

Alternatives For Controlling Traffic In Your Community

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To some degree, traffic is an issue for every community association. The problems typically fall into the following categories: speed, volume, safety and noise. Since the roads in a community association are usually limited to serving the homes in the association, volume is generally fixed, although in some cases, "cut through" traffic can be a concern. The remaining issues of speed, safety and noise are often interrelated.

Speeding or perceived speeding is often a concern for associations. One approach to controlling speeds is "Traffic Calming". Traffic Calming State of the Practice published by the Institute of Transportation

Engineers includes the following definition for traffic calming:

"Traffic calming is the combination of mainly physical measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use, alter driver behavior and improve conditions for non-motorized street users."

Simply put, that means making changes to your roads to address traffic concerns in the community. Traffic calming can address traffic volume and/or traffic speed. As discussed above, traffic volume in community associations is usually not the issue. Traffic speed is usually perceived as the issue.

Before a community is built, there are many techniques available to the designer to

provide for traffic speed control, such as traffic circles, raised intersections and narrowing of the roadway. Once the site is built and occupied, practical options for speed control decrease significantly. Stop signs and speed limits are only effective if the association has the authority and resources for enforcement. The most common traffic calming measure implemented in existing community associations is speed bumps or speed humps.

Speed bumps and speed humps are sections of raised pavement that extend across the width of the traveled roadway. Both work by causing discomfort to the driver, thereby causing them to decrease their speed to decrease their discomfort.

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SPEED BUMPS...FROM PAGE 12.

So what's the difference between a speed bump and a speed hump?

Speed bumps don't conform to any particular design standard but are typically three to six inches high and two to three feet wide (in the direction of travel). Speed bumps can be built in place or purchased premade and anchored in place. Speed bumps generally cause vehicles to slow to approximately 5 to 10 miles per hour to pass the bump. Then the cars typically accelerate back to their desired speed. The braking and accelerating can create more problems than the speed bump solves. Because there are

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no standards or accepted practice relating to speed bumps, it is a bit of a guessing game as to whether or not they will be effective in controlling traffic speeds.

Speed humps are raised sections of pavement that conform to specific design parameters and are designed to maintain traffic at specific speed ranges without causing unsafe conditions. Speed humps are generally 3" high and 14' long. Speed humps can be installed on roads with speed limits between 20 mph and 30 mph. Proper spacing of multiple speed humps will encourage drivers to travel at a consistent speed along the entire length of the road.

One of the most significant differences between speed bumps and speed humps is that the New Jersey Legislature has adopted a law (P.L.2004, c.107 C.39:4-8.9) that recognizes speed humps and establishes standards and practices for their design and construction.

Using the design standards for speed humps, an engineer can develop a plan for traffic calming that is likely to accomplish the desired reductions in speed while maintaining safe conditions on the site. In addition, if the design and implementation of the speed

humps comply with the standards accepted by the state, the association will have greater protection against potential litigation than they would if they just had a contractor "put in a speed bump".

The following factors must be considered before speed humps can be implemented:

Existing Conditions: The existing traffic conditions should be quantified and evaluated. This information will allow the association to determine if there is an actual traffic problem or just a perceived problem. The existing condition data is also used after implementation of the speed humps to determine their effectiveness.

Existing Road Design: Locations of curves, hills, on street parking, driveways, intersections, storm water management structures, etc. will influence the number and location of speed humps.

Traffic Mix: What percentage of vehicles traveling on the subject roads are passenger vehicles versus delivery trucks or other commercial vehicles.



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Emergency Vehicles: Assuming that the roads in the community are not a primary route for emergency service response, installation of speed humps should not have a significant impact on emergency services. However, emergency services personnel (police chief, fire chief, etc.) should be consulted regarding the plan to install speed humps. Discussions with emergency services may have to include an element of education. When you mention speed humps to them, they are going to think "speed bump" and they are going to say "no way". There is data available that documents the negligible impact of speed humps on emergency response times.

Pedestrians and Cyclists: If the community has a lot of foot or bicycle traffic along the roads, speed humps may have to be modified to avoid causing conflicts.

Aesthetics: Speed humps require signage identifying their locations. In addition, pavement markings are painted on the speed hump. Some people find these signs and markings objectionable.

Snow Plowing and Maintenance: Properly designed speed humps should not interfere with snow plowing. Because the speed humps are marked with signs, the plow operator will know their location and adjust his plow as necessary. The speed humps must be maintained in the same fashion as the roads. If inspected annually and repaired when necessary, the speed hump should have similar useful life to the roads.

Community Acceptance: Along with the technical aspects of a speed hump installation project, community acceptance is critical. All members of the community will be impacted by the speed humps on a daily basis. If a majority of the membership of the association is not in support of the installation of speed humps, or if there is not a common expectation of the outcome, achieving a successful project is much more difficult.

Speed humps can be used to effectively control speeds within a community. However, it is critical that the project be carefully planned and implemented following accepted standards. An association should consult with their professional engineer and attorney to consider the technical and legal aspects, before initiating a speed hump installation program. ■

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