

# Memorandum

**TO:** HONORABLE MAYOR  
AND CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** John Ristow

**SUBJECT: AMENDMENT TO COUNCIL  
POLICY 5-6, TRAFFIC CALMING  
FOR RESIDENTIAL  
NEIGHBORHOODS**

**DATE:** May 28, 2024

Approved



Date

6/6/24

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Adopt a resolution approving a revised Council Policy 5-6 entitled “Traffic Calming Policy for Residential Neighborhoods”.

## **SUMMARY AND OUTCOME**

The updated Council Policy 5-6 will enable more residential neighborhood streets to be eligible for comprehensive traffic calming measures. Specifically, the proposed revisions would lower the speed threshold criteria for speed reduction measures such as speed humps. The updated policy also includes revisions to the community support, petition, and outreach provisions; and expands the criteria for prioritization of eligible projects as well as the exemption criteria for residential streets that do not meet the policy thresholds for comprehensive traffic calming measures.

## **BACKGROUND**

Council Policy 5-6 was adopted by the City Council in April 2000 and was subsequently modified by the City Council in June 2001. The policy was developed with a goal to improve traffic conditions and livability within San José neighborhoods. Among other provisions, the policy outlines the guidelines and processes for the review of residential traffic concerns and implementation of various traffic calming measures.

In 2008, the Council Policy 5-6 was again modified by the City Council, after extensive community input through a series of 11 community meetings, resident surveys, benchmarking of traffic calming programs in other cities, and recommendations from a City Auditor’s review. Major revisions to the policy at that time included changes to the threshold criteria for streets to be considered eligible for comprehensive traffic calming measures, incorporating a process to

prioritize eligible projects based on the severity of traffic conditions, and included the ability for neighborhoods, schools, and businesses to donate funds for eligible projects. The policy also incorporated an exemption process for a street that does not meet the threshold criteria to be considered eligible for comprehensive traffic measures if there are unique or unusual conditions.

The Mayor's June Budget Message for 2023-2024 approved by the City Council on June 13, 2023 included direction for the City Manager to initiate policy work to decrease the 33 miles-per-hour (mph) threshold in Council Policy 5-6 to 31 mph. The reduced threshold would enable additional streets to be eligible for the installation of comprehensive traffic calming measures, such as speed humps. This direction was based on a budget document submitted May 25, 2023 by City Councilmember Jimenez.

## **ANALYSIS**

The traffic calming policy and services contained within the Council Policy 5-6 are primarily focused on responding to community concerns about traffic on lower speed, lower volume residential streets. It is important to note that the Department of Transportation plans, designs, implements, and maintains a wide variety of projects and programs to increase traffic safety and multi-modal travel. Many of these efforts are focused on improvements to the major roadway network where a majority of fatalities and severe injuries occur. In 2023, 42 (86%) of traffic fatalities occurred on major roadways with posted speed limits of 35 mph or higher. Other efforts to improve roadways are outlined below.

- *Vision Zero Action Plan*<sup>1</sup> - strategic use of data, safety redesign projects on high injury corridors, and outreach and community engagement to move towards a culture around roadway safety.
- *Better Bike Plan 2025*<sup>2</sup> - jointly with the Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department, complete a 550-mile low-stress combined on-street bike and trail network.
- *Walk Safe San José* – a plan to address pedestrian safety citywide and to make recommendations using quick build material on project sites in City Council districts with the highest fatal and severe injury crashes involving pedestrians.
- *School Safety* - the established Walk n' Roll program educates school aged children on how to walk and bike safely and to promote multi-modal travel. Beginning this calendar year, staff have initiated a multi-year effort to enhance crosswalks and to conduct studies to improve traffic circulation in school zones throughout San José.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://sanjose.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=11915861&GUID=5E96023E-A9FD-402E-B560-32D66A109E40>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/68962/637477999451470000>

- *Technology* - speed safety cameras (a five-year pilot) and red-light running cameras are proven enforcement strategies that will reduce fatal and severe injuries on the City's roadways. These systems will be implemented in fiscal year 2024-2025.
- *Complete Streets* - strategic implementation of traffic safety and multi-modal improvements through a variety of efforts, including leveraging opportunities through pavement maintenance activities and aggressive pursuit of grant funds. For example, in 2023, the Department of Transportation was awarded over \$82.3 million in various state and federal grant funding sources for transportation safety projects that support walking, biking, and taking transit.

### **Residential Neighborhoods Traffic Safety Activities**

To improve safety, staff responds to over 1,200 traffic safety requests annually and implements a variety of safety measures to address speeding, pedestrian and bicyclist safety, crosswalk and stop sign requests, intersection visibility, and parking concerns. A majority of these requests are in residential neighborhoods. Staff also proactively conducts a comprehensive crosswalk assessment on residential streets as part of the annual paving program and implements improvements with the paving activities. A majority of staff activities are associated with basic traffic calming services that include the collection of data, field observations, installation of various traffic control signs and markings, parking compliance, forwarding traffic enforcement concerns to the Police Department, and traffic safety education, particularly at schools and senior center facilities.

### **Comprehensive Projects**

As described in Council Policy 5-6, a comprehensive traffic calming project involves the construction of a physical roadway feature or the installation of a dynamic sign or message system. The policy includes the following types of comprehensive measures.

*Level 1 projects*: to reduce vehicular speed or enhance pedestrian safety. Measures may include islands, curb extensions, chokers, traffic circles, speed humps, enhanced crosswalks, and radar speed display signs.

*Level 2 projects*: involves redirecting traffic to address excess volumes from cut-through traffic. Examples include traffic diversion islands, full or partial street closures, and changing the direction of travel on a street.

### **Traffic Calming Speed Threshold**

The current speed threshold in Council Policy 5-6 used to determine eligibility for comprehensive speed reduction projects is based on the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed. The 85<sup>th</sup> percentile, or prevailing speed, is the speed at which 85% of motorists are traveling at or below.

The current policy speed thresholds are summarized as follows:

Local Streets: 33 mph or more on 25 mph posted streets  
 Neighborhood Collector Streets: 33 mph or more on 25 mph posted streets  
 37 mph or more on 30 mph posted streets

### 25 mph Residential Streets (Local and Neighborhood Collector)

Reducing the speed threshold on 25 mph residential streets from the current 33 mph will increase the number of residential streets that are eligible for Level 1 speed reduction measures. The below **Table** summarizes the eligibility of 25 mph residential streets based on traffic speed data collected over an approximate three-year period on 227 street segments. Traffic data was collected between fiscal year 2019-2020 and fiscal year 2023-2024 (to mid-January 2024). If the current threshold in Council Policy 5-6 is reduced to 32 mph, the number of eligible 25 mph residential streets increases 114%, (from 14 to 30 streets). If the threshold is reduced to 31 mph, the number of eligible streets increases 179%, (from 14 to 39 streets).

**TABLE: Eligibility of 25 mph Residential Streets for Comprehensive Traffic Calming Measures**

85 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Speed Threshold	Eligible Streets		Additional Eligible Streets vs. Existing 33 mph Threshold	
	#	% of total	#	% increase
33 mph	14	6.2 %	--	--
32 mph	30	13.2 %	17	114 %
31 mph	39	17.2 %	25	179 %

*Note: Traffic data was not collected beginning spring 2020 through fiscal year 2021-2022 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.*

### 30 mph Residential Streets (Neighborhood Collector)

For consistency with the reduced threshold on 25 mph streets, staff proposes that the speed threshold on 30 mph residential streets be reduced from the current 37 mph threshold to 35 mph. Over the same approximate three-year period referenced above, staff collected data on six 30 mph residential streets. With 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds between 33 – 34 mph, the proposed reduced threshold would not impact eligibility for these specific neighborhood collector streets.

### **Other Proposed Policy Updates**

In addition to lowering the speed threshold, the proposed changes to Council Policy 5-6 includes various updates that clarifies application of the policy, clarifies the outreach and community

support process, and incorporates equity and various land use or roadway features as considerations. The primary proposed changes include the following listed below.

- As the purpose of the policy is to respond to community concerns about traffic on lower speed, lower volume residential streets, clarify that the policy is not intended to apply to how the City implements adopted safety, mode shift, and climate smart goals and plans.
- Clarify that the speed and volume thresholds in the policy are to address speeding and “cut-through” traffic concerns.
- Update the priority ranking of eligible comprehensive projects to incorporate *senior centers, high-density housing, urban villages, and equity*. The consideration of equity will be based on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission’s Combined Equity Score. A *high crash rate* has been removed as a unique condition as the crash history on a street is separately considered in the prioritization process. It is important to note that this prioritization process would be used when funding is allocated for citywide traffic calming projects.
- Clarify that neighborhood involvement and documented support is not needed for all measures. For example, the Council Policy 5-6 requirements to establish a Traffic Committee and solicit documented feedback via a formal petition is not needed for small projects, such as installing a dynamic sign (speed radar), small median island, or a crosswalk to enhance pedestrian safety.
- For Level 1 corridor-long speed control comprehensive measures, enable the Department of Transportation to solicit input from households, schools, businesses, and property owners about the planned measures prior to determining if documenting support via a petition is needed.
- Expand the policy exemption criteria to incorporate consideration of equity and existing or planned bicycle facilities.

## **Projected Impacts**

As mentioned above, based on traffic data collected between fiscal year 2019-2020 and fiscal year 2023-2024 (to mid-January 2024), 39 residential streets would be eligible for Level 1 speed reduction measures if the policy speed threshold is reduced to 31 mph. Speed humps have already been installed or are planned to be installed on nine of the 14 streets eligible for these measures based on the current 33 mph threshold. This leaves a current backlog of 30 residential streets when eligible for speed reduction measures when applying the proposed threshold of 31 mph.

If speed data collection activities remain similar in the future, staff anticipates an additional 10 to 13 residential streets annually would become eligible for comprehensive speed reduction measures based on the proposed 31 mph speed threshold, resulting in a growing backlog. This

backlog would grow if policy exemptions are provided to some residential streets that do not fully meet the policy threshold criteria. Further, if speed humps are installed on a significant number of residential streets, this may result in additional interest and requests for traffic calming. Depending on the level of new requests, additional resources may be needed for data collection and analysis, or staff may need to develop a prioritization process for these efforts.

### **Traffic Calming Project Implementation**

Staff coordinates with each City Council Office to identify priority projects for residential streets that are balanced with priority projects on major roadways and near schools. Funding for these projects has been primarily through the \$2.3 million Safety – Pedestrian Safety Improvements annual funding allocation in the Traffic Capital program that has primarily been used for pedestrian safety projects, and through the annual Mayor’s Budget Messages. These funds are also used for safety investments on the major roadway network and near schools. Annually, two to four projects varying in scale have been constructed in each City Council District.

### **EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP**

No additional follow-up action with the City Council is expected at this time.

### **COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS**

Traffic calming projects in residential neighborhoods have primarily been implemented through the approximate \$2.3 million Safety – Pedestrian Safety Improvements annual funding allocation in the Capital Improvement Program and through the annual Mayor’s Budget Messages.

### **COORDINATION**

This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney’s Office, the City Manager’s Budget Office, and the Planning, Building, and Code Enforcement Department.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

This memorandum will be posted on the City’s Council Agenda website for the June 18, 2024 City Council meeting.

### **COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT**

No commission recommendation or input is associated with this action.

HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

May 28, 2024

**Subject: Revisions to Council Policy 5-6, Traffic Calming for Residential Neighborhoods**

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## **CEQA**

Not a project, File No. PP17-008, General procedure and policy making resulting in no changes to the physical environment.

## **PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING**

This item does not include a public subsidy defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.

/s/

JOHN RISTOW

Director of Transportation

For questions, please contact Lam Cruz, Division Manager with the Department of Transportation at [Lam.Cruz@sanjoseca.gov](mailto:Lam.Cruz@sanjoseca.gov).