

## Raleigh to review controversial traffic program

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Westbound traffic on Kaplan Drive in west Raleigh slows down while being funneled between the curb and new median Friday, June 17, 2016. The City of Raleigh installed new median islands, curb extensions and in other places along Kaplan Drive, speed humps to slow the often speeding traffic through the west Raleigh neighborhood. HARRY LYNCH@NEWSOBSERVER.COM

### RALEIGH

The city launched a system in 2009 that allows residents to request road changes to make speeding drivers slow down in their neighborhoods.

Seven years later, Raleigh has installed speed bumps, lower speed limits, stop signs or medians on dozens of Raleigh streets – often in the face of controversy.

Residents complain the [Neighborhood Traffic Management Program](#) is too confusing, divides neighbors and isn't responsive enough.

Raleigh leaders are now reviewing the program, and city planners recently adopted changes to how they measure the severity of traffic issues.

The city council's transportation and transit committee plans to make further tweaks and will evaluate how residents are informed about potential projects. It might also raise the standard for neighborhoods to qualify for the program, which has a waiting list of 220 streets.

Raleigh's budget allows for only seven to 10 projects each year.

Many people don't think the program is helpful, said councilwoman Mary-Ann Baldwin, who leads the transportation and transit committee.

"In schools where I sometimes go talk, people say the most pressing issue in their neighborhoods is speeding," Baldwin said. "To hear adults say that is one thing. It's a top concern among residents in a growing city. But when you hear kids say that, it's jarring."

Residents concerned about speeding in their neighborhoods can ask the city to conduct a traffic study. If the street earns poor traffic scores and the city council OKs changes, Raleigh staff reaches out to neighbors.

If 75 percent of the people who live on the street sign a petition seeking roadwork, the city mails a ballot to survey residents who live within a two-block radius. As long as more than two-thirds of respondents support the idea, city engineers start working with residents to design a traffic-calming strategy.

The process sometimes divides neighbors. Residents gathering signatures for petitions have been accused of misleading their neighbors about the traffic-calming strategies.

In at least one case, on Laurel Hills Road, the city canceled a project after some residents disputed the validity of the petition.

Additionally, residents sometimes disagree over the type of traffic-calming strategy to adopt on their road – speed bumps vs. a stop sign, for instance.

## **SPEEDERS**

City engineers grade a street's traffic problem using a 100-point scale that considers average speeds, crash history and traffic volume. Raleigh wants to change the way it scores speeding.

In studies conducted in previous years, for example, drivers could go 34 mph in a 25 mph zone without registering any “speeding points” on the scale. Under the proposed system, a driver going 9 mph over the speed limit would register 13 points.

The city, under proposed changes, would also measure multiple locations along a street instead of a single location to determine traffic volume.

## **OTHER POTENTIAL CHANGES**

To single out the worst streets, Raleigh may raise the traffic score that streets must reach to qualify for traffic-calming projects.

Baldwin's group will consider that move, along with changes to the petitioning process. In a work session Tuesday, Mayor Nancy McFarlane suggested the city give more weight to the opinion of residents who live on the street in question since they're the most affected by speeding.

Baldwin's group is likely to discuss the issue at 2 p.m. Tuesday, July 12, in room 305 of City Hall.