# COUNTY AGENDA REQUEST

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| Department: | Engineering | Presenter(s): | Phil Mallon |
| Meeting Date: | Wednesday, October 3, 2012 | Type of Request: | Old Business |

Wording for the Agenda:

Further discussion of a draft Policy and Procedure document for the use of speed tables as traffic calming devices on select County roads.

Background/History/Details:

At the September 5, 2012 Board of Commissioners Workshop Meeting, staff presented the Board with a draft policy for the use of speed tables as a traffic control measure. The Board had several comments regarding details of the policy and directed staff to further refine the policy before returning for additional consideration.

The proposed Policy and Procedure for speed tables reflects the Board's input as well as additional research performed by staff.

What action are you seeking from the Board of Commissioners?

No action is required. Staff is seeking either further direction on this draft policy, or is seeking approval by the Board to place the draft policy on the next available agenda for a formal vote.

If this item requires funding, please describe:

If approved, the program will required additional funding for installation, repair, and maintenance. Two fees for participants in the program are proposed, but these fees may not fully cover all program costs.

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| Has this request been considered within the past two years? | Yes | If so, when? | Wednesday, September 5, 2012 |
| Is Audio-Visual Equipment Required for this Request?* | No | Backup Provided with Request? | Yes |

**** All audio-visual material must be submitted to the County Clerk's Office no later than 48 hours prior to the meeting. It is also your department's responsibility to ensure all third-party audio-visual material is submitted at least 48 hours in advance.***

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| Approved by Finance | Yes | Reviewed by Legal | |
| Approved by Purchasing | Not Applicable | County Clerk's Approval | Yes |
| Administrator's Approval | Yes | | |

Staff Notes:

Finance - Where will funding be taken to cover additional costs if necessary?

**FAYETTE COUNTY**
**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**OPERATIONAL FUNCTIONS**
**Public Works – Speed Tables**
**200.qq**

## PURPOSE

This *Policy and Procedure* establishes a process for the use of speed tables on select County roads and provides information on submitting a sponsor request; the traffic study and evaluation; public meetings; funding; and table installation, maintenance and removal.

## POLICY

It is Fayette County policy to help maintain safe and appropriate vehicle speeds on County roads through a combination of proper road design, traffic control signs, pavement markings, right-of-way maintenance, enforcement, and, where appropriate and financially feasible, traffic calming measures. This *Policy and Procedure* addresses one type of traffic calming measure that has been shown to reduce speed and discourage cut-thru traffic.

## PROCEDURE

*Background Information*
Slowing traffic speed is an on-going problem for Cities and Counties across the United States. Strategies to reduce speed include public education, enforcement, traffic signs and pavement markings, landscaping (to create appearance of a narrower corridor), traffic circles, lane-narrowing devices, speed tables, etc.

Speed tables are a raised portion of roadway, typically constructed of asphalt concrete or prefabricated rubber, designed to slow vehicles to 25 to 30 mph. Speed tables are typically 3.5 to 4 inches high with a 10-ft plateau and 6-ft inclines on either side. Tables extend across the entire road width and are marked with reflective material and signs. The delay to emergency response from speed tables is not considered a serious compromise of public safety emergency response capability. Research shows that properly placed speed tables are effective at reducing vehicle speed and discouraging cut-thru traffic[1].

For purposes of this *Policy and Procedure*, the term speed table also includes speed humps, which are similar to tables but without the flat plateau between the inclines. Speed tables are specified in lieu of humps when there is need for the device to serve as a crosswalk and/or a gentler ride is desired.

No public street or road in unincorporated Fayette County shall have speed humps, speed tables or similar devices installed without the specific approval of the Board of Commissioners.

*Sponsor Request*

The request for the installation of speed tables shall be initiated by a project sponsor. The sponsor shall be a property owner within the subdivision (if commonly platted) or on the road for which the traffic calming is requested. The sponsor shall serve as the primary point of contact for County staff during the project and shall be responsible for providing necessary information, petitions, funding, etc.

A request to start the evaluation process shall be made in writing and include the following:

- Sponsor name and property address;
- Sponsor contact information (telephone number, mailing address, email);
- Approximate number and location of proposed speed tables (Fayette County will work with the sponsor to refine the design upon completion of traffic study); and
- A short description of the speeding or cut-thru traffic problem being addressed.

Requests may be sent to Fayette County Public Works by mail, facsimile or email at:

Public Works
115 McDonough Road
Fayetteville, GA 30214

(T) 770-320-6010
(F) 770-719-0871
publicworks@fayettecountyga.gov

Public Works will review the request to determine if the noted roads are eligible for speed tables and look for any unusual circumstance that could preclude their installation. If none, the County will proceed to the next step.

*Traffic Study and Evaluation Criteria*

Upon receipt of a valid request for speed tables, Public Works will ask the Fayette County Sheriff's Office to measure directional traffic volume and speed over a 24-hour period. Data from the study will be used to determine the mode and average vehicle speed, the percent of vehicles exceeding the posted speed, and the 85$^{th}$ percentile of speed. This information will be shared with the project sponsor.

Unless approved otherwise by the Board of Commissioners, the following evaluation criteria must be satisfied for speed table installation:

1. The tables shall be located on County Local or Internal Local roads, per the County's Thoroughfare Plan;
2. The posted speed limit is 30 mph or less;

3. If the 85th percentile is at least 11 mph over the posted speed limit, then the petition shall include affirmative support from at least 66.7 percent of all property owners within the Petition Area;
4. If the 85th percentile speed is less than 11 mph over the posted speed limit, then the petition shall include affirmative support from at least 80 percent of all property owners within the Petition Area;
5. Speed tables shall not be located on street sections with grades greater than eight percent; and
6. Speed tables shall not be placed in areas with sight distance concerns.

Speed tables are not advised for locations with 85th percentile speeds below 30 mph since the tables are designed to maintain speeds between 25 and 30 mph and would therefore provide little benefit. Tables in series should be spaced 300 to 500 feet apart as research shows this is most effective at lowering the 85th percentile speed to the target range[2].

*Petition Area and Property Owner Support*

Communities impacted by proposed speed tables shall demonstrate support by collecting the required number of affirmative votes from property owners in the Petition Area using the Fayette County Speed Table Petition form. The Petition Area is determined by road layout and configuration, as described below. Properties may not be added to or subtracted from the Petition Area for purposes of changing the percent of affirmative support.

- **Dead-End Roads and Single Entrance Subdivisions** – For traffic calming requests on dead-end roads or within subdivisions having one entrance, the Petition Area includes all properties that are "downstream" of a proposed table plus and any "upstream" properties that are entirely or partially within 100 feet of a table. The 100 feet is measured along the road's centerline and does not extend down intersecting roads. "Downstream" properties are those that would be accessible only by crossing one or more of the proposed tables. "Upstream" properties, conversely, would be accessible without crossing a speed table.

  Alternatively, the sponsor may request, in writing, that the Petition Area include all properties in the subdivision (if commonly platted) or having frontage along the road (if not commonly platted).

- **Thru Streets and Multi Entrance Subdivisions** – For traffic calming requests on thru streets or within subdivisions having two or more entrances, the Petition Area includes all properties having frontage on the road plus all properties on side streets whose sole access is off the road. The County Engineer may modify the prescribed Petition Area to account for intersections, loop roads or other configurations that justify site-specific input. Modifications to the Petition Area shall be consistent with the overall goal of getting input from property owners affected by the proposed tables and excluding those who are not.

All property owners in the Petition Area, including undeveloped lots, shall be given an opportunity to sign the form. Properties without a valid signature will be counted as "no" votes. The vote and signature must be by the legal owner(s). Spouses cannot substitute for one another and both must sign if they are joint legal owners. Tenants may not sign for the property owner(s).

The completed petition must be signed, with witnesses, and returned to Public Works where the parcels and signatures will be checked against County tax records. In the event of a recent change of ownership, appropriate documentation may be considered in lieu of tax records. Signatures may not be withdrawn from a petition once submitted to Public Works.

Affirmative support is determined by dividing the number of "yes" votes by the total number of properties in the Petition Area. Each lot counts as one vote. Common areas and amenity areas are excluded. Petitions that meet the affirmative support requirements will be presented to the Board of Commissioners at a Public Meeting.

*Public Meeting(s)*

Upon receipt of a petition and confirmation of the required signatures, Public Works will prepare an agenda request for consideration by the Board of Commissioners at a Public Meeting. The agenda request will include details on the type, number and location of the proposed tables. Specifically, the County Engineer shall recommend to the Board the:

- material type and specific design of the speed tables;
- exact locations for installation; and
- number of devices to be installed.

At this meeting the public may provide written or verbal comments in support or opposition to the proposal. As appropriate, staff from Public Works may comment on the request and provide background information, including a review of the traffic study data. Ultimately, the Board of Commissioners will approve or deny the request.

*Funding*

Since speed tables are installed for the benefit of a select group of property owners, costs for their purchase, installation, maintenance, repair and replacement are partially offset through two types of fees paid by the property owners in the Petition Area.

The first fee is a one-time cost to help pay for the speed table materials. It is the project sponsor's responsibility to provide funds to Fayette County equal to 70 percent of the table's material costs. Fayette County will fund the 30 percent balance plus all equipment, labor, site preparation, signs, etc. required for installation. For example, if two, pre-fabricated speed tables (assumed at $3,500 each for purposes of example) are requested for a subdivision, the sponsor would be responsible for providing $4,900 (2 x $3,500 x 0.7 = $4,900).

The second type of fee is an annual cost associated with Petition Areas. This fee, currently set at $15 per year per parcel, is added to the property tax bills for all lots within a Petition Area. The revenue from the traffic calming fee is tracked independent of the County's general fund and may only be used for the design, installation, maintenance, repair, replacement and removal of traffic calming measures in the unincorporated County. The annual fee is set by the Board of Commissioners and may go up or down over time based on the accumulated reserve and program costs.

Subdivisions may opt-out of a traffic calming Petition Area by following the procedures described below. The removal of the annual fee will be effective in the following tax year. The one-time material cost fee will not be reimbursed to Petition Areas opting out of the program and the tables will remain the property of Fayette County.

*Installation and Maintenance*

Speed tables will be purchased, installed and maintained by the Fayette County Road Department. Speed tables may be pre-fabricated or constructed in-place using asphaltic concrete. The tables will be marked with thermoplastic or other reflective material. Warning signs will also be placed around the tables.

The Road Department will procure the material for the speed table(s) only after all the above requirements have been satisfied, including approval from the Board of Commissioners and receipt of the sponsor/Petition Area's share of the material costs. Installation will typically be completed within three months of receipt of payment.

Speed tables and associated striping and signs will be maintained by the County's Road Department.

*Opt-Out Procedures*

Sponsors may petition for removal of one or more speed tables at any time. The process for removal requires the same petition and number of supportive signatures as required for installation. Only property owners in the Petition Area may vote to remove a speed table. Similar to installation, removal requires approval by the Board of Commissioners. If approved, the tables, signs, and striping will be removed by the Road Department and necessary repairs/patches will be made to the road.

As noted above, the annual assessment fee will not be removed from a property's tax bill until the year after a Petition Area opts-out of the program.

## Footnotes

1 *Updated Guidelines for the Design and Application of Speed Humps* by M. Parkhill, R. Sooklall, and G. Bahar.

2 *Gwinnett County Speed Hump Program Manual*. Gwinnett County Department of Transportation, Traffic Engineering and Planning Division, Traffic Studies Section. December 2008.

## Other References

An internal Fayette County memorandum regarding Traffic Calming Devices dated March 27, 2007.

http://www.trafficlogix.com/en/. Traffic Logix is located in Spring Valley, NY

*Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices*, 2009 Edition with Revisions No. 1 and 2. , U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration.

*Summary of a Proposed Recommended Practice: Guidelines for the Design and Application of Speed Humps* by R. Elizer, Jr., PE. ITE Journal, May 1993.