

# City of Boulder Neighborhood Traffic Mitigation Program

## DRAFT Public Comment Summary

### Introduction

Between December 2006 and February 2007, the City of Boulder elicited public input on potential refinements to the Neighborhood Traffic Mitigation Program (NTMP) process. The public process focused on involving people with an interest in and experience with the NTMP. Specific activities conducted included:

- Interviews – Ten interviews were conducted with community members with different experiences and views on the NTMP. A list of interviewees and the interview template is presented in Attachment A: Interview Process.
- Open House - An open house was held on January 24, 2007 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Whittier Elementary School. The materials presented at the open house are included in Attachment B: Open House Materials. The open house was set up in stations related to key issues in the NTMP process and participants were presented choices for each issues and asked to share their preferences and comments. Participants received comment forms inviting comments on the key issues and more general concerns.
- Website – Information from the Open House is posted on the city's website along with the comment form distributed at the meeting.
- Individual comments – additional comments were emailed or called in

Twenty people attended the open house. Each participant received a packet with the display materials and a comment form with questions related to the displays. Comment forms were also posted on the city's website. This summary includes comments from the 12 comment forms submitted as of the date of this report.

### Comments

The following outlines comments received on the following key issues:

- NTMP goal
- NTMP initiation
- Qualifying for the NTMP
- The role of Education
- The role of Enforcement
- Funding
- Mitigation on Critical Emergency Response Routes
- Assessing Support for Mitigation

Interview comments are summarized followed by notes from the 12 comment forms received. On the comment form, respondents were asked to pick from a series of choices for each issues. The tally of preferences from the comment forms is presented in parenthesis following each choice. Three individuals who were interviewed also submitted comment forms; while their comments are noted under both interviews and comment forms, specific comments are not repeated.

## Overall Goal

**Question:** The goal of the Neighborhood Traffic Mitigation Program is to mitigate traffic on neighborhood streets through education, enforcement and/or engineering treatments. Do you have any comments or questions about this goal?

### Interviews

- *Need to look at traffic impacts more broadly when an area is developed.*
- *NTMP should not be resumed as it adversely affects safety and emergency response.*
- *Have to balance expectations for mitigation with resources – the problems accepted into the program with the ability to solve them.*

### Comment Forms

- *Engineering treatments ignore need for large commercial vehicles to negotiate city streets. As a bus driver, devices are a nightmare.*
- *Great goal – add goals of pedestrian friendly streets, safer streets, child friendly streets*
- *Add “for the safety of all residents because of the law breaking speeders.”*
- *I and many other silent majority are against NTMP. People have a right to get across town without being subjected to speed bumps, circles, radar and misplaced, heavy-handed enforcement.*
- *Our area needs help from the city.*
- *Add: “without negatively affecting the homeowners who live along the neighborhood street.”*
- *Goal of NTMP as speed control is misrepresented. NTMP is a waste of taxpayers’ money and a hazard to the community. Effect is diversion of traffic to other streets and delay of emergency response.*
- *Look for win/win solutions, not those that divide neighborhoods and increase risk from delay to emergency response. Delete vertical deflection devices from toolbox and keep physical devices off CERR’s.*
- *Applauds the city for this program and urges making the NTMP a high priority for funding as soon as possible. US Department of Transportation reports that most deaths on roadways occur on local urban and rural streets, including residential streets.*
- *Goal on 6<sup>th</sup> Street from Aurora to Baseline Rod is to reduce the speed of autos as they “gun it”. We have used radar speed trailers many times.*

## NTMP Initiation

**Question:** How should residents initiate the NTMP process and gauge initial public support for involvement in the NTMP?

### Interviews

- *Three of the 10 interviewees said that you need to hear from more than one person.*
- *Not sure if should include surrounding neighborhood.*
- *If money is available in the city, it would be nice if city staff would do survey to save neighbors from doing it.*
- *Petition process is driven by the squeaky wheel and doesn't consider those affected by traffic mitigation.*
- *Might not be necessary to do polling or petition just to enter NTMP.*
- *Set the bar so only those who are really concerned apply so that resources are in balance with expectations – perhaps 100 people or signatures from 50% of those registered to vote within ½ mile of the problem.*

**Comment Forms:** Five choices were provided on the comment form as follows:

1. Neighborhood petition signed by a percentage of street/block (current process) (3)
  - *Use this approach with a low percentage and a non-binding vote.*
  - *Already done for our area*
  - *Most direct method.*
2. Neighborhood application submitted by one or more residents (2)
  - *Application coupled with neighborhood meeting focused on solving the problem.*
  - *Make this process easy for residents and save the formalized processes for deciding whether to implement the NTMP. Meetings, ballots and petitions are biased against non-English speaking residents who may not have the tradition of activism prevalent in wealthier neighborhoods. Having a point person at each end is useful.*
3. Neighborhood meeting with staff (1)
  - *With the number of student renters, it might be hard to have enough signatures on a petition.*
4. No application process – Staff responds to any request (1)
  - *Staff can easily screen frivolous requests. People can still do petitions.*
5. Other (4) - Other suggestions are noted below with a summary of comments related to each suggestion.

*Neighborhood petition signed by the entire city. All Boulderites are affected by these neighborhood projects. When one neighborhood enacts a severe NTMP, it affects thousands who go through that neighborhood.*

*Allow all of these methods.*

*Representative petition process, including 50% support from property owners (not residents) within two blocks on proposed street as well as parallel streets.*

*Application by 67% of all affected residents, including all residents downstream whose emergency response will be affected. If CERR, should include ballot of all city residents.*

## Qualifying for the NTMP

Question: How should the city determine if a neighborhood concern qualifies for the NTMP?

### Interviews

- *5 mph above 25 mph seems to be high for neighborhoods.*
- *Need some sort of ceiling since resources are limited.*
- *Reasonable to have threshold but hard to define.*
- *Will always have excessive speeds because speed limits are excessively low.*
- *5 mph seems low since many people routinely drive 5 mph over the speed limit. Between 5 and 10 – perhaps 7.5 mph.*
- *Upping the threshold probably won't have much effect because most neighborhoods have a problem. Need application process to gauge where it is bad enough to be considered a shared problem.*

Comment Forms: Four choices were provided on the comment form as follows:

1. No predefined thresholds (1)
  - *If there is no speed recording device available, then the residents would have to verify how bad the problem is.*
2. Staff decides on a case by case basis (4)
  - *Each neighborhood is different with unique challenges. Simplify process.*
  - *Verify but don't over do the analysis. Use common sense.*
  - *Thresholds should be used as guidelines only because an extremely dangerous intersection may only have a few pedestrians crossing per hour. Relax the requirements for thresholds.*
3. Detailed set of thresholds or warranting procedures (current process) (3)
  - *A few disgruntled people cannot be allowed to run the street program for the City. It should take many people as possible to decide that we are going to inflict this stuff on ourselves.*
  - *Conduct traffic counting when residents report the problem, not at a predetermined time of day or season.*
4. Other (3) - Other suggestions are noted below with a summary of comments related to each suggestion.

*Small set of thresholds. Keep it simple.*

*Detailed thresholds and warrants, but not the current ones, which are designed to ensure virtually every application is accepted.*

*Detailed set of thresholds, showing 10 mph average speed over the limit.*

## Role of Education

Question: What role should education play in the NTMP?

### Interviews

- *Not sure education works. The information was too generic and just created more for neighborhood to do.*
- *Education should be used to teach people how to use traffic circles. Start massive education campaign using website.*
- *Need to teach respect for neighborhoods and make people aware – perhaps “Slow, Neighborhood Zone”*
- *The approach of starting with education brings people together.*
- *Temporary solutions may raise awareness but also can backfire because they are ugly and may make people dislike the concept.*
- *Speed trailers are good. They communicate effectively.*
- *Education is pointless with the exception of signs.*
- *Not sure about the 3 tiers because in general, education doesn’t work. However, speed signs on 9<sup>th</sup> Street made a difference.*
- *Education helps raise awareness where neighbors are the ones speeding*
- *Make education permanent, like radar speed signs.*

Comment Forms – Four choices were provided on the comment form as follows:

1. Continue to require a 3 to 6 month education phase (3)
  - *Education should be the only component. When the flashing sign tells them their speed, most people slow down. You should leave it at this and not build policy around the 1% who don’t slow down.*
  - *Education may provide the solution. Electronic speed signs seem good.*
2. Incorporate an education phase at the discretion of staff (1)
  - *Education has been used for years but there is still a problem.*
3. Make education an optional tool that neighborhoods can use at their discretion (3)
  - *Mandatory education might be too onerous and cumbersome in some cases.*
  - *Drags out the process – might be a better way to do it.*
4. Other (4)

*Make education an ongoing (up to 6 month) process for a certain number of standard tools*  
*No education. Education cannot be shown to have any effect on drivers’ behavior.*  
*Have a citywide effort educating people through flyers and Channel 8.*  
*Speeding in residential neighborhoods represents the single greatest complaint issued to police departments and City Council representatives throughout the US. Most speeders in a neighborhood live in the neighborhood. Presented a list of data about safety risks from speeding. (keepkidsalivedrive25.org)*  
*Only effective education is from lighted radar indicator on a power pole.*

## Role of Enforcement

Question - What role should enforcement play in the NTMP?

### Interviews

- *Enforcement works but you can't have police there all the time.*
- *Enforcement seems to be lax.*
- *Enforcement works. To address funding problem, consider hiring parking cop types as speed control officers or use trainees.*
- *If not willing to do enforcement, what is the point of having speeding laws? Have floating program so don't know what neighborhood is targeted.*
- *Need real enforcement. It is more effective and less expensive that traffic mitigation advocates claim.*
- *Radar vans help.*
- *Enforcement is a stop along the way but not a long term or permanent solution.*

Comment Forms - Four choices were provided as follows:

1. Continue to require a 6 month enforcement phase (1)
2. Incorporate an enforcement phase at the discretion of staff (3)
  - *Need as much flexibility as possible*
  - *Must have better mitigation that is not dependent upon enforcement*
  - *Enforcement has been used for years but there is still a problem.*
3. Make enforcement an optional tool that neighborhoods can use at their discretion (1)
4. Other ( ) - Other comments or suggestions are noted below with a summary of comments related to each suggestion.

*Enforcement seems non-existent on city streets*

*Need flexibility. Include this but recognize drivers' "memory" problems. City presence also has other functions. (1)*

*No enforcement (1) Allow the police to use their limited budgets and personnel on real crime. Begin enforcement after one month of education. Why wait?*

*More overall enforcement, not tied to NTMP. Police should more rigorously enforce traffic laws.*

*Replace enforcement phase with having residents report to police and work on solutions without expecting intense police effort. Do enforcement as needed but eliminate 6 month required phase and encourage increased communication between residents and police.*

*Police do not have time or money to constantly patrol over long period of time.*

## Funding

Question: When needed, how should the implementation of physical mitigation measures be funded?

### Interviews

- *Be equitable. Neighborhoods should not get priority if they pay their own way.*
- *Public streets should be addressed by the city, not privately.*
- *Neighborhoods should be able to pay for mitigation.*
- *Allow neighborhoods to pay if they are not moving ahead of another neighborhood in priority and are not affecting other areas.*
- *Perhaps consider having everyone pay their own way or apply for funding.*
- *Require neighborhoods to pay. If people had to pay some of their own money for devices, we would stop having them.*
- *If neighborhoods pay full costs without diverting city staff time, could pay own way.*

Comment Forms – Five choices were provided as follows:

1. 100% city funding of NTMP project implementation (5)
  - *Entire city causes problem so city should pay but let neighborhoods pay if they can.*
  - *Remember this is caused by people speeding and breaking the law.*
  - *Our street is made up of largely rental properties probably not interested in program or funding it.*
  - *The city should refund NTMP charges to residents plus interest.*
2. Required cost sharing by residents on all projects
3. Selective application of required resident cost sharing (3)
  - *Generally, the preferred mitigation is a 4-way stop at 35<sup>th</sup> and Aurora. This should be cheap.*
  - *Agrees with equity concerns with residents paying but inequities exist already. Even less affluent neighborhoods in Boulder can afford to help fund NTMP. Be flexible – City funds where clear needs and neighbors contribute where residents feel that dangers need to be addressed. In particular, residents should be able to put in painted cross-walks and radar-speed signs at their own cost.*
  - *Sharing the expense is best.*
4. 100% resident funding of NTMP project implementation (3)
  - *Opens up the question of whether a neighborhood can really do whatever it wants on a city street to impact all fellow citizens.*
  - *If city worsens mobility and impairs emergency response, require immediate beneficiaries to foot the bill*
  - *Why should the entire city pay for something requested by a few?*
5. Other ( ) - Other comments or suggestions are noted below with a summary of comments related to each suggestion.

#### *No use of physical mitigation*

- *Physical mitigation harms people with physical problems – caused pain when had rupture disc.*
- *Physical mitigation further increases noise, pollution, and fuel consumption.*

*Engage large vehicle operators in the discussion of physical mitigation*

*Speed bumps hidden in snow are a hazard to children riding school buses*

## Mitigation on Critical Emergency Response Routes

Question: How should Critical Emergency Response Routes (CERRs) be managed?

### Interviews

- *Find ways to make neighborhoods safe without losing seconds for emergency response. Consider low speed bumps like on Quince or flashing lights.*
- *Traffic circles work.*
- *Weigh risks from speeding with risks from delayed emergency response.*
- *Traffic problems outweigh emergency response issues.*
- *Fire trucks are too large for neighborhoods.*
- *Research shows that an extra minute of emergency response results in 85 deaths before one life is saved by preventing speeding.*
- *Risk of delayed emergency response is greater than that from speeding.*
- *If there is an impact area defined and polled, larger area will always side with quicker emergency response except for people on the street with the speeding problem.*
- *Look at alternative approaches like permanent red light tripped by emergency response vehicles.*
- *Address on a case by case basis.*
- *The issue of emergency response is really about a desire to drive unimpeded. There are other ways to increase emergency response like decreased dispatch times and decreased congestion.*
- *People vote with their pocketbooks to live on a quiet street, not next to a fire station.*

Comment Forms: Five choices were provided as follows:

1. Continue system where CERRs require City Council approval for delay inducing devices (2)
  - *Believes more lives would be saved by slowing traffic and reducing accidents. Allow speed delay mechanisms on most CERR roadways.*
2. Delay inducing devices an option only on defined impact area CERR roadways (2)
  - *East Aurora – use devices for 3 to 6 months to determine effectiveness. Would not cause major delays in response times.*
  - *Allows for traffic-guiding devices that would not impede CERR vehicles.*
3. Allow delay inducing devices on all CERR roadways
4. Do not allow delay inducing devices on any CERR roadways (3)
  - *Emergency response affects lives and is far more important than NTMP.*
  - *Boulder’s 6-minute response goal is already 50% longer than national standards for fire or ambulance response. We cannot afford ANY delay to emergency services.*
  - *TAB has recommended devices on every CERR where devices have been proposed.*
5. Other (3) Other comments or suggestions are noted below with a summary of comments related to each suggestion.

*Determine on street-by-street basis. See if alternate CERR available.*

- *Accept some delay if necessary.*
- *Use neutral language in description. “Delay inducing” prejudices the discussion.*

*Not all CERR’s are the same.*

*Do something about “density” that produces congestion.*

*People love to live on cul-de-sacs – what about their response time? What about neighborhoods not on the grid system?*

*Change emergency response so that less expensive, more agile vehicles( other than fire trucks) can respond to medical emergencies and traffic accidents.*

*No response – not clear on what defined impact area means.*

## Assessing Support for Mitigation

Question: How should neighborhood support for an NTMP project be assessed?

### Interviews

- *Petition process is a good way to hear different concerns. Suggests 2 or 3 meetings to get as many people as possible and present different solutions*
- *Voting has to be done properly. Include renters and property owners.*
- *Take a poll door to door or online. 51% or higher trigger.*
- *Listen to people in immediate neighborhood but use TAB for community-wide view.*
- *Gauge support within a logical project boundary including those affected by reduced emergency response times. Require 2/3 support.*
- *Every device ever built diverts at least 25% traffic to other streets. Need those streets represented in process.*
- *Process of petitioning is onerous but necessary. Require formal vote of property owners (as in special districts) with voting area including those affected by diverted traffic or increased emergency response times.*
- *Given level of outcry about emergency response, need a public hearing or formal survey. However, make sure staff doesn't abdicate their professional opinion on safety.*

Comment Forms – Five choices were provided as follows:

1. Neighborhood balloting with city managing balloting process (1)
  - *Citywide balloting of all Boulder residents because all other Boulderites are impacted by these devices.*
2. Neighborhood petition with residents required for gathering signatures (3)
  - *A neighborhood petition with a meeting seems like the cheapest and most effective alternative.*
  - *Petitions describing the specific method of mitigation and signed by the property owners and submitted to the city.*
3. Neighborhood support meeting with polling of only those who attend meetings (2)
  - *People better be involved.*
  - *Ballots weren't sent to all households eligible to vote in Whittier*
4. No formal process other than public hearings (2)
  - *Keep the process flexible. Only ballot if controversy foreseen.*
  - *The balloting process is flawed because the city did not send ballots to all who were defined to be eligible.*
5. Other ( ) - Other comments or suggestions are noted below with a summary of comments related to each suggestion.

*Neighborhood balloting with third party management of balloting process. Only yes-no questions with no three-way questions unless you adopt "instant run-off" methods.*  
*Special district balloting – Follow a process like that used for special taxing districts, which accurately preserves the rights of all property owners. See Local Improvement Districts, as set forth in 8-1 BRC 1981. LID process is specifically designed to govern provision of benefits associated with land.*  
*Certified mail out requiring a 67% majority of the people eligible to vote. For CERR, ballot of entire city.*  
*Any of the above. Meetings might draw less input. Need to accommodate non-English-speaking residents.*

## Other Comments/Questions

- *Consider the impact on large vehicles when making decisions on mitigation strategies.*
- *Like Whittier mitigation.*
- *Need funding – put in the budget.*
- *The mitigation around Pine and around the city works.*
- *Do more with alternative modes to get people out of cars and reduce congestion. Give bus passes to all residents.*
- *Realize that speeds cause the problem.*
- *What vision do we have for safe streets to stop the problem?*
- *Equity on features (like irrigation)*
- *NTMP is a waste. Vote should be citywide, not just neighborhood vigilantes. NTMP is heavy-handed, Draconian, invasive, intrusive, and unnecessary. NTMP makes good citizens the enemy. Don't spend tax dollars because a handful of citizens move onto a busy main arterial and expect it to be quiet. Focus on making it easier to get around Boulder.*
- *A number of people on East Aurora would be willing to assist in gathering support for this. Two schools have greatly impacted the neighborhood, greatly increasing traffic when school is in session.*
- *Curving streets increase danger to motorists during icy or wet weather and makes snow plowing damage landscaping.*
- *Medians and roundabouts force cars and bicyclists into the same space. Cease these treatments and replace existing ones with raised crossings with rounded edges.*
- *Boulder Valley School District's shift away from a system of neighborhood schools to open enrollment has done much to increase traffic in Boulder. Urges the City to work towards having the school district redirect change towards neighborhood schools and away from open enrollment.*
- *Winter conditions with street not plowed has reduced short-cutting and slowed down traffic. Experience convinces me that speed humps work. Would like to work with the City on assessing neighborhood support for a speed bump at each end of street, raise support and install without using thresholds using resident funding.*
- *Why do I feel so strongly about traffic safety issues? I have lost three friends who were killed on bicycles by cars. Every life that is saved through NTMP projects in Boulder is a big deal.*
- *Minimize time delays for implementation of NTMP projects.*

## Comments on Open House

- *Bring food to next NTMP meeting.*
- *Need group discussions at these open houses.*
- *Too vague a meeting process.*

## Emails

- *If a network of arterials covered the City well, there would be no need for an NTMP. Would prefer to see the money spent on pothole repair. Develop criteria to address in consistent, objective manner.*

## Interview Process

### Person Interviewed

*Susan Guegan, Poplar*

*Michael Banks, Quince*

*Vicki Naber, Whittier neighborhood*

*Rick Dyson, 15<sup>th</sup> and Orchard*

*Alison Richards, West Arapahoe, former TAB*

*Kathleen Calogne, Whittier neighborhood, Seconds Count*

*David Wagner, 55<sup>th</sup> Street, former TAB*

*Kris Miller, 9<sup>th</sup> and Aurora*

*John Tayer, former TAB*

*Don Mock, Whittier neighborhood, former City Council*

### Interview Questions

1. Please tell me about your previous involvement with traffic mitigation in Boulder. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of a traffic mitigation program?
2. What is your view on how a residential street should get into the NTMP? Should the City continue to require some demonstration of neighborhood support before an application is accepted? If so, what ideas do you have for how to make this less onerous on the neighborhood but still meaningful?
3. Currently the program defines a speeding problem as meeting a threshold of an 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed of 5 or more MPH over the speed limit. Do you think there should be a minimum threshold? If so, at what threshold should traffic mitigation be considered?
4. Do you know what a Critical Emergency Response Route (CERR) is? [If not, define for them]. How would you recommend balancing the desires for traffic mitigation and the needs of emergency response on these CERR roadways?
5. What do you see as the appropriate role of education in traffic mitigation in Boulder?
6. What do you see as the appropriate role for enforcement in traffic mitigation?
7. What do you see as the appropriate role for engineering in traffic mitigation?
8. What criteria do you suggest for prioritizing projects to receive engineering solutions? Should there be both a large and small pot?
9. What is the fairest and most efficient way to gauge support for traffic mitigation? Is the previous use of polling for each individual device effective and if not, what do you suggest?
10. Do you think neighborhoods should be able to receive mitigation quicker by paying for their own improvements? Do you think neighborhoods should have to pay some or all of the costs of traffic mitigation? Should there be specific criteria for self-funding?
11. Should there be some minimum level of neighborhood participation in the NTMP design process?
12. What is a reasonable timeframe for completing an application?
13. What other comments would you like to share on the NTMP process?

## Open House Materials

### Open House Notification

A letter was mailed to approximately 100 people on the existing NTMP mailing list inviting them to sign up to be on the email list for this effort to refine the NTMP process. People on the list received notices about the meeting and the meeting was posted on the city's website and publicized in the city section of the Daily Camera for several weeks. In addition, ten individuals who had been involved in the NTMP previously were interviewed individually prior to the open house to learn different views and encourage "word-of-mouth" advertising. A copy of the letter of notification is attached.

### Open House Materials

Participants in the Open House received the following comment form. A copy of these materials is also posted on the city's website.