Administrative Report

N.4., **File #** 22-4162 **Meeting Date:** 5/17/2022

To: **MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

From: **TED SEMAAN, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR**

TITLE

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON ACCELERATING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAFFIC CALMING IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH THE REDUCTION OF POLICY BARRIERS AND CHANGES TO PROCESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Goal 6 of the City Council's recently revised Strategic Plan is to "Enhance the Delivery of City Services." A stated objective under that title is for staff to present a report on "policy changes that would accelerate the implementation of traffic calming improvements". The topic was presented to the Public Works Commission ("Commission") who, in coordination with staff, helped identify certain policy changes that might simplify the City's traffic calming procedures and make it easier for residents to make requests and get results. These ideas are discussed in the background section of the report. Staff appreciates additional feedback from the public and the City Council on this topic to continuously improve the City's engineering processes and provide more timely and responsive service to residents.

BACKGROUND

The term "Traffic Calming" as used (somewhat imprecisely) in the discussion below includes resident requests related to stop controls, speeding, parking, pedestrian and bicycle safety. The City's traffic engineering team works to respond to these resident requests and Council referrals to address concerns as they are observed first hand, or brought to the City's attention. Requests can be as simple as a request for curbs to be painted red adjacent to a residential driveway, and as complex as evaluating ways to reduce and slow traffic through a network of neighborhood streets. Successful policy to address these concerns will be a combination of the "three E's", education, enforcement and engineering.

This discussion focuses on the process to implement engineering (infrastructure and regulatory) improvements, which are meant to modify driver, pedestrian and cyclist behavior to encourage more alert, cautious and thoughtful consideration of other users in the right of way. Improvements to driver behavior typically plays the largest role in bringing "calm" to local traffic and many of the traffic calming tools are directed towards constraints to vehicle operation. Some of these tools are relatively simple to implement, like refreshing striping.

A revised traffic calming policy was reviewed in 2018 by the Public Works Commission over four meetings with an eventual recommendation to take a new approach to Traffic Calming requests. The

revised approach was deemed to be more holistic by considering impacts to a neighborhood rather than studying individual roadway segments or intersections in question. The holistic approach is meant to engage the technical analysis early on, in order to understand impacts on surrounding streets, to identify root causes, and present options to the resident(s) based on technical findings. A down side of this approach, however was that additional time was required for technical analysis and resident input over a larger geographic area. That process was frustrating to many due to the long duration between original request and implementation of the resident's perceived "best solution" to address the concern.

This approach was not formally presented to City Council as such, but was implemented in a number of resident requests that were reviewed by the City Council. In those meetings, after hearing residents with views opposing staff recommendations, other residents' preferences and the final Council decisions, it became clear that while a fast response was desirable, the time taken to get a neighborhood consensus with technical guidance, was also useful in the long run.

Staff proceeded to use the holistic approach for a number of neighborhood traffic calming inquires in the following months, including:

On July 10, 2018 the City Council reviewed traffic calming along the Ford Avenue corridor between Aviation Blvd. and Artesia Blvd. Implementation of the immediate improvements were completed in August 2019. Installation of temporary bulbouts was not done, due to unsuccessful similar temporary installations. Staff is considering other approaches to temporary installations.

On October 16, 2018 the City Council considered traffic calming improvements along the 500-600 blocks of Paulina Ave. and the 700-800 blocks of Maria Ave. which was revisited on December 18, 2018 to discuss a temporary bulbout at the north end of Maria Ave. These improvements were mostly implemented in March 2019. A review of effectiveness of the temporary bulbout on reduction of speeds and volume was presented to City Council in December 2019 resulting in approval of installation of a permanent bulbout and inbound turn restriction. Installation of the final "porkchop" raised island to prohibit inbound traffic from Anita and shorten the pedestrian crossing across Maria was completed last month, with final striping being added this month.

On December 18, 2018, the City Council also considered traffic calming improvements along the Inglewood corridor and neighborhood between 190th Street and 182nd Street. Turn restriction signs on Inglewood Avenue at Ripley Avenue and 182nd Street were installed in January 2020. Other identified sign installations await completion. A work order has been initiated for these.

Temporary traffic circles were installed in September 2019 and removed at the direction of City Council in August 2020 after the trial period concluded, data collection was completed, and resident input was received. At the direction of City Council, all way stops were installed in their place. On May 18, 2021, the City Council approved plans and specifications for installation of speed cushions along the 2700 blocks of Ralston, Fisk and Armour Lanes as a follow up item to the Inglewood corridor item. Installation of these was completed in October 2021.

On December 3, 2019, the City Council considered traffic calming improvements along the Emerald St. corridor between Prospect Ave. and PCH. These improvements include temporary mini traffic circles (which may need reconsideration given the aversion to temporary installations), 16 to 24 permanent bulbouts, two radar feedback signs as well as striping and signage. Work will begin on

this corridor when the temporary mini-traffic circle reconsideration is addressed. Staff needs to initiate a conversation with the district Council Member.

On March 17, 2020, the City Council considered traffic calming improvements along the Beryl St. corridor between Prospect Ave. and Catalina Ave. On July 6, 2021, the City Council considered additional improvements along the Beryl St. corridor between PCH. and Catalina Ave. based on new requests following implementation of the earlier Beryl St. corridor item. Three intersections, at N. Broadway, N. Elena, and N. Francisca, respectively, were upgraded to all-way stops in October 2021. Additional improvements (lane alignment, striping) will be installed with upcoming road resurfacing projects in FY2022-23.

On March 17, 2020, the City Council also considered traffic calming improvements in the Dow Avenue and Johnston Avenue neighborhood, bounded by Manhattan Beach Boulevard to the north, Vail Avenue to the west, Inglewood Avenue to the east and Robinson Street to the south. Implementation of these improvements began last month and will continue through summer of 2022. The proposed median installation on Beland, will require additional time for design and construction.

On April 19, 2022, the City Council considered traffic calming and pedestrian mobility in the Riviera Village commercial area. Approved recommendations include installation of a raised mid-block pedestrian crossing, in-pavement flashing lights at the mid-block crossing on Avenue I, an all-way stop, enhanced crosswalks, and permanent bulbouts at a number of intersections on Catalina Ave. The bulbout at S. Catalina Avenue and S. Elena Avenue was installed last month as part of a previously initiated effort.

The above list of projects document staff's implementation of the recommendation to institute a more holistic approach to neighborhood traffic calming. While not perfect, and not always fast, it has provided opportunity for neighborhood input and in some cases an iterative approach based on resident desires and technical recommendations.

The topic of traffic calming acceleration was raised again with the Public Works Commission at their recent March meeting (March 28, 2022). While no "blockbuster" improvements in the process were identified, the Commissioners emphasized the need for increased flexibility and more contemporaneous (less linear) activities in the process.

Over the last several years, the City Council has regularly appropriated funding to the Traffic Calming program. Over the last three years, $756,000 has been appropriated, in addition to carryover funding of $547,079 that was approved at the beginning of the three-year period. Since then, approximately $614,507 has been encumbered and/or spent, leaving an available "cash balance" of $688,572 in the program. However, a significant portion of these funds are spoken for in elements that have been approved by City Council but as yet have not been executed. These pending improvements include approximately 56 bulb-out locations, 20 radar feedback signs, on-call traffic engineering services, one in-pavement flashing light mid-block crossing enhancement, two elevated pedestrian crossings / speed tables, and several additional elements. Staff is proposing an additional appropriation to the Traffic Calming program in the FY 2022-23 CIP Budget to cover pending items and to provide resources for other upcoming projects. The attachment includes a summary of appropriations and expenditures over the three-year period. The table does not include staff time, which can be a significant part of the traffic calming implementation process.

Staff has identified the need to more accurately estimate and capture the costs for traffic calming improvements. Materials and construction costs are constantly changing, sometimes dramatically, which makes estimating costs more difficult during the planning phase for traffic calming elements that may be implemented a year or two afterwards. Staff will seek assistance from available on-call resources to help more accurately predict future costs.

All-Way Stop Control - Process Changes

Through this review, staff has found opportunities to improve and shorten the City's traffic calming process to bring items to City Council for decision. For instance, under current policy, the request for an all-way stop requires that the requesting resident circulate a petition among neighbors within 150 feet of the subject intersection and receive signatures in support from at least two-thirds (66%) of those residents. (Staff provides the addresses of potential signors.) This process often drags on, as attempts to catch residents at home can be difficult, and was made even more difficult as a result of pandemic related social distancing requirements.

In recognition of this concern, during the pandemic, staff sent letters to each address within 150 feet requesting consideration of the all way stop and provided an opportunity to provide a signature of support (one per address) that could be returned by mail, email, or dropped off at City Hall. This saved the requesting resident time by reaching all potential signors at once, rather than through door to door efforts, and saved staff time in eliminating the need to verify signatures with qualified residences.

In the past the neighbor to neighbor petition process took 12 to 18 weeks to complete. Staff believes the mailed notice approach by City staff can get a good idea of neighborhood support within four (4) weeks. Residents may still advocate for the request by encouraging their neighbors to return the notice, and even provide replacement copies to neighbors in case the City notice was not seen or kept when delivered by mail. The attachments include a proposed flow chart that communicates the proposed process and estimated timelines for an all way stop request.

Staff's recommendation is to eliminate the resident driven stop sign request petition process and instead implement a City directed neighborhood survey that accelerates community feedback and allows for a more expeditious scheduling of the stop sign request before the Public Works Commission and City Council.

Among the ongoing traffic calming requests, staff is currently working on about fourteen (14) all-way stop requests. Of these, five have gone through the City initiated petition process with none returning the 66% positive response rate to carry them forward on the grounds of broad community support. However, one of these five, Ruhland and Felton, is scheduled for the May 23, 2022 Public Works Commission meeting due to staff's safety review of data collected. Notices are pending for the remaining nine (9) locations, with results due four (4) weeks after the mailing. Staff has completed the safety review for each of the others, and found no reason on the history of correctable crashes to move any of the requests forward. A list of the fourteen (14) intersections currently under AWS consideration is included in the attachments.

In addition to shortening timelines for bringing a request to the City Council for a decision, staff is working to be more efficient in managing the request process and implementing the solutions. Staff is improving its traffic request tracking system to be more accessible and helpful to employees and to

be better able to respond to status requests and other reports from the public and City leadership. The software has the ability to generate automated reminders to staff regarding next steps, and to provide dashboard type display of metrics that identify areas of strength and subjects for improvement. An "open ticket report" will provide insight into where a request is on its timeline and in the current workplan. We are targeting a rollout in July 2022 and welcome suggestions to meet the need for transparency. Staff is also upgrading software to acquire and analyze traffic collision data, making the initial review of potential conflict locations less cumbersome and more thorough.

Staff is in the process of implementing software that will help track traffic calming requests and provide an "open ticket" status report for both internal and external customer review.

Alternative Traffic Calming Measures - Process Changes

Traffic calming (referring to the more precise definition) requests are more complex than all- way stop requests because the optimal improvement package is harder to identify. More often, only the problem is well defined. In these cases, rather than reacting to a request for a specific improvement that may not be appropriate or feasible to install, staff has been practicing an approach that attempts to understand the problem, through discussions with residents, that residents are experiencing, determine levels of support from neighbors and any technical resources, consider the impacts to the neighborhood and work collaboratively with interested residents to identify potential solutions. These potential solutions would then be carried forward for more formal community input through district meetings, the Public Works Commission and ultimately City Council.

Lessons learned from the past few years point to consideration of installing improvements in their final form, rather than administering a trial period using temporary measures. Of note, all of the mini traffic circles that have been placed for a trial period in the last few years were later removed in the wake of resident concerns. These concerns more often had to do with the appearance or functionality of the temporary installation, rather than its effectiveness of the traffic calming device. For instance, all of the installed temporary traffic circles effectively reduced vehicle speeds (that is, calmed traffic), but were opposed due to their unsightly appearance, confusion of pedestrian crossing patterns, or some other item not addressed at installation due to the temporary nature of the facility. Like the all way stop request, staff has developed a draft flow chart to communicate in broad terms the process and expected timelines of a traffic calming request. This is included in the attachments.

Staff's recommendation is to eliminate pilot installations of proposed traffic calming improvements that have been widely discussed and approved and instead implement attractive more permanent construction solutions.

The current vacancy in the Transportation Engineer position, aka the "City Traffic Engineer", provides an opportunity to improve our systems and approach. Recruitment to fill the vacancy will begin promptly after approval of the revised job specification, which is also on the agenda. Selection of the best candidate will be based not only on technical abilities but also on an understanding of the need to be responsive and accountable to the needs of the City and its residents. Until the position is filled existing staff are working to draw down the existing backlog of requests and to stay current on incoming requests. More complex traffic analyses and other duties of the City Traffic Engineer are being forwarded to an on-call consultant Traffic Engineer. A recently filled vacancy in Engineering Services Division has provided help to carry some of the Transportation Engineer's CIP project management load. Other projects in the Transportation Engineer's portfolio are being borne by other

project managers in the Division or by consultants. The need for qualified and sufficient staffing in the Engineering Service Division continues to deserve the full attention of City leadership. The ability for the Transportation Engineer and his/her team to remain focused on traffic matters and traffic related improvements will continue to provide the best traffic engineering service to the residents and visitors of Redondo Beach.

Traffic calming continues to be a mixture of “art and science” and will foreseeably require involvement of interested neighborhood stakeholders, policy makers and technical guidance. The current holistic approach to traffic calming seems to be an improvement to the former prescriptive and deliberate method. However, there is room for continued improvement. Staff has identified areas of improvement related to tracking requests, implementing approved solutions and giving insight into progress being made. Staff welcomes additional comments, suggestions and concerns, in order to better serve the motorists, cyclists and pedestrians using the public right of way in the City.

COORDINATION

This report was coordinated by the Public Works Department with input from the Public Works Commission.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact from the improvements to traffic calming processes suggested in the report. The work to address traffic calming requests is included in the operating budget of the Public Works Department.

APPROVED BY:
Mike Witzansky, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

Traffic Calming CIP 3-Year Tracking List
DRAFT Flowchart - All-way Stop Requests
DRAFT Flowchart - Traffic Calming Requests
List of Active All-way Stop Requests