

Legislation Text

File #: 24-319, **Version:** 1

PRESENTER:

Carly Farmer, Engineer

SUBJECT:

Discuss and consider approval of implementing a traffic calming plan on Willowbrook.

DEPARTMENT: Transportation and Capital Improvements

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: 5

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Since 2021, staff has received 16 traffic safety requests from residents in the August Fields subdivision, the majority being speeding and cut-through traffic-related concerns on Willowbrook. Willowbrook is a local residential street in the August Fields subdivision, which is located between FM 1101 and Alves Lane. Willowbrook runs from FM 1101 to Split Rock Road. It is a popular cut-through route because it is the only roadway linking FM 1101 and Alves Lane between SH 46 and Barbarosa Road. The posted speed limit in August Fields is 30 mph, and none of the streets are classified on the 2012 City of New Braunfels Thoroughfare Plan.

Of the 16 requests submitted, nine were specifically for speed humps. The City of New Braunfels Speed Hump Policy approved in 1999 requires a petition be submitted with signatures from two-thirds of the properties adjacent to the street segment on which speed humps are requested. For each request, the speed hump application with a petition was provided to the requester. Some petitions were returned with signatures, but to date, the only completed petition meeting the two-thirds requirement was for Colonial Avenue, which did not meet the volume or speed requirements in the Speed Hump Policy. Because the August Fields subdivision is still under construction, a portion of the homes in the neighborhood and on Willowbrook are unbuilt, unoccupied, and/or still owned by the home builder. This makes obtaining adequate signatures challenging.

An operational requirement in the policy is that the 85th percentile speed must be at least 5 miles per hour (mph) over the regulatory speed limit of 30 mph. Traffic data collected over 24 hours in 2022 showed the 85th percentile speed of 31 mph, which does not meet the speed criteria in the Speed Hump Policy. Additionally, the volume requirement in the approved speed hump policy is a daily traffic volume of at least 800 vehicles per day (vpd). The traffic data collected measured 1,579 vpd. Staff would not be able to recommend speed humps under the requirements of the Speed Hump Policy, but the high volume surpasses the 1,000 vpd maximum design volume in the city code for a local residential street due to the high cut-through traffic coming from FM 1101 and Alves Ln. Traffic congestion on SH 46 and Barbarosa Road causes drivers to seek alternative routes, and Willowbrook is currently the only option. Additionally, parents use Willowbrook to pick-up students from Freiheit Elementary and Canyon Middle Schools which compounds the issue. Most neighborhoods evaluated by city staff for speed humps have 85th percentile speeds measured at around 25 mph, so although the speeds

on Willowbrook do not meet Speed Hump Policy criteria, an 85th percentile speed of 31 mph is significant.

The City of New Braunfels is in the process of creating its Street Safety Action Plan. This plan will make recommendations for new policies, programs, and projects to end severe and fatal roadway crashes on the City of New Braunfels Roads. City staff recognizes that the current 1999 Speed Hump Policy being the lone traffic calming procedure, is insufficient for evaluation of neighborhood traffic speeding concerns. Part of the Street Safety Action Plan initiative will be recommendations on updates to the speed hump policy, default speed limits in residential areas, and additional traffic calming measures with updated evaluation criteria that city staff can implement when investigating speeding and safety concerns on residential streets.

Based on the volume of concerns and requests received over the last few years, the documented high cut-through traffic volumes, and the higher-than-average 85th percentile speed in a residential area, city staff drafted a traffic calming plan for the entirety of Willowbrook that includes methods such as speed humps but also incorporates a raised pedestrian crossing and a mini traffic circle. Staff presented the traffic calming plan and allowed the community to provide public comment without the constraints of the petition process. Staff has already adjusted the proposed plan based on feedback from the public presentation at the February Transportation and Traffic Advisory Board meeting. With no dedicated funding for traffic calming this fiscal year outside of the annual speed hump budget, the city cannot implement the entire plan until more funding is identified or budgeted for. However, using the existing speed hump fund, the city may proceed with installing some of the proposed speed humps this fiscal year. Staff recommends prioritizing the proposed speed humps located on the segments of Willowbrook where homes are currently occupied.

Because of the subdivision layout in August Fields, other streets in the neighborhood may also be experiencing impacts from cut-through traffic. These impacts may change with the implementation of the traffic calming plan on Willowbrook. City staff will monitor the traffic conditions on these streets and determine if further mitigations are warranted.

ISSUE:

Residents have requested traffic calming be installed on Willowbrook due to speeding and safety concerns about cut-through traffic.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The City has specific funding for the installation of traffic calming. Installation of speed humps, including speed cushions, signing, and pavement markings at four locations, cost approximately \$32,000. There is sufficient funding in the FY 2024 Streets and Drainage budget. Staff will seek additional funding for the remaining items in future budget cycles.

RECOMMENDATION:

Transportation and Traffic Advisory Board

The Transportation and Traffic Advisory Board unanimously recommended approval at their February 15, 2024, meeting.

Staff

Staff recommends approval of the traffic calming plan on Willowbrook to be installed in phases as funding is available.