



Privately Funded Traffic Calming: A How-To Guide for Neighborhoods

(A supplement to Metro's Neighborhood Street Traffic Calming Process Manual)



Background

Since the re-introduction of effective speed-reducing measures in 2018, Nashville’s **Neighborhood Street Traffic Calming Program (NSTC)** has seen significantly increased demand from constituents. Since that time, various steps in the program have evolved to streamline the implementation process while remaining committed to the importance of citizen input into the project. A few of these milestones include:

- 2018 First speed cushions installed in approximately 10 years
- 2019 Metro Council earmarks dedicated funds for traffic calming
- 2021 Prioritization streamlined for one-street-at-a-time installations
- 2022 Direct mailer used to contact all property owners
- 2022 On-line ballot replaces door-to-door petition process
- 2022 Recorded virtual (and hybrid) meetings introduced
- 2023 Website overhauled with additional resources including project tracker map
- 2023 Privately funded projects authorized by Metro Council

Even with these changes bringing better efficiency and quality of service to the program, demand has continued to increase. There currently remain well over 400 applications for new traffic calming installations on streets in Davidson County.

Traffic calming, by comparison with most types of infrastructure improvements, is fast, inexpensive, and low impact. This, combined with the high demand (and associated backlog) for the program, has led to some Davidson County communities asking for the opportunity to self-fund a traffic calming project.

In 2023, Metro Council passed ordinance BL2022-1572, authorizing traffic calming projects paid for by private funds. This supplement to NDOT’s standard traffic calming program manual specifies the requirements and procedures which must be followed by applicants wishing to self-fund a traffic calming project on a street under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Government.

By far, the most commonly requested type of traffic calming is speed cushions. This is also the form of traffic calming that NDOT has had the best experience with and is most recognized in our community. This process is oriented toward neighborhoods who desire to install speed cushions as the primary form of traffic calming.



The Privately Funded Process



NDOT recognizes that a neighborhood’s desire to self-fund a traffic calming project represents significant effort and commitment to safer infrastructure and therefore works to make the process as simple and efficient as possible. These seven steps define the process.

Early Outreach – Applicants should familiarize themselves with traffic calming project objectives (see the NSTC Program Manual) and seek to achieve consensus regarding a project with neighbors. Funding commitments should also be determined in advance.

Application/Letter of Interest – This document must be completed and submitted to NDOT staff via NDOTTrafficCalming@nashville.gov. The application requires the signatures of ten (10) affected property owners to demonstrate project buy-in.

NDOT Review #1 – NDOT’s staff will review the application and determine the viability of the project. Conflicts with other Metro projects or services (such as WeGo, etc.) will be determined. In some cases, additional data collection (traffic volumes, speed, etc) may be required. This would be the applicant’s responsibility and can be provided by the applicant’s engineer.

Plan Submittal – After approval of the application, the applicant will hire a licensed engineer to perform all field measurements and develop the traffic calming design plans. Plans must comply with NDOT’s current standards and specifications for traffic calming installations plan requirements.

NDOT Review #2 – City staff will review the design plans and provide revisions, if necessary, to the applicant’s engineer.

Online Ballot – After receiving approval, the design plans will be posted on the traffic calming website, and NDOT will administer the online voting process¹. Details of this procedure can be found in the NSTC Program Manual.

Construction – If voted favorably, the applicant will be authorized to proceed with construction. The applicant’s contractor must obtain the appropriate permits from NDOT’s permitting office. The installation will be inspected and approved by NDOT before being accepted as a permanent city asset.

¹ Balloting is required for all projects in order to fulfill the code requirement that evidence be provided that all affected property owners have been contacted and provided with copies of the design plans. NDOT will supply the mailing list, and applicant returns ballot cards, stamped and addressed, to NDOT for mailing.

Typical Costs and Timeframe

All design and construction costs for these projects will be paid by outside sources and will not be reviewed or negotiated by NDOT. However, with the intent to help neighborhoods estimate whether a traffic calming project is able to be self-funded, the following ballpark estimates are provided.

Engineering Design. A detailed survey is not required and most design plans are drawn using aerial imagery as basemapping. Professional engineers may contract for the total job or may charge by the hour. The engineer's work load (and, therefore, cost) can be lessened by providing the engineer with a clear concept to develop, and minimizing time spent in coordination and consensus-building with the neighborhood. The engineering cost for a typical traffic calming project is approximately **\$15,000**.

Construction. Contractors typically charge by the unit price of materials installed. So, a project on a longer street having more materials will be more expensive. Also, depending on the location, permit requirements and resulting costs might be higher. For example, the requirement to provide off-duty police for traffic control would drive installation costs higher. The material and labor cost range for a typical traffic calming project is approximately **\$20,000 - \$50,000**.

Based on NDOT's project completion experience, the expected total cost to the neighborhood might be **\$35,000 - \$65,000**, but is highly dependent on street length and selected treatments.

Like cost, the timeframe for developing a traffic calming project is largely in the hands of the applicant and the contracted professionals. But, to provide some reasonable expectation, a project is likely to take **six to ten months** to complete from development of the application. This is loosely broken down as follows:

NDOT Review #1: 2-4 weeks to review the application.

Plan development, submittal, and Review #2: 6-8 weeks

Preparation and online balloting: 8 weeks

Order materials and construct: 12-16 weeks



Appendices

The following documents are attached for reference.

Application/Letter of Intent for a privately-funded traffic calming (speed cushion) project

Sample set of design plans

NDOT's speed cushion standards and specifications