



CITY OF

NEWPORT BEACH

City Council Staff Report

November 15, 2022
Agenda Item No. 22

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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TITLE: Post Installation Review of Mariners Neighborhood Traffic Calming Measures

ABSTRACT:

On January 12, 2021, the City Council directed staff to implement neighborhood traffic calming measures including installing speed cushions on various streets throughout the Dover Shores and Mariners neighborhoods. This direction followed the preparation of an extensive traffic calming study, three neighborhood meetings to discuss the issue, and submission of a petition from the residents showing sixty percent support within the entire neighborhood for the project. The speed cushions were installed in July of 2021.

As a follow-up to this neighborhood traffic calming project, staff completed post installation speed surveys. The results of the follow-up speed measurements showed a reduction of speeds of 3 mph to 9 mph on the streets within the neighborhood.

Recently staff received some concerns from residents adjacent to 1911 Highland Drive in the Mariners neighborhood about the speed cushion that was installed near their homes. The concerns from the residents are related to noise. Staff met with the residents at the speed cushion location on November 2 to discuss their concerns. At the meeting, the residents requested the speed cushion be relocated or removed entirely. Staff advised the residents of the challenges of relocating the speed cushion, and the negative impacts with removal of the speed cushion.

RECOMMENDATION:

- a) Determine this action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) and 15060(c)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines because this action will not result in a physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly; and
- b) Receive and file the report and make no modification to the current traffic calming measures unless otherwise directed by City Council.

DISCUSSION:

In response to residents' concerns related to high neighborhood traffic speeds and safety, a comprehensive neighborhood traffic study for the Mariners and Dover Shores neighborhoods was prepared in 2019. The study included the collection of a significant amount of daily traffic volume and traffic speed data. During the study process, three separate Town Hall meetings were held to discuss the study preparation and traffic speed data. City Council Policy L-26, which covers neighborhood traffic management, was also discussed with the residents. To address the neighborhood traffic speeding issues, the final study provided a conceptual plan for the installation of speed cushions and traffic striping improvements on the streets that met the criteria and guidelines of City Council Policy L-26.

Following the completion of the traffic study, a neighborhood representative circulated a petition to determine community support for the installation of speed cushions on the specific streets that met the minimum criteria for traffic calming. The neighborhood, as a whole, supported the project with 60 percent total signatures.

On January 12, 2021, the City Council directed staff to implement and install speed cushions on various streets throughout the Dover Shores and Mariners neighborhoods. As the plans and funding only included 15 speed cushions for the entire Dover Shores and Mariners neighborhoods, staff was judicious in locating them.

The plans that were included in the study showed preliminary and conceptual locations for the speed cushions, not final locations. When staff was ready to install the cushions, the signed petitions were reviewed to determine where there were property owners that supported the project and, importantly, did not support the project. The speed cushions within the neighborhood were installed in July of 2021.

Speed cushions are installed for the purpose of safety and reducing the speeds (mph) of vehicles on the streets. They are there to make the motorists aware of speed reduction and the consequences of not following the speed limit. When studying speeds, the measured 85th percentile speed is used as the criteria to establish whether a residential street is considered for traffic calming. The 85th percentile speed is the speed at which 85 percent of cars are travelling at, or below.

Staff has now collected "before and after" speed data and determined that the speed cushions are working as planned to reduce speeds on the targeted neighborhood streets. The results of the follow-up speed measurements after the project showed a reduction of speeds from between 3 mph to 9 mph on the streets within the neighborhood.

Of the 15 speed cushions that were involved as part of this neighborhood traffic calming project, we have only received complaints about two locations. Earlier this year, we received a complaint related to noise concerns associated with a cushion installed on Dover Drive. Staff reviewed this cushion and location and was able to move this speed cushion to a new location close by on Dover Drive.

It is important to note that Dover Drive is a street with homes on only one side of the street. We were able to move the speed cushion on Dover Drive next to a resident's side yard, as there is a wall and landscaping in that location. We also contacted that resident regarding the relocation, and there were no concerns.

In the summer of this year, staff received some additional concerns from residents adjacent to 1911 Highland Drive in the Mariners neighborhood about an individual speed cushion that was installed near their homes. Their concerns are related to noise from the speed cushion.

The two locations along Highland Drive that were chosen were based on the following:

- Support from adjacent residents.
- Equally spaced locations along the roadway segment.
- Adjacent to homes with front-yard walls and/or significant landscaping.

When the petitions were circulated, over 70 percent of the residents on Highland Drive between Mariners Drive and Irvine Avenue signed the petition in support of the speed cushion installation project.

The residents of the six homes on both sides of the street near 1911 Highland Drive all signed the petition in support. The two speed cushion locations along Highland Drive are also fairly equally spaced between Irvine Avenue and Mariners Drive. Across the street from 1911 Highland Drive, there is mature landscaping, and thus this location was chosen. The other speed cushion, installed in front of 2030 Highland, was placed in that specific location using the same criteria.

The two cushions installed on Highland are proving to be effective in reducing street speeds. The previous measured 85th percentile speeds on Highland Drive ranged from 34 mph to 37 mph. After the speed cushions were installed, the measured 85th percentile speeds were 28 mph.

On November 2, staff met with the residents of the six homes near the cushion at 1911 Highland Drive. After hearing their concerns and request for the cushion to be relocated or removed, staff reviewed the street again, as well as the petition, for an area of strong support.

The relocation of the existing speed cushion at 1911 Highland Drive to an alternate location on Highland Drive would shift the potential noise concerns to another property. For this reason, receiving support from adjacent residents would be necessary. There are two properties located between 1911 Highland Drive and Mariners Drive that did not sign the petition nor support the project. For this reason, moving the cushion would be difficult as the potential alternative location is fronted by adjacent residents that did not support the traffic calming project.

Removing the existing speed cushion entirely is not recommended as it would defeat the purpose of the project to reduce speeds on the street and improve safety. A removal of the speed cushion would cause the speeds along this segment of Highland Drive to revert back to the original speeds. Speeds would be expected to rise approximately 6-9 mph over the existing measured speeds.

Given the project history, overall neighborhood support, location criteria being met, and verified speed reduction measurements after the project completion, it is staff's recommendation to maintain the existing speed cushion system in the current location.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact related to this item.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Staff recommends the City Council find this action is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical change to the environment, directly or indirectly.

NOTICING:

The agenda item has been noticed according to the Brown Act (72 hours in advance of the meeting at which the City Council considers the item).

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – January 12, 2021 City Council Staff Report

Attachment B – January 12, 2021 City Council Meeting Minutes

Attachment C – Mariners and Dover Shores Traffic Calming Study Executive Summary

Attachment D – Exhibit for Speed Cushion Locations in Mariners/Dover Shores

Attachment E – Exhibit of Highland Drive Speed Cushion