DATE: February 11, 2020

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Darwin Galang, Associate Civil Engineer
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VIA: Max Bosel, Interim City Manager/Police Chief

TITLE: **Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP)**

STUDY SESSION MEMO

CITY OF MOUNTAIN VIEW

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Study Session is to provide an overview and update on the City's Neighborhood Traffic Management Program and to obtain City Council direction on possible revisions to the program.

BACKGROUND

In 1996, the City Council adopted the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) to establish a consistent set of guidelines to provide residents and property owners a means to obtain relief from traffic-related concerns, namely speeding vehicles and cut-through traffic on residential streets. The most recent modifications to the program were made in September 2002.

DISCUSSION

The NTMP process consists of a number of steps that include a request from a neighborhood to initiate the process, validation of the concern by the City, and community input on which, if any, traffic-calming devices are desired. Each step is described briefly below.

Although cut-through traffic is part of the NTMP, the main purpose of this Study Session discussion is intended to be about residents' concerns related to speeding. Most petitioners initiate the NTMP process with speeding concerns, and staff has not received any petitions related to cut-through traffic. The work effort and types of studies required for cut-through traffic concerns are not discussed below and, in general, are more labor-intensive than a speed survey.

1. Initial Inquiry and/or Petition by Residents

The NTMP process begins with a petition to the City Traffic Engineer with signatures from a minimum of 10 percent of the residents or property owners on the street in question. The petition should include a statement explaining the traffic concern.

Staff recommends continuing to require the submittal of a petition for resident-initiated efforts. This requirement assures minimum consensus among residents that a traffic-related concern exists.

Staff recommends revising the number to a minimum of five signatures or a minimum of 10 percent of the residents or property owners on the street in question, whichever is higher. Although staff recommends keeping a low threshold on the number of signatures required, petitions signed by only one or two residents do not provide a good indication that there is a consensus that a problem exists and can result in failed attempts to get traffic-calming improvements approved by the affected residents. With a reasonable threshold, staff resources can be deployed to collect and analyze speed data to determine if the street qualifies for NTMP. There is value in collecting the speed data because it quantifies the actual speeds which can be compared to the residents' perception of speeds on their street.

Question No. 1: Does Council support changing the signature requirement to a minimum of five signatures or a minimum of 10 percent of the residents or property owners on the street in question, whichever is higher?

2. Traffic Study, Identification of Appropriate Measures, and Establishment of Notification/Voting Area

After a petition has been received, staff conducts a traffic or speed survey to determine if the speed of traffic or the amount of traffic on the street exceeds the NTMP criteria (see Attachment 1—Table 1 and Table 2). If the speed or volume on the street meets or exceeds the NTMP criteria, staff moves to the next step in the process.

During this phase of the NTMP, staff also establishes a notification/voting area. This area only includes residents on the segment of the street in question or on culs-de-sac directly connected to the street without alternate ingress or egress. In other words, only the people who must use the street segment(s) in question and have no alternative ingress and egress are allowed to vote.

Staff recommends retaining the established NTMP speed and volume criteria and keeping the notification/voting area to only the street in question and culs-de-sac directly connected to the street without alternate ingress or egress. This provides the opportunity to those residents directly impacted by speeding vehicles to implement traffic-calming measures, whereas residents not affected may not be considering the implications of the speed and volume of vehicles but only the inconvenience of having to navigate traffic-calming measures.

3. Neighborhood Meeting with Affected Residents/Property Owners to Identify Preferred Traffic-Calming Measures

If the speed survey meets the program criteria, staff arranges a neighborhood meeting with the residents/property owners within the established notification/voting area. At this meeting, staff discusses the NTMP process and presents the traffic-calming measures available as part of the program guidelines. At the end of the meeting, staff polls the attendees to see if there is consensus on the type of traffic-calming device(s) the attendees would like implemented on their street.

If a consensus is reached, staff moves to the next step in the process. If a consensus cannot be reached, staff arranges a second and final neighborhood meeting. If, after the final meeting, a consensus still cannot be reached, the process may be concluded depending on the desires of the affected residents and property owners.

Staff recommends that the guidelines be modified to add electronic speed feedback signs to the list and to also allow staff to authorize additional traffic-calming measures as new techniques/devices are developed and approved per the California Manual on Uniform Traffic-Calming Devices (CA MUTCD) and other State and/or Federal standards.

Question No. 2: Does Council support modifying the NTMP guidelines to add electronic speed feedback signs to the list of traffic-calming devices and to also allow staff to authorize additional traffic-calming measures as new techniques/devices are developed?

4. Postcard Survey

Staff sends out a postcard survey within the established notification/voting area to vote on the selected device(s). For a device to be installed, a supermajority (67

percent) approval of the returned postcards is needed. There is no minimum number or percentage of returned postcards required.

If supermajority approval is not received, the NTMP process does not proceed and the affected residents and property owners receive a notification of the results and are informed that a reapplication process may be initiated after a year.

Staff recommends that a voting process be retained in the program. The percentage of postcards returned from recent NTMP processes have ranged from 36 percent to 83 percent. Staff recommends requiring a minimum 35 percent return rate for the postcards and a supermajority (67 percent) approval of the returned postcards to ensure that there is adequate support for the traffic-calming devices to be installed.

Question No. 3: Does Council support requiring a minimum of 35 percent of the postcard ballots be returned along with a minimum of 67 percent approval of the returned postcards?

5. Approval by Staff and/or the City Council Transportation Committee/City Council

Depending on the type of device(s) approved in the postcard survey, staff approves the installation of the device or brings a recommendation to the Council Transportation Committee (CTC) and, in some instances, to the City Council. Attachment 2—Table 3 provides information on the approval process for each type of traffic-calming device.

Staff has encountered NTMP requests of different scales and recommends retaining the ability for staff to approve the installation of certain device(s), to recommend the installation of certain device(s) to CTC for approval, and to have Council approve larger-scale and more controversial implementations. In instances with smaller-scale installations, such as speed humps, narrow median islands, and electronic speed feedback signs, eliminating the need for CTC or Council approval can significantly reduce the amount of time needed to install improvements. Staff recommends the guidelines allow staff more discretion and use of professional judgment in determining whether it is necessary to take a recommendation to CTC or Council.

Question No. 4: Does Council support modifying the NTMP guidelines to revise Step 5 to make it optional at staff's discretion and judgment about whether it is necessary to take a recommendation to CTC or Council?

6. Installation of Traffic-Calming Device(s)

After the project has been approved, staff arranges to install the traffic-calming devices.

Staff has received feedback from residents that project approval and installation of devices have, in some instances, taken longer than four to six months from initial inquiry, as outlined in the NTMP. It is worth noting that each individual NTMP step takes time, and there are sometimes delays that are beyond staff's control. For instance, traffic survey data collection is typically performed during non-holiday weeks and outside of the school summer break to be able to obtain more representative data. Noticing, setting up neighborhood meetings, and conducting postcard surveys require several weeks each to allow an adequate noticing period and to encourage a higher participation rate from residents and property owners.

Staff also coordinates installation of traffic-calming improvements with other projects (such as overlays and street resurfacing projects) and thoughtfully considers other opportunities (such as Capital Improvement Program (CIP) projects and development projects) in the interest of efficiency and economies of scale. For example, Gretel Lane and Gladys Avenue NTMPs were incorporated in the 2017-2018 Street Resurfacing and Slurry Seal Program Project; Cuesta Drive and Rose Avenue NTMPs were incorporated in the 2016-2017 Street Resurfacing and Slurry Seal Program Project; and Linda Vista NTMP was incorporated in the 1001 North Shoreline Boulevard Development Project.

If no such opportunities are available, the traffic-calming improvements are installed as a stand-alone project and, depending on the cost, may involve formal bidding.

Staff is recommending that no changes be made to the practices and timing used to install traffic-calming devices. However, staff intends to remove the reference to specific implementation timelines in the NTMP guidelines to avoid setting unrealistic expectations.

7. Evaluation, Permanent Installation, or Removal After One Year

After a one-year evaluation period, staff conducts another speed or traffic survey to determine if traffic speed or the volume of vehicles has been reduced. At this point, the following three possible actions can be taken:

- If the traffic concern has been resolved and the affected residents or property owners are satisfied with the results, staff makes the installation permanent or recommends a permanent installation to the CTC or City Council, depending on the type of improvement. An example of this is initially installing a rubber curb island that will eventually become a permanent concrete island. On the other hand, speed humps are considered permanent when installed but could be removed if necessary and if requested by the residents and property owners based on the second possible action described below.

- If the traffic concern has been resolved but the affected residents or property owners are not satisfied with the results, they may request removal of the device(s). For a device to be removed, the petition (signatures from 10 percent of the affected area) and postcard survey (supermajority support of the removal) Step Nos. 1 and 4, respectively, of the NTMP are followed. See Attachment 2—Table 4 to determine the removal process for each traffic-calming device.

- If the traffic concern has not been resolved, staff may remove the device or recommend the removal of the device to the CTC or City Council. Staff automatically arranges for another neighborhood meeting to discuss alternate traffic-calming device(s).

Staff has received feedback from residents wherein the traffic-calming devices have successfully resolved the issues, but the residents would like additional improvements without the removal of the installed device(s). Staff recommends retaining the evaluation and removal process; however, if the installed devices have resolved the issues and a resident would like additional NTMP measures, staff will direct the resident to submit a new petition to start a new process. At the same time, staff will also consider if there are others tools available outside the NTMP that could address the concern.

NTMP Implementation Challenges

The flow of petitions and requests for NTMP has generally been unpredictable (see Attachment 3—NTMP History Log (since 2011)). Staff has received as few as one petition a year to as many as seven petitions a year while staff has also managed as few as one NTMP qualified street a year to as many as eight NTMP qualified streets in a span of two years. As outlined in the NTMP guidelines, projects are accepted and funded on a first-come, first-served basis, and if the budget is exhausted, remaining projects are carried over to the next year. Staff has consistently and attentively managed NTMP projects while also looking at opportunities to incorporate improvements into CIP or developer projects. Depending on the design stage of CIP or developer projects, there may be delays in installing the NTMP improvements.

NTMP projects can also vary in scale and complexity. For instance, the Orangetree Lane NTMP project in 2011 included two speed humps and required 18 months from submittal of petition to installation. On the other hand, the Sylvan Avenue NTMP project in 2016 included electronic speed feedback signs; high-visibility crosswalks with LED-enhanced signs, In-Roadway Warning Lights, Caltrans standard poles, and solar panels; and other striping and signage work, and required three years from submittal of petition to installation.

In some cases, NTMP does not readily provide the best solution for traffic-related concerns, and the City has other methods besides the NTMP to address these neighborhood traffic concerns. For instance, in 2012, an NTMP petition for Bush Street was received, but the speed survey verified that the street did not qualify for the NTMP. One of the neighborhood's concerns was vehicles not yielding to pedestrians crossing Bush Street near Mercy-Bush Park. Staff conducted a stop sign warrant and verified that the intersection of Mercy Street and Bush Street qualified for stop sign installation. The stop sign addressed the concern. Other examples include traffic signal warrants, striping and signage improvements, and crosswalk improvements, none of which typically require the NTMP process.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council consider revisions to the process and seeks input on the following questions:

1. Does Council support changing the petition signature requirement to a minimum of five signatures or a minimum of 10 percent of the residents or property owners on the street in question, whichever is higher?

2. Does Council support modifying the NTMP guidelines to add electronic speed feedback signs to the list of traffic-calming devices and to also allow staff to authorize additional traffic-calming measures as new techniques/devices are developed?

3. Does Council support requiring a minimum of 35 percent of the postcard ballots be returned along with a minimum of 67 percent approval of the returned postcards to approve installation of traffic-calming devices?

4. Does Council support modifying the NTMP guidelines to revise Step 5 to make it optional at staff's discretion and judgment about whether it is necessary to take a recommendation to CTC or Council?

5. Are there any other revisions to the process or guidelines Council would like staff to develop?

NEXT STEPS

If Council directs staff to implement any changes to the NTMP, staff will return to Council with a recommended program revision as necessary.

PUBLIC NOTICING

Agenda posting. Notices were e-mailed to all neighborhood associations and a notice was advertised in the *Mountain View Voice*. The meeting will also be promoted on social media.

DG-LL-EA-DSC/TS/5/CAM
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Attachments:
1. NTMP Speed and Volume Criteria Tables
2. NTMP Traffic-Calming Device Approval and Removal Process
3. NTMP History Log
4. NTMP Guidelines

cc: APWD—Arango, CTE, ACE—Galang, SMA—Goedicke, PA—Li, SMA—Doan, File