



New Jersey FIT: Future In Transportation

Calm Traffic

Traffic calming is a system of road design and management strategies that aims to balance car traffic on streets with other uses. It is founded on the idea that streets should help create and preserve a sense of place instead of acting solely as conduits for vehicles passing through at the greatest possible speed. Traffic calming helps lower vehicle speeds, build human-scale places, and create an environment that is friendly to people on foot.



Speed humps and speed bumps force traffic to slow down.

Traffic calming can be applied quickly, inexpensively, and flexibly. It can often be accomplished just by painting lines, colors, and patterns; using planters, bollards, and other removable barriers; eliminating or adding parking; or installing sidewalk extensions or similar structures with temporary materials. Communities can experiment with various tools and combinations of strategies and locations,

fine-tuning them until the desired outcomes are achieved. When funds are available, the right combination of devices can be transformed into permanent improvements and extended over a broader area.

Principles

There are dozens of possible traffic calming elements, each with its own specific applications. They include:

- **Narrower Traffic Lanes** can give more room to pedestrians and cyclists, while encouraging cars to slow down. Conventional traffic engineering calls for lane widths of 12 to 13 feet, but newer evidence shows that lanes as narrow as 9 feet are still safe.



Roundabouts and traffic circles slow traffic and direct right-of-way without using a traffic signal and interchange.

- **Two-Way Streets** reduce car speeds and shorten distances between destinations – cutting down the total amount of traffic on the road. Many communities are converting one-way streets to two-way for this reason.
- **Speed Humps** and speed bumps force cars to slow

down. They work in locations where very low speeds are desired and reasonable.

- **Raised Crosswalks** provide pedestrians with a level street crossing and make them more visible to approaching motorists. Raised crosswalks are a good option when pedestrian crossings occur at haphazard locations and vehicle speeds are excessive.
- **Textured Pavements** help to visually emphasize a pedestrian crossing, an intersection, a whole Main Street, or a small residential street – wherever cars should slow down.



Bulb-outs serve to narrow the road at intersections, which shortens the distance pedestrians must cross and visually narrows the road to slow down traffic. Also, these areas can be made visually interesting with landscaping.

- **Traffic Circles and Roundabouts** serve to calm intersections and allocate right-of-way between competing movements.
- **Curb Extensions** shorten the distance between curbs, making it easier for pedestrians to cross the street. They also tighten the curb radii at the corners, which reduces the speeds of turning vehicles. They are good for intersections with substantial pedestrian activity.

- **Center Islands** narrow the travel lanes at that location. When landscaped, they can provide a visual amenity as well as serve as a refuge for pedestrians crossing the street. Center islands are good for entrances to residential areas and wide streets where pedestrians need to cross.
- **Diagonal Parking** makes drivers more alert to their surroundings and more aware of pedestrians. It also shortens the “peering distance” for people crossing the street.

Examples

NJFIT Project: Route 9, Ocean County, New Jersey

Route 9 extends through several towns and sometimes the character of the road provides no indication that one is driving through a new community. In fact, the width of Route 9 allows for a higher speed than is safe for the adjacent communities. The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) is partnering with many of the communities in this corridor to study ways to improve mobility in the region and reduce the speed of traffic in towns. The redesigning of the road will include several traffic calming elements, including distinct shoulder treatments, speed limits, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

Studies have shown that traffic calming can reduce crashes by up to 40 percent.

Success Project: Clematis Street

Clematis Street was a typical one-way urban arterial, with three traffic lanes and two parking lanes. It was a run-down area with 80% vacant properties. When the city converted several wide thoroughfares into narrow two-way streets with narrow lanes, a raised intersection, lateral shifts, and the removal of turn lanes and traffic signals, traffic slowed significantly and pedestrians felt welcome again. The increase in pedestrian traffic attracted new shops and apartment buildings. Clematis Street has become a major activity center with a wide variety of thriving businesses and a ten-fold increase in property values.