City of Boulder, CO, USA creates Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program

Background

The city of Boulder, Colorado Transportation Division launched a Neighborhood Speed Management Program (NSMP) geared toward slowing speeds on residential streets in 2018. The city continues to implement the program, which also includes education, enforcement and evaluation to calming traffic on any road classified as a local or collector street in Boulder city limits. The Neighborhood Speed Management Program is incorporated in both the Transportation Master Plan and Vision Zero goals in the city of Boulder, to ensure the program is recognized and achievable.

The goals of the city of Boulder Neighborhood Speed Management Program include:

- Enhance neighborhood livability by reducing speeding traffic.
- Involve neighborhood residents in addressing neighborhood-identified speeding issues.
- Use clear evidence and a documented process to support the prioritization of neighborhood traffic calming activities and identify impacts of such activities (i.e., impacts to traffic diversion).
- Effectively address the public safety interests of emergency responders.
- Strive toward zero injury and fatal accidents, reflecting the overall city transportation and environmental policies and values with emphasis in Toward Vision Zero and the Transportation Master Plan.
- Implement speed management strategies in coordination with other City of Boulder planning priorities when possible.

Education and Enforcement

The NSMP in Boulder involves residents in every step of the speed management process by having a formal application process for residential streets by block to be considered for engineering, education and enforcement measures. There is a Neighborhood Registration Form to be included in the neighborhood speed management program, which includes education and enforcement resources.

Education and enforcement resources are provided to residential streets approved to participate. The education resources for participating streets in the Neighborhood Speed Management Program range from yard signs to bumper stickers to brochures. Enforcement resources include neighborhood speed zone signs, radar gun rentals, and speed trailer and photo radar deployment lists.

Traffic Calming Countermeasures

According to the NSPM Program Guidelines, the city of Boulder defines traffic calming as a “method of implementing physical traffic engineering devices to slow motorized vehicle speeds to a safe level for that street. Traffic calming can have other impacts, including improving street conditions for people walking and riding bicycles.” There is a NSMP Neighborhood Petition Form, which

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1 NSPM Program Guidelines
2 NSPM Program Guidelines
requires signatures from 20 neighbors or 30% of households on the same block, to be consider for an engineering project to slow speeds. City staff review the forms to determine whether education and enforcement resources will resolve the problem, or if simple or complex traffic calming measures are necessary to reduce speeds.

Once an engineering project in underway in Boulder, city staff host a neighborhood meeting and collect comments in a comment form. According to the program website, if an engineering project is approved, simple traffic calming projects are considered first as a less invasive and lower cost approach, such as speed humps and cushions, to calm speeds. If simple traffic calming cannot solve the speeding problem, a more complex project may be explored by the city of Boulder Transportation Division. A complex project in the city of Boulder includes a formal planning process and timeline. The NSMP website categorizes simple and complex project as follows:

- Simple projects are those that are expected to have a localized impact on reducing speeds…and have little effect on traffic diversion. They are also anticipated to cost less than or around $10,000. Simple projects will be implemented by staff after a recommendation by the Transportation Advisory Board.
- Complex projects may include impacts to neighboring streets or other travel modes…and cost more than $10,000. Complex projects must receive a recommendation to proceed from the Transportation Advisory Board and must also be approved by City Council.3

The city of Boulder has developed a Speed Management Engineering Toolkit for staff to use in evaluating the most appropriate design solution to slow speeds, and also educate residents about the purpose, effectiveness, advantages, and disadvantages of traffic calming countermeasures. While there are many traffic calming countermeasures for transportation professionals to consider industry-wide, such as the ones featured on the ITE Traffic Calming Measures webpage and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Traffic Calming ePrimer, the city of Boulder has selected specific traffic calming measures for their Neighborhood Speed Management Program toolkit. City staff use posted speed limit, 85th percentile, average daily traffic (ADT), number of speeding cars, speed related crashes, and activity generators such as sidewalks and bike routes to determine the most appropriate measure for managing speed based on a points system.

More information

Check out the full Neighborhood Speed Management Program page for additional material, such as post program data collection and FAQ sheets, on how to possibly implement a similar program in another jurisdiction.

3 Neighborhood Speed Management Program webpage

Traffic circle (above image) and chicane style curb extension (below image) traffic calming projects completed in the city of Boulder. Source: City of Boulder, CO.