reduce cut-through traffic or speeds on one street can shift the problem to another location.
- Motorist behavior plays a key role in the creation of neighborhood traffic problems and in the effectiveness of certain solutions.
- Improving the operation of signalized intersections on major roadways can reduce neighborhood street impacts.
- Enforcement and engineering resources have typically been focused on locations with documented safety problems including a high number of speeding violations or a higher than average accident rate.
- Without a dedicated funding source such as voluntary neighborhood participation or assessment districts, economic conditions can change the City's ability to install physical devices, enhance their aesthetics (e.g., with landscaping), or provide directed enforcement to address every complaint.
- Physical measures can be installed on a trial basis to allow both City staff and residents the option to remove devices should they not be effective or result in a secondary impact (e.g., divert traffic to area, substantially increase noise).

Within the context of the items outlined above, application of the NTMP will rely on staff's knowledge of the City's transportation network, augmented by more detailed data collection at specific locations to help objectively identify and quantify problems.

NTMP Process

The NTMP process includes a total of 10 steps and is designed with three levels of traffic calming, ranging from the least costly to those that could result in a significant change in travel patterns in and around a neighborhood. The levels address different needs as determined by engineering studies and neighborhood input.

Level 1: After reviewing the concerns of the neighbors and the results of an appropriate traffic engineering study, traffic control devices such as signs or pavement markings may be deemed sufficient to correct the identified problem. This is a Level 1 plan and does not include construction.

Level 2: A Level 2 plan is intended to address pedestrian/bicycle safety, speeding or other inappropriate driver behavior with devices that go beyond Level 1. Examples of traffic calming devices that fall into this category include traffic circles, speed humps, raised medians and chokers.

Level 3: A Level 3 traffic-calming project would redirect traffic in order to address excessive traffic volumes and requires the most detailed review because it typically changes circulation patterns in and around the subject neighborhood. Examples of traffic calming projects that fall into this category

are full or partial street closures, traffic diversions islands and changing the direction of travel on a street.

The 10 steps of the NTMP process are listed below and the potential improvements are included in the attached Traffic Management Tool Kit.

Step 1: Problem Identification

The planning process can begin with a citizen's request for action or with City staff's perception that a problem exists. The problem identification may be redefined based on subsequent data collection efforts and community input. This step includes definition of potentially affected streets so that other residents and stakeholders can be notified in Step 2.

Step 2: Preliminary Screening and Evaluation

City staff will review the request to determine whether or not the complaint should be handled as part of the normal traffic engineering function of the city, or if the complaint qualifies for consideration under the NTMP process. The following initial criteria will be used to assess requests:

- Is the street in question classified as a local or collector street? If not, is the neighborhood predominantly residential in character?
- Is the complaint related to speeding, high traffic volumes, accidents, cut-through traffic, truck traffic, or bicycle/pedestrian safety, or other related issues?

If it is determined that the request should be addressed by the NTMP process, then Step 3 is initiated. If not, the request shall be followed up as appropriate by the Public Works Department as part of its normal responsibilities. Public Works staff may determine that directed enforcement or minor improvements (e.g., signing and striping modifications) should be implemented initially to address the complaint before more complex solutions are considered. For example, use of a radar trailer that notifies drivers of their speed and directed enforcement through the issuance of citations by traffic control officers has successfully reduced speeding problems in other jurisdictions. These actions may solve the problem and thus end the process.

Step 3: Initial Neighborhood Survey/Petition

Following the preliminary screening and evaluation, a survey/petition will be circulated to establish the level of support from the stakeholders. A neighborhood representative must be identified to serve as a liaison to City staff and to circulate and collect the petition. The persons eligible to sign the petition will include all households, businesses, and non-resident property owners that have frontage on the project street segment(s) or in the neighborhood as defined in Step 1 and that could potentially be directly impacted by any modifications. The purpose of the petition is to establish that the majority of affected residents perceive a problem and to identify the level of support among those persons prior to proceeding with a more detailed analysis and potential project. The NTMP process will continue if a simple majority (50 percent plus one) agree that there is a problem, where every residence and business is entitled to one signature or vote.

Step 4: Initial Neighborhood Meeting

If a majority of residents sign the petition, a neighborhood meeting will be held to solicit specific input on the problem and potential solutions, and to further educate residents on the NTMP process. Details about the complaint will help staff to focus on appropriate data collection efforts and solutions as Part of Step 5.

Step 5: Engineering Analysis

The Public Works Department will conduct an engineering study of streets or neighborhoods that meet the qualifications for an NTMP. The study may include the following actions:

Review by the Police and Fire Departments. The review will determine if the specific streets in questions are critical police or fire response routes. If so, Engineering will work direct with emergency response agencies to ensure that measures are not implemented which will significantly impact response time. Police and Fire personnel will also be solicited to offer input on the problem based on their experience and perspective.

Traffic data collection may include some or all of the following based on the identified problem:

- Determine the area affected and then conduct field investigation to not traffic operating conditions, geometric conditions (roadway width, pavement condition, parking availability, type and location of existing traffic control devices, etc.).
- Traffic volume counts
- Radar or machine based speed surveys
- Truck volume counts
- Pedestrian counts
- Accident Investigation
- Other investigation as deemed appropriate by the Public Works Department

To properly quantify engineering problems and to better address quality of life issues related to vehicle traffic, the thresholds listed in the following table will be used to determine whether the complaint represents a significant problem. It is important to note that exceeding the volume thresholds does not automatically warrant modification. Additional data collection may be needed to identify the source of the traffic volumes and distinguish whether: 1) diversion or cut-through traffic is occurring, or 2) if the traffic is generated by an adjacent neighborhood and the street layout encourages travel through another neighborhood.

Traffic Measure	Threshold
Daily Volume	
Local Street	Greater than 2,000 vehicles per day (vpd)
Residential Collector	Greater than 3,500 vpd
Speed	85th percentile $\geq$ 32 mph (with a speed limit of 25 mph)
Accidents	5 or more accidents in past 3 years that were potentially preventable with traffic calming measures

Step 6: Preliminary Recommendations and Follow-up Meeting/Neighborhood Approval

If a significant problem is identified, potential modifications will be recommended based on the severity of the problem and the appropriate solutions. Solutions will include directed enforcement, education efforts, and measures included in the attached NTMP Tool Kit. Physical measures will be recommended where modification of driver behavior has not been successful through enforcement and education, and where the design of the roadway or street network may encourage the identified problem (e.g., a wide street, attractive bypass route, etc.). Certain measures such as speed humps

or bulb-outs/neckdowns may not be installed on streets that serve a bus transit route or are primary emergency response routes.

At a second neighborhood meeting, the results and preliminary recommendations will be presented. If no significant problem is identified based on the criteria shown above, no further action will be taken.

For significant problems, the preliminary recommendations can be carried forward, amended, or deleted based on community input. Draft recommendations to be considered by the city decision-makers will be consistent with the adopted NTMP goals and objectives, as well as other applicable City policies. The estimated cost of improvements will be a consideration in the preparation of draft recommendations.

NTMP plans must be approved by 60 percent of residents and business owners on streets with devices installed on them. This approval would be obtained in the form of a second petition circulated by the neighborhood representative. The petition would include a map showing the location of all devices and would allow a "yes" or "no" vote on the plan and the 60 percent total is based on the total number of votes received (i.e., abstentions do not count as "no" votes). Any property owner has the right to refuse installation of a device directly in front of their property.

Step 7: City Approval

Any physical improvements beyond the installation of signage and striping, which includes Level 2 or 3 improvements, will require approval of the City Council. The neighborhood representative and affected residents/business owners are encouraged to attend the Council meeting to voice their support or opposition to the proposed NTMP.

Step 8: City Wide Priority List Evaluation

Approval of an NTMP will result in an evaluation of that plan to identify its funding priority relative to other NTMP plans. Plans that require substantial construction efforts and/or costs will be prioritized based on the following criteria:

1. **Funding from neighborhood**. Neighborhood residents that provide a substantial financial contribution to their NTMP (Recommend 50 percent).
2. **Collision rate**. Three-year accident history with special emphasis on collisions involving pedestrians and bicyclists.
3. **School Safety**. Safety concerns near schools and on designated Safe Routes to School.
4. **Excessive Speeding**. High percentage of vehicles exceeding the speed limits.
5. **Traffic Volumes**. Traffic volumes that are higher than the capacity of similar streets within the City.
6. **Pedestrian Facilities**. Streets listed as a General Plan Pedestrian Corridor.
7. **Unusual Conditions**. Streets with an unusual physical configuration or motorist behavior.
8. **Changing Conditions**. Streets projected to experience an adverse traffic impact as a result of new development.
9. **Date of Request**. Projects will be reviewed on a first-come, first-served base when all the other priority measures are equal.

It is the intention of the City that the cost of installation of any new devices approved through this process be borne by the City Capital Improvement Program. City CIP funds that are set aside for traffic management may be used for construction or for detailed study costs. However, these funds may not be available based on economic conditions, and other sources of funding including

neighborhood contributions, assessment districts, or grants (e.g., Safe Routes to School) may be required.

Step 9: Develop and Install Trial Project

Once an NTMP has been approved and funding becomes available, a trial project will be designed by the Public Works Department for the neighborhood/streets at the top of the priority list. The trial project will be implemented with temporary materials and will remain in place for approximately six months to one year depending on the type of improvements installed. If significant citizen complaints warrant, the time period could be reduced to less than six months. The project will be evaluated during the test period to determine if it addresses the identified problems and if it achieves the NTMP goals. The Public Works Department shall conduct follow-up studies as necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of individual measures.

Step 10: Permanent Installation or Removal of Projects

If the temporary test project shows that the traffic calming plan is sufficiently addressing the specified traffic problem(s) and there have not been significant citizen complaints nor excessive diversion of the problem to another residential street, the traffic control measures shall be made permanent as funding becomes available. The measures of success will vary for safety and volume reduction projects, but for speeding problems, success means that the 85th percentile speed has been lowered to 32 miles per hour (mph) or less on streets with 25 mph limits.

If it is found that the measures do not achieve the intended goals of the NTMP, the Public Works staff will review other potential measures and recommend either elimination of all measures or a trial installation of different control measures. If additional or different measures are recommended, the street will be re-evaluated and added back onto the city wide priority list.

Residents may request removal of the installation by submitting a petition signed by at least 60 percent of residents and business owners on streets with the devices installed on them. Similar to the petition for installation, the 60 percent threshold is based on the total number of votes received (i.e., abstentions do not count as a vote).

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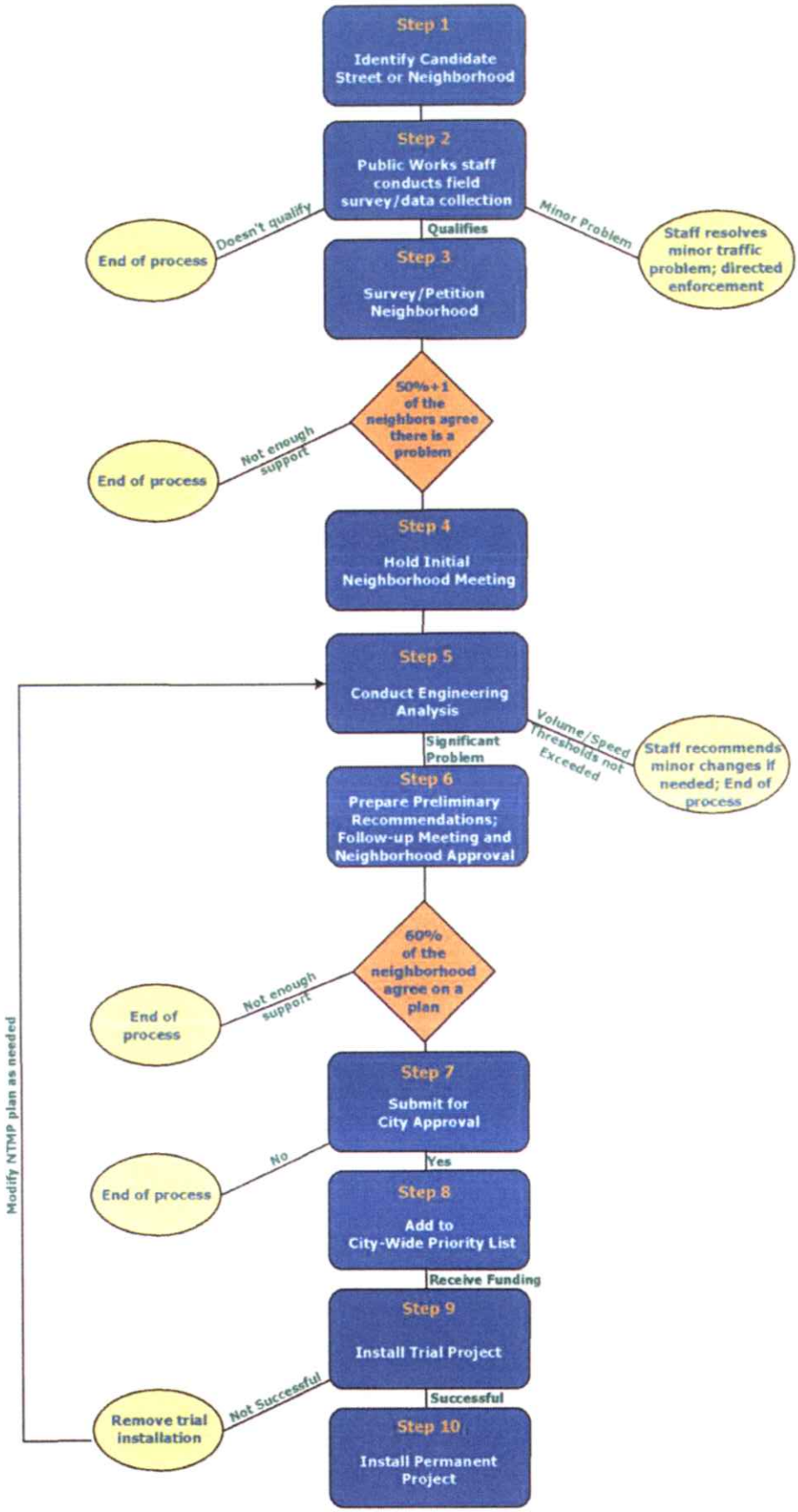
Neighborhood Traffic Management Policy (NTMP) Process