

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: APRIL 20, 2011

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #73: RESIDENT PURCHASE OF TRAFFIC CALMING DEVICES

This memorandum is in response to Councilman Krupicka's request regarding whether the City could create a program for residents to purchase traffic calming devices (speed humps) for their street if pre-determined criteria were met, and determine a cost estimate to residents for such a program.

Due to budget constraints, City funding for traffic calming was removed from the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the traffic calming staff support position eliminated from the operating budget in FY 2009. Staff shifted focus from traffic calming to utilizing available grant funding for pedestrian and bicycle safety projects, supplemented with a limited amount of City funding to support the bicycle mobility plan, Safe Routes to Schools, and other improvements such as countdown timers and curbs and ramps. Funding for traffic calming devices such as speed humps and bulb outs is not included in either the operating or capital budgets. When staff receives calls from citizens requesting traffic calming, they are referred to the Police department (to assist with enforcement of traffic laws), and notified that funds are currently not allocated for traffic calming.

To create and implement a program for resident funded speed humps, policy items which would need to be approved by City Council and implemented by staff include but are not limited to:

- Reallocating existing staff time to administer the program and process requests for resident funded speed humps;
- Developing a formal request process for residents to ask staff to review traffic calming requests for the program;
- Creating minimum standards (daily traffic volumes for example) required for installation of speed humps regardless of public or private (resident) funding;
- Staff would recommend traffic calming devices in the program be limited to speed humps since there is no design required and costs are generally fixed, as opposed to bulb outs which are much more expensive and require additional work related to sidewalks and stormwater runoff;
- Obtaining a commitment from the residents to pay for the traffic calming devices and performing other community outreach; and
- Addressing annual maintenance costs and emergency repairs as needed.

In order for these items to be addressed, City Council would need to request staff begin work on developing a program to allow residents to purchase speed humps should their street meet pre-determined traffic volume criteria. T & ES has estimated the time needed from start to finish (from program development to City Council approval) is approximately six to eight months. Additionally, each approved resident speed hump project will consume 60 to 80 hours of existing City staff time. Staff time would be needed to: perform the traffic volume analysis; coordinate community outreach; work with legal staff to produce all program agreements; assist with engineering, design and placement of the speed humps; and provide construction inspectors to monitor installation of the speed humps. In FY 2008, staff had developed a draft of this program; however, the program was not fully developed nor formally approved by City Council.

Costs to design and construct speed humps would vary depending on the number of locations on each street and street width. Speed humps could range from \$5,000 to \$10,000 at each location on the street. Approximately \$3,000 to \$4,000 in staff time costs for 60 to 80 hours of work also would be charged per project. Since this program would address only those projects that were 100% resident funded, no additional capital funds would be necessary. On-going maintenance costs are unknown, and responsibility of those costs (City or resident) would be developed as part of the program.

Allowing residents with the financial means to purchase public infrastructure or services, such as speed humps, that benefit them also raises a fairness and equity question in regards to residents who may have a similar need but not similar financial means. This would be a significant issue in a City that has a wide diversity of incomes.