

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT RESIDENTIAL SPEED CONTROL

Speeding on residential streets is probably the most persistent problem facing residents and traffic officers. Residents observe vehicles being driven at speeds they perceive as too fast and often propose solutions that simply won't reduce speeds or that create other traffic safety problems.

This article answers some of the most common questions regarding speeding on residential streets. It points out that there is no single, simple solution that:

Satisfies residents,
Is effective, and
Meets good engineering practices and standards.

Therefore, it is extremely important that residents and traffic officials work together with a full understanding of each other's problems, limitations, and concerns for the common goal of safety on residential streets.

Can we have stop signs to slow down cars?

Studies show that three things happen when stop signs are installed solely to reduce speeds:

1. Vehicle speeds are only reduced within about 150 feet of each side of the stop sign.
2. Very few drivers actually come to a full stop for these signs.
3. Vehicle speeds often increase between stop signs.

Therefore, stop signs are not always the desirable solution to reduce speed.

There are many children on our street. How can we keep them safe from speeders?

Children should never play in the street. When children are old enough to cross streets parents should teach them the hazards involved and the proper, safe way to cross. If there are no sidewalks, a community can form an ad-hoc committee to have them installed.

Why can't we get the police to ticket the speeders on our street?

You can, but they need your help. When you notice a speeder, make note of the time, location, vehicle (make, model, year, color, license number) and driver (size, age, sex). Pass this information on to your local police department to be included in their selective enforcement program.

Can we get speed bumps installed on our street to slow down vehicles?

The purpose of speed bumps is to make drivers so uncomfortable going over them that they will slow down. Tests show that the comfort level varies with the height and width of the bump and the speed of the vehicle. Going over some bumps at higher speeds can actually make the ride smoother. This, of course, defeats the purpose.

Traveling over speed bumps at any speed can cause major mechanical or maintenance problems to any vehicle, especially school buses and delivery trucks. Bumps can also increase response time for fire, police and ambulances, cause accidents for bicyclists and motorcyclists, and be an attractive hazard for skate boarders.

Why can't we close our street at one end to keep speed down and through traffic off of our street?

Comprehensive studies must be done to define the problem and determine how a street closure will affect traffic. Street closures affect emergency response time, snow plowing, school bus and mail routes, and residential traffic, just to mention a few.

Traffic volumes may decrease, reducing the number of speeders. These displaced vehicles will move to another street, relocating the problem.

What can I do to start a traffic committee to help resolve traffic safety problems?

A "Traffic Safety Committee" is generally made up of 5 citizens and an official from the city, police officer or engineer. The committee is often an official committee of the community government. Contact your local police or community officials about starting a Traffic Safety Committee. Since you are taking the first steps to establish a traffic committee, you should be prepared to become active on the committee.

What is the best way to improve the safety on our streets?

Studies show that most traffic law violators are residents of the neighborhood. These drivers can be reached through neighborhood association newsletters, PTA meetings and social gatherings. Safety can also be improved by asking neighbors not to park cars in the street, if possible. This increases the drivers' sight distance and decreases the chance of children darting into the street from between parked cars. Request your local traffic officials to review the area for proper traffic controls, sight distance restrictions (parked cars, trees, bushes, etc.) and other items that may be a traffic safety hazard. Then work with the officials to implement changes that are recommended.

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