

DATE OF MEETING NOVEMBER 24, 2025
AUTHORED BY FRASER MAH, TRANSPORTATION ENGINEER, TRANSPORTATION
SUBJECT **TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM UPDATE**

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report:

To provide a summary of Nanaimo's current approach to Traffic Calming and present plans to address existing challenges to the Governance and Priorities Committee.

BACKGROUND

Existing Traffic Calming Program

The City's traffic calming program is based on the Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Guidelines (Attachment A) developed in 2005. A high-level summary of the process outlined in the guideline for traffic calming implementation is:

1. The need for traffic calming is generally identified by neighbourhood residents, neighbourhood associations, or City Staff who contact the Transportation Engineering department to outline their concern.
2. Transportation Engineering conducts an assessment to determine if the situation meets the thresholds for traffic calming; typically, 7 km/h over the posted speed limit and above a certain traffic volume depending on road classification.
3. If a problem is identified, Transportation Engineering develop a site-specific design to address the concerns identified. Residents in the impacted neighbourhood are consulted to confirm that a majority of residents support the implementation of the traffic calming measures.
4. If a majority of residents are in support (or the situation requires intervention to meet safety or liability requirements), Staff will bring a report with recommendations to Council for approval. If approved, the traffic calming measures will be implemented.
5. Transportation Engineering will collect follow-up data to determine if the intended safety improvements are achieved.

City Plan Alignment

Policies in the Official Community Plan (OCP) that align with the Traffic Calming program include:

- C2.4.3: Apply traffic calming measures and programs to address identified safety and livability issues.

- C2.4.4: Prioritize safety improvements based on Walk Score, traffic speeds, collisions, proximity to schools, traffic volume, land use, proximity to transit, and socio-economic factors.

Programs in the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) that align with the Traffic Calming program include:

- C2.4.2: Continue the traffic-calming program to promote safety in the community and work towards Vision Zero goals.
- C2.4.4: Target \$365,000 over the next 5 years to enhance safety through traffic calming.

DISCUSSION

Traffic Calming Program Challenges

Over the past several years, the Transportation Engineering department has struggled to effectively meet the high demand of residents for traffic calming improvements across the City. Challenges to the program include:

- Increased traffic calming demand: Transportation Engineering receives hundreds of requests for traffic calming measures every year and currently has 12 locations in queue for data collection.
- Population growth and density: Increasing residential density throughout the City is increasing traffic volumes on some streets that have historically been quiet suburban areas.
- Nanaimo's topography: Many of the City's neighbourhoods have steep slopes and open-ditch stormwater drainage that presents challenges to safely implementing traffic calming improvements.
- Construction costs: While construction costs have recently somewhat stabilized, project costs remain high and create challenges to meeting the demand for traffic calming measures. Based on traffic calming budget allocations and typical project costs, we're able to implement 1-2 projects per year.
- Historic car-centric development: Many of Nanaimo's neighbourhoods were developed at a time that personal vehicle use was the design basis leaving many areas without sidewalks and wide vehicle lanes which encourage faster speeds.
- Project prioritization: The current Traffic Calming program addresses concerns chronologically based on when they are received. Presently, we have 44 locations that have been identified as meeting our traffic calming thresholds (Attachment B), waiting to be addressed.
- Conflicting engagement opinions: During the community engagement portion of the process, Staff often receive a diverse array of opinions from impacted residents with some strongly in support and some strongly opposed.

Traffic Calming Program Opportunities

Acknowledging the challenges facing the existing Traffic Calming program, opportunities have been identified to refresh the current program to try to improve the process to address the highest priority items.

- Automated data collection: Staff are currently working to aggregate anonymous, crowd-sourced data to monitor traffic speed and volumes across the entire City to expedite data collection and proactively identify high-risk areas of the City.
- Prioritization matrix: Introducing a prioritization matrix would help to identify the sites in greatest need of traffic calming improvements to address the highest risk areas.
- Local Service Area agreements: Given financial constraints on the ability of the traffic calming program to meet demand, opportunity is available to encourage residents to directly support the construction through a Local Service Area agreement.
- Community-led petitions: Currently, Staff conduct a community survey to determine the level of support for traffic calming when a project is being considered. Some other municipalities require residents to submit their own petition to show that most residents in an area support traffic calming with the initial inquiry. This helps to free up Staff time by screening requests based on locations that already have demonstrable support. Policy would be required for Staff to appropriately authenticate survey results and ensure all residents have had the opportunity to participate.
- Standardized designs: Currently, when traffic calming measures are required, a site-specific design is developed to address the specific issues and road geometry/cross-section. There may be opportunity to standardize some designs to expedite implementation.
- Update traffic calming criteria: Adjusting the thresholds at which traffic calming is deemed necessary, or revising the evaluative criteria more broadly would help to prioritize the highest risk locations.

Introducing these opportunities as an update to the 2005 Traffic Calming Guidelines and processes is expected to help Staff to identify and prioritize the highest risk locations. While some opportunities will help to expedite the implementation of traffic calming measures to meet the demand, the number of projects that can be implemented each year will be limited by the availability of Staff and financial resources.

Consulting with Emergency Services and Transit Drivers

At the 2025-OCT-20 Regular Council Meeting, the following motion was passed:

“That Council direct Staff to engage with RCMP, BC Emergency Health Services, Nanaimo Fire Rescue Department, and BC Transit prior to any traffic calming or road changes. It is requested each department speak with the drivers of said agencies to ensure their concerns are heard and furthermore any comments received by these agencies be included for Mayor and Council review.”

Staff are working with referral agencies to update workflow to receive driver input. Discussions are ongoing with Nanaimo Fire and Rescue, BC EHS, RCMP, and RDN Transit to effectively collect this feedback.

CONCLUSION

Staff continue to work diligently to address the community demand for neighbourhood traffic calming using appropriate measures considering the safety of all road users. To support this work, Staff will complete a review of the 2005 Traffic Calming Guidelines in 2026 to align our approach with industry best practices and incorporate opportunities to improve the efficiency of the overall process where possible. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- Nanaimo is seeing unprecedented demand for neighbourhood traffic calming. The existing program is facing challenges in meeting that demand.
- Updating the Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Guideline and our overall traffic calming processes is expected to help Staff address demand effectively and more efficiently.

ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT A – City of Nanaimo Neighbourhood Traffic Calming Guidelines, Oct 2005
ATTACHMENT B – Project Consideration List (as of November 12, 2025)

Submitted by:

Jamie Rose
Manager, Transportation

Concurrence by:

Poul Rosen
Director, Engineering

Bill Sims
General Manager, Engineering & Public
Works