

Office of the City Auditor

**Report to the City Council
City of San José**

**AN AUDIT OF THE
TRAFFIC CALMING
PROGRAM**

**The Department Of Transportation Needs
To Establish Additional Controls To
Improve The Traffic Calming Program's
Effectiveness**

**The Department Of Transportation Needs
To Better Maintain Some Comprehensive
Traffic Calming Projects**

**Report 07-03
May 2007**

PREFACE

Presented herein are the City Auditor's Executive Summary, the Department of Transportation's response, and the Police Department's response to *An Audit of the Traffic Calming Program*. This summary is intended to reduce the City's cost of printing and distributing audit reports. If you would like a copy of the full report, please call the City Auditor's Office at (408) 535-1250; we will be happy to send you a complete report.

Executive Summary

In accordance with the City Auditor's 2006-07 Audit Workplan, we audited the Department of Transportation's (DOT) Traffic Calming Program (Program). We conducted our audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards and limited our work to those areas specified in the Objectives, Scope, and Methodology section of this report.

Finding I

The Department Of Transportation Needs To Establish Additional Controls To Improve The Traffic Calming Program's Effectiveness

The City of San Jose's Traffic Calming Program (Program) was initially established in 1978; however, it has been discontinued and reestablished twice over the past few decades. In 2000, the City Council established a new Traffic Calming Policy and the Program was reestablished. Since 2001, the Program has implemented a number of measures intended to reduce traffic problems and increase the safety of the residents of San Jose. On the whole, the community seems to support the Program. However, funding problems have limited the Program's ability to implement needed traffic calming measures. In our opinion, the Department of Transportation (DOT) needs to establish additional controls to ensure that the Program spends its limited funds on comprehensive traffic calming projects that are warranted and on the highest priority projects. In addition, we found that the DOT needs to strengthen its controls over its Annual Collision Review process for reviewing high crash locations and that the Program should use technology to enhance its ability to proactively identify neighborhood streets with speeding problems and obtain additional non-injury crashes information. Furthermore, we found that the DOT needs to establish additional controls to ensure that the Program responds to neighborhood complaints in a timely and consistent manner. Also, the DOT needs to formalize the Neighborhood Automated Speed Compliance Program (NASCOP)

procedures¹. Finally, we found that the San Jose Police Department's (SJPD) Traffic Enforcement Unit (TEU), which handles the enforcement part of the Program, was not accurately reporting its performance in responding to and resolving traffic complaints.

The lack of funding for the Program has impaired its effectiveness. However, we found that the DOT can develop and implement additional controls to improve the overall effectiveness and performance of the Program. Specifically, the DOT should develop procedures to ensure that project files sufficiently document that comprehensive traffic calming projects are warranted under the City's Traffic Calming Policy. Furthermore, the DOT should develop a priority ranking system to provide greater assurance that the City's limited Program funds are spent on comprehensive traffic calming projects that are warranted and on the highest priority projects. In addition, the DOT needs to develop and implement procedures to ensure that staff follow up and assess the effectiveness of comprehensive traffic calming projects. Furthermore, the DOT should formalize its Annual Collision Review process. To be more proactive, the DOT should work with the SJPD to obtain traffic speeding citations information that can assist the DOT in identifying neighborhood streets with high occurrences of speeding. In addition, the DOT should work with the SJPD to generate reports by location for those non-injury accidents for which the SJPD did not prepare a traffic accident report. To ensure a more timely and consistent response to traffic complaints, the DOT should prioritize complaints and develop written procedures to identify complaints that have not been resolved in a timely manner. The DOT should also develop procedures to ensure appropriate and consistent handling of traffic complaints. To ensure the effective deployment of NASCOP resources, the DOT should formalize procedures to monitor NASCOP utilization and to guide staff in its effective deployment. In addition, the SJPD should develop written procedures to ensure accurate reporting of the TEU's performance. Finally, the City Council should revisit its policy to prioritize traffic calming projects on a first-come, first-served basis.

¹ We should note that the City Manager has proposed elimination of the NASCOP in the proposed 2007-08 operating budget.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the Department of Transportation:

Recommendation #1 **Develop written procedures to assess whether comprehensive traffic calming projects are warranted. These procedures should include how to assess if specific streets experience traffic volumes, speeds, or crashes in excess of 10 percent above the City averages and how to assess if specific streets qualify for traffic calming based on unusual conditions, such as limited visibility of pedestrians, irregular roadway design features, or indications of unreported crashes. (Priority 3)**

Recommendation #2 **Develop written procedures to ensure that the project files for all comprehensive traffic calming projects document any studies performed and resulting analyses, a statement of the existing adverse condition that needs to be addressed, the estimated impact or objective of the project, the estimated cost of the project, and the approving official. (Priority 3)**

Recommendation #3 **Develop written procedures that clarify the DOT's process for approving comprehensive traffic calming projects. (Priority 3)**

We recommend that the City Council:

Recommendation #4 **Revisit its Traffic Calming Policy regarding project prioritization such that it funds larger comprehensive traffic calming projects on a priority ranking system basis. (Priority 3)**

Further, we recommend that the Department of Transportation:

Recommendation #5 **Develop and implement written procedures to ensure timely staff follow-up, study, analysis, and written conclusions as to whether comprehensive traffic calming projects meet their intended objectives. (Priority 3)**

Recommendation #6 **Formalize the Annual Collision Review process. (Priority 3)**

We recommend that the Department of Transportation:

Recommendation #7 **Work with the San Jose Police Department to generate date, time, and location reports for residential speeding traffic citations reports by location using the E-Cite System and non-injury accidents for which the SJPD did not prepare a traffic accident report. (Priority 3)**

Recommendation #8 **Develop procedures to identify traffic complaints that are not resolved in a timely manner and require staff to document the reason for lengthy delays. (Priority 3)**

Recommendation #9 **Establish a system for prioritizing complaints based on severity of the traffic complaints. (Priority 3)**

Recommendation #10 **Complete the Traffic Calming Procedures Manual to help ensure that staff take appropriate and consistent actions and comply with policies and regulations. (Priority 3)**

Finally, we recommend that the Department of Transportation:

Recommendation #11 **Develop a performance measure to monitor NASCOP utilization. (Priority 3)**

Recommendation #12 **Formalize its procedures to guide staff in the effective deployment of NASCOP resources. (Priority 3)**

We recommend that the San Jose Police Department:

Recommendation #13 **Develop written procedures to ensure that it accurately reports on the percentage of traffic complaints responded to within two weeks and the level of customer satisfaction. (Priority 3)**

Finding II The Department Of Transportation Needs To Better Maintain Some Comprehensive Traffic Calming Projects

The Department of Transportation (DOT) installs various types of traffic calming measures such as road bumps, traffic circles, and bulb-outs for its comprehensive traffic calming projects. These traffic calming measures need periodic maintenance.

The DOT's Infrastructure Maintenance Division is responsible for maintaining most of the traffic calming measures. However, we found that residents have volunteered to be responsible for maintaining parking strips on traffic calming measures such as bulb-outs and some traffic circles. We visited various traffic calming project sites. While most of the project sites are properly maintained, we found that some of the sites are not. Specifically, we found that some road bump markings are faded and some landscaped traffic calming projects were in poor condition. In our opinion, the DOT should review its road bump re-striping guidelines to ensure that they are re-striped often enough to ensure that road bumps are adequately visible to drivers. In addition, the DOT should explore the feasibility of using either Thermo thin plastic or high build paint for road bumps. Also, the DOT should provide guidelines, training, and equipment for volunteers who maintain projects not attached to a sidewalk under the City's Adopt-A-Street Program. Finally, the DOT should develop written procedures to ensure that all comprehensive traffic calming projects receive the appropriate maintenance; individual comprehensive traffic calming project files document the responsible party for each traffic calming device requiring landscaping; and processes are in place in the event that neighborhood residents do not maintain agreed-upon landscaping.

RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the Department of Transportation:

- Recommendation #14** **Review its road bump re-striping guidelines to ensure that they are re-striped often enough to ensure that road bumps are adequately visible to drivers. In addition, we recommend that the DOT explore using Thermo thin line plastic or high build paint markings for road bumps. (Priority 3)**
- Recommendation #15** **Provide guidelines, training, and equipment to volunteers who maintain street projects not attached to sidewalks under the City's Adopt-A-Street Program. (Priority 3)**

We also recommend that the Department of Transportation:

Recommendation #16

Develop written procedures to ensure that 1) all comprehensive traffic calming projects receive the appropriate maintenance; 2) individual comprehensive traffic calming project files document the responsible party for each traffic calming device requiring landscaping; and 3) processes are in place in the event that neighborhood residents do not maintain agreed-upon landscaping. (Priority 3)



RECEIVED

MAY 03 2007

Memorandum

CITY AUDITOR

TO: Gerald A. Silva

FROM: James R. Helmer

SUBJECT: AUDIT OF THE TRAFFIC
CALMING PROGRAM

DATE: 05-02-07

Approved

Kay Winer

Date

5/2/07

This is in response to the report on *An Audit of the Traffic Calming Program*, which was issued to the Department of Transportation (DOT) on April 12, 2007 for review and comment.

RESPONSES TO AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1, #2 & 3 – Develop procedures to access whether comprehensive traffic calming projects are warranted, and that project files document any studies performed and resulting analysis, the existing adverse condition, the objective and cost estimate of the project, and the approving official.

Procedures and guidelines have been developed to guide staff in the analysis and implementation of comprehensive traffic calming projects. Please note that several of the projects that were referenced in the audit as not having adequate justification in the project files were included in a previous Mayor's Budget Message as priority projects.

Recommendation #4 – City Council revisit its Traffic Calming Policy regarding project prioritization such that it funds larger comprehensive traffic calming projects on a priority ranking system basis.

Although, to date, the Traffic Calming Program has been able to fund projects that are warranted, the remaining funds within the program budget are limited. Given this, a priority ranking system would be beneficial. DOT is considering a more comprehensive review of the Traffic Calming Policy as part of its 2007-08 workplan.

Recommendation #5 – Develop and implement written procedures to ensure timely staff follow-up, study, analysis, and written conclusions as to whether comprehensive traffic calming projects meet their intended objectives.

Written procedures and guidelines will be developed and included in the Neighborhood Traffic Management Guidelines and Procedures Manual.

Recommendation #6 – Formalize the Annual Collision Review Process.

Annually, DOT evaluates high crash intersections, including those with a high number of crashes associated with red light running, stop sign violations, or involving pedestrians and bicyclists. DOT agrees with this recommendation and will document its existing process for selecting intersections that will be analyzed as part of the Annual Collision Review.

Recommendation #7 – Work with the San Jose Police Department (SJPD) to generate residential speeding traffic citations reports by location using the E-Cite System, and non-injury accidents for which the SJPD did not prepare a traffic accident report.

The City's Traffic Calming Program was established to respond to concerns of residents and schools about neighborhood traffic issues. In addition to the Traffic Calming Program, DOT implements many proactive education and safety programs on an ongoing and one-time basis. DOT will work with the SJPD to generate residential speeding traffic citations reports by location and non-injury accidents to provide additional traffic data when analyzing neighborhood traffic concerns.

Recommendation #8 – Develop procedures to identify traffic complaints that are not resolved in a timely manner and require staff to document the reason for lengthy delays.

As a result of budget reductions over the past several years, there are 40% fewer staff within the Traffic Calming Program in FY2006-07 as compared with FY2002-03. This staffing reduction, combined with reductions in maintenance staff that install signs and markings, are the primary reason for the increase in time to implement basic traffic calming projects. On a monthly basis, reports are generated and analyzed for each Council District, including a review of projects that are not completed. DOT will develop written procedures to document its existing process and will include procedures for staff to document the reason for lengthy delays.

Recommendation #9 – Establish a system for prioritizing complaints based on the severity of the traffic complaints.

DOT has a system for prioritizing complaints based on the severity of the complaint. As indicated in the Audit, immediate safety concerns have a 24-hour target. The majority of other measures that are implemented, such as basic signs and markings have a 21-day installation target.

Establishing a system to prioritize the installation of basic signs and markings would be challenging given the nature of these projects. In FY2006-07, it is anticipated that approximately 1,700 basic traffic concerns will be addressed. On any given day, Traffic Calming staff manage between 150-200 basic level projects, each of which may be at a different stage of analysis. This

includes: data collection, field observations, review of traffic and accident data, review of any prior education, enforcement or engineering activities, discussions with neighborhood representatives and other City departments, and development and processing of work orders to implement necessary measures. DOT will continue to identify those issues that are immediate safety concerns and prioritize for completion within 24 hours.

Recommendation #10 -- Complete the Traffic Calming Procedures Manual to help ensure that staff take appropriate and consistent actions and comply with policies and regulations.

A Traffic Calming Procedures Manual was developed for a majority of the studies that are conducted. Staff was trained on the guidelines and procedures contained within this manual in the Summer 2006. DOT agrees with this recommendation and will complete this manual.

Recommendation #11 & #12 – Develop a performance measure to monitor NASCOP utilization and formalize procedures to guide staff in the effective deployment of NASCOP resources.

On March 6, 2007 the City Council directed staff to cease operation of the existing NASCOP enforcement program. Although staff was also directed to explore implementation of a modified NASCOP program focusing on issuing warnings, it is unknown whether a modified program will be implemented due to budget constraints. DOT is exploring a modified program as part of the 2007-08 budget review and what positive or negative impacts this may have on existing programs.

NASCOP was effective at reducing the level of speeding in neighborhoods, especially vehicles speeding excessively over the posted speed limit. The positive results achieved by NASCOP were a result of the program itself, and of staff's continual review and adjustments of deployments on neighborhood streets participating in the program. If NASCOP is reinstated as either an enforcement or a warning program, DOT will document its existing procedures to ensure effective deployment of resources.

Recommendation #14 – Review road bump re-striping guidelines to ensure that they are re-stripped often enough to ensure adequate visibility, and explore the use of Thermo thin line plastic or high build paint markings for road bumps.

Striping for road bumps has been maintained consistently with other roadway striping within neighborhoods. The single faded road bump that was identified in the audit has been re-stripped with more durable paint.

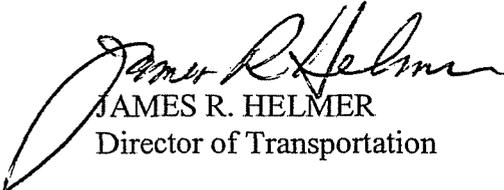
Recommendation #15 – Provide guidelines, training, and equipment to volunteers who maintain street projects not attached to sidewalks under the City’s Adopt-a-Street Program.

The City’s Adopt-a-Street Program currently provides guidelines, training and equipment to volunteers that maintain street projects.

Recommendation #16 – Develop written procedures to ensure that all comprehensive traffic calming projects receive appropriate maintenance, project files document the responsible party for maintaining landscaped devices, and that processes are in place if neighborhood residents do not adequately maintain agreed-upon landscaping.

DOT currently has maintenance standards for streetscape within the public right-of-way. Overwhelmingly, landscaped traffic calming devices have been maintained consistent with other streetscape throughout the City. DOT maintains a database that identifies which maintenance section is responsible for maintaining various landscaped areas within the City.

Please note that of the two locations identified within the audit, one involved incorrect plant material that had been installed by a contractor which has since been replaced with the correct plants. The other location involved neighborhood volunteers planting wild flowers in a traffic device that was installed many years ago, well before the City’s existing Traffic Calming Program. This neighborhood has joined the City’s Adopt-a-Street Program that includes procedures to ensure that volunteers only install approved plant material and that agreed upon landscaped areas are maintained adequately.


JAMES R. HELMER
Director of Transportation

RECEIVED

MAY 02 2007

CITY AUDITOR



Memorandum

TO: Gerald A. Silva
City Auditor

FROM: Robert L. Davis

SUBJECT: SJPD RESPONSE TO
TRAFFIC CALMING AUDIT

DATE: May 1, 2007

Approved

Date

BACKGROUND

The San Jose Police Department (SJPD) has reviewed the final draft report prepared by the Office of the City Auditor entitled "An Audit of the Traffic Claming Program." The purpose of this memorandum is to provide your office with the Department's response to the recommendation that pertains to the SJPD.

RESPONSES

FINDING I. The SJPD's Traffic Enforcement Unit Was Not Accurately Reporting Its Performance

Recommendation #13: Develop written procedures to ensure that it accurately reports on the percentage of traffic complaints responded to within two weeks and the level of customer satisfaction. (Priority 3)

SJPD Response: The SJPD's Traffic Enforcement Unit (TEU) already reviewed this issue and implemented changes at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2006-2007 that would meet the recommended actions as outlined in the Auditor's Report. In addition to the written procedures implemented, TEU personnel now maintain a traffic incident report log within their office and have created a new satisfaction survey form to collect the required data more accurately.

CONCLUSION

Since the SJPD Traffic Enforcement Unit already implemented the recommended changes at the beginning of Fiscal Year 2006-2007, this fact should be clearly noted in the narrative and recommendations section of the Auditor's report so that it very clear not only that the problem no longer exists but that the San Jose Police Department was proactive in resolving the issues once they surfaced months ago. TEU is now able to track all of the complaints, with complete

Gerald A. Silva, City Auditor

May 1, 2007

RE: SJPD RESPONSE TO TRAFFIC CALMING AUDIT

Page 2

accuracy, as well as all of the responses to the satisfaction surveys, and has been accurately reporting this data for the first three quarters of the current fiscal year.



Robert L. Davis
Chief of Police

RLD: JS

