

Humps, circles are 2 weapons against speeders

Neighbors pay to build traffic control devices



By Kristen Cook
and Ken Keuffel Jr.
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Cars zip through Ellen Adelstein's midtown neighborhood like they're racing in the Indy 500.

And she thinks it's time for a pit stop.

Adelstein and her neighbors in Catalina Vista are considering installing speed humps to get drivers to ease off the gas.

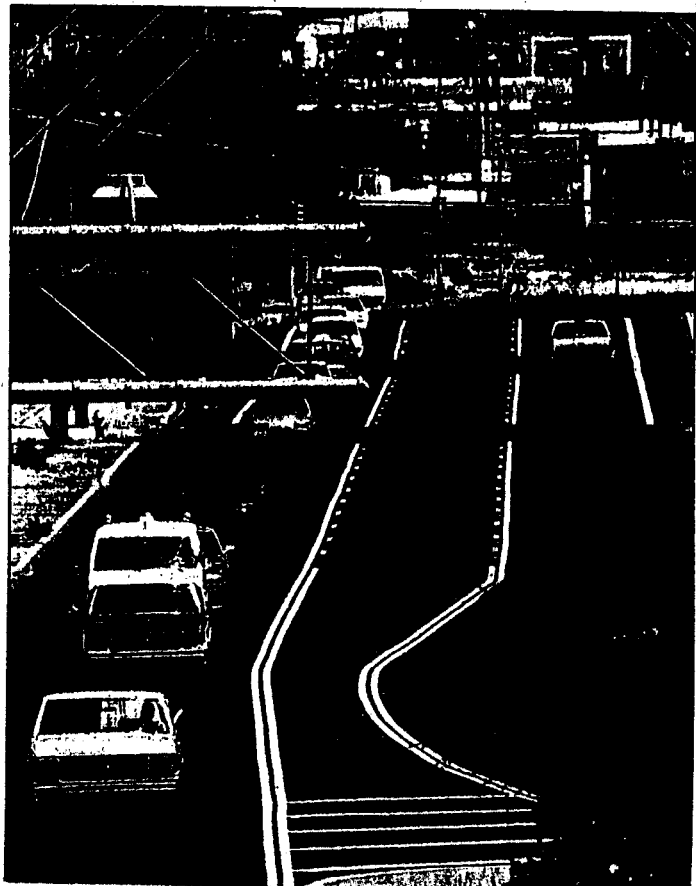
"We really don't want to put them in, but we cannot tolerate people speeding through our residential neighborhood," said Adelstein, president of the neighborhood association area bounded by North Tucson Boulevard and Campbell Avenue and by East Grant Road and Pima Street.

The problem Adelstein's neighborhood faces is fairly common. As Tucson grows and its major streets clog with cars, drivers often bypass traffic by slicing through quiet neighborhoods.

That leaves frustrated residents such as Adelstein searching for ways to stem the flow - and lower the speed - of cars cruising through their neighborhoods. Some areas install traffic circles, or roundabouts, or opt for speed humps, the speed bump's wider, flatter cousin.

Albert Elias, planning administrator for the city's Transportation Department, attributes increased neighborhood traffic to the fact that total annual vehicle miles are

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Photos by A.E. Aralza, The Arizona Daily Star

A portion of South Park Avenue lost two of its traffic lanes

At Interstate 10, South Park traffic slows to merge into the newly remodeled two-lane avenue, built with input from area resi

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increasing faster than our population growth.

"In other words, we're driving more and more and more," he said. "Part of that has to do with the urban growth of our community - it's so sprawling."

Dealing with the needs of drivers and those of neighborhoods is a delicate balance.

Five years ago, the city started a formal neighborhood traffic management program. Since then, at least 45 neighborhoods have added some type of traffic control device, according to the Transportation Department.

In addition to speed humps and traffic circles, they include rumble strips and signs with messages such as "Slow - children are playing." Making roads narrower is another option.

Speed, not volume, reduced

These measures reduced the number of cars exceeding the 25 mph residential speed limit by an average of 56 percent, according to a city Transportation Department handout.

Mitigation devices are less successful in reducing traffic volume. In some neighborhoods traffic decreased, but in others it actually increased.

Anne Lawrence, president of downtown's Amory Park Neighborhood Association, said traffic circles slowed the cars driving through her area in the past year. Also, semi-trailer truck traffic is down, she said.

Armory Park bought eight traffic circles - at a cost of \$4,500 each - and plans on adding eight more.

As a bonus, the traffic deterrents give the neighborhood a distinct feel by identifying Armory Park's boundaries, Lawrence said.

Speed humps are another way neighborhoods try to slow traffic.

A majority of homeowners must approve speed humps before they're installed. The average hump costs \$550.

Neighborhoods have two payment options if they want traffic mitigation devices. Property owners can be taxed over 10 years or residents can raise contributions.

In the Sam Hughes area, several speed humps were installed last February on East



A roundabout slows traffic at South Third Avenue and East 16th Street.

Seventh, Eighth and Ninth streets. Before the humps, drivers would cut through the UA neighborhood at 65 mph, said Ralph Taylor, the neighborhood association's president.

Since speed humps joined the neighborhood, traffic has "slowed down significantly," Taylor said.

In the eastside Terra del Sol, neighborhood results are mixed. Speed humps were installed two years ago. Residents are so frustrated that they've volunteered to sit in their front yards with radar guns, said Claire Weeks, neighborhood association president.

One problem with speed humps and traffic circles is that they slow down emergency vehicles that people want to speed.

Before traffic control devices are installed, emergency personnel are consulted. But Tucson Fire Department Capt. Brian Delfs said his agency is only asked if vehicles can get through, not whether they want humps or roundabouts.

"We understand (a neighborhood's) needs," said Dan Larkin, an assistant chief for Tucson Fire. "Our concern's getting to a scene as quickly as possible. The more humps there are, the longer it takes to respond."

Sometimes residents disagree about

The neighborhood traffic management program is at 791-4259.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Examples of before and after speed

- On the eastside, after five humps went up on Pima Street east of Pano Road, the number of cars driving faster than 25 mph dropped by 71 percent. The normal speed limit in residential areas is 25 mph.

- Four traffic circles were built in the northside's Keeling neighborhood. North First Avenue and East Glenn Street, toward the city center, were checked various times in the neighborhood and found as much as a 50 percent reduction in vehicles exceeding 25 mph.

- The 10 speed bumps around Tucson's Wilshire Drive, near East Broadway and South Craycroft Road, prompted a prompt 86 percent reduction in excess speed.

what's appropriate. That's the case along Pima Street. As part of a voter-approved bond package, Pima between Craycroft and Alvernon Way was targeted for flow improvements, the city's Elias said.

But some neighbors think the Alvernon-to-Swan Road segment should be reduced to three lanes instead of widened to five.

"Since the bonds were proposed, we've had a lot of people to be used for addressing congestion. That's a problem," Elias said.

Work on Pima between Craycroft and Swan is expected to start in December. The Transportation Department will like to go to the City Council to resolve concerns about the controversial Alvernon-to-Swan segment, Elias said.

In new developments, home builders are head off traffic problems by avoiding streets that make for easy speeding. Mark Lewis, owner of Lewis Management, said he oversees about 40 neighborhood associations.

Newer neighborhoods tend to have through streets and instead feature cul-de-sacs and curvy streets, Lewis said.