

Eastern Norwalk Neighborhood Association



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Sea To The Green®

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Dear Members of the Common Council:

The Eastern Norwalk Neighborhood Association (ENNA) recommends that traffic calming be an integral part of planning for improvements and maintaining roads in Norwalk.

The Common Council – starting with the 2001-2002 Capital Budget – has annually approved \$100,000 for traffic calming. I am asking that you continue to recognize that ongoing funding for traffic calming projects is an essential component of road maintenance.

I am, therefore, asking you to approve \$80,000 under the category of Public Works – line item 'Traffic Calming – Strawberry Hill Avenue' toward Traffic Calming study and design.

Currently zero dollars have been recommended toward traffic calming in this year's budget. This is unacceptable.

I have listed important points below specific to the need for funding traffic calming.

1. Public Works has requested \$125,000 for a Citywide Traffic Management Plan in this Capital Budget. I understand that the Planning Commission recommended only \$25,000 toward this item because Public Works plans to use \$100,000 of the \$213,000 left over from capital funds approved in prior years for traffic calming. Has the Council discussed this? It's important to be aware that the Traffic Management Plan is not a Traffic Calming Plan. Public Works, in its documentation states the consequences of not funding this item as, "increased deterioration of quality of life and road rage". What does this mean? Will the improvements keep cars moving so quickly that drivers won't be upset? Is the improved quality of life meant for road rage sufferers? What is in the plan for traffic calming? Is the Traffic Management Plan's goal to speed traffic so that road rage sufferers' quality of life improves? Although a citywide traffic management plan should prove beneficial it should not be categorized as traffic calming. It should not be funded with previously approved traffic calming dollars unless there is proof of a strong traffic calming component within the plan. And, regardless, it should not be funded in lieu of funding traffic calming this year. Additionally, if funding is allocated for this item, the RFO and RFP need to require inclusion of evidence of innovative and effective traffic calming strategies in the consultant selection process – and in every part of the plan. The goal should not be just to move traffic more efficiently – meaning faster. Also, important to keep in mind is that even if traffic calming components are included in the Citywide Traffic Management Plan, the plan won't provide enough detailed planning to substitute for studies on individual streets and at specific intersections.

2. There is more to traffic calming than speed humps. Speed humps do work and are effective on some streets. But there are many more engineering treatments that can be used for traffic calming. Unfortunately, without these treatments in place to point out as examples, it is difficult to visualize. Conversely, potholes are visible and impossible to ignore. What isn't visible, such as traffic calming, is more difficult to imagine or define. Yet, the negative effects from speeding are what residents complain about most. Speeding and the lack of effective traffic calming result in eroding safety and deteriorating quality of life in our neighborhoods.
3. We need to keep the momentum going. If a year goes by without funding traffic calming, it will be more difficult to get it approved in future years.

Why you should approve funding for the Strawberry Hill Avenue Traffic Calming item:

1. There has been a lot of talk about there being more to traffic calming than speed humps. I challenge you to prove it by funding an engineering design for traffic calming projects other than speed humps.
2. A completed study and design will increase the chances of securing grant funding for the construction phase. With the anticipated new position of Grants Coordinator, this is an ideal time to fund the design. The Public Works documentation states as the implications of not funding this item as, "Federal funds often become available for projects that are designed and ready to bid. By having a design, we may have the opportunity to secure construction funds that are fully reimbursable". Additionally, I suggest that one of the grants sought be through the Safe Routes to School program. Some of the identified improvements could also be funded in fiscally manageable phases in future capital budget allocations.
3. There are 3 schools located on Strawberry Hill Avenue – Norwalk High School, Naramake Elementary School and Nathan Hale Middle School. The large number of children and their safety needs make this street a priority for traffic calming.
4. Strawberry Hill Avenue, even with the addition striping and signage, remains a road where drivers routinely speed. Various other recommendations and plans are underway to add traffic improvements to Strawberry Hill Avenue. Until a traffic calming study has been done for the entire road, it could be a waste of money to fund band-aid or hodge-podge improvements. The design needs to include school zones and to follow standards of 'Safe Routes to School'. It also needs to find effective ways to slow traffic during the night and during non-school hours.
5. Recent events make the need clear. For several years the ENNA has heard complaints from residents living on Strawberry Hill Avenue, and its adjoining streets, about speeding and dangerous driving on Strawberry Hill Avenue. As a result, the ENNA held a public Traffic Safety Forum for Strawberry Hill Avenue on March 8 of this year with the Mayor, Police Chief, Public Works Director and Public Works Traffic Engineer on the panel to present information and answer questions. Residents came out in the dozens to voice their frustration at the unresolved traffic safety problems. The ENNA had a petition available for signatures that asked for additional traffic improvements on Strawberry Hill Avenue. Without any door-to-door circulation, or other method of gaining additional signatures, we easily obtained a couple of dozen signatures. A head-on collision, clearly the result of speeding, occurred late in the evening on Strawberry Hill Avenue in

the middle of Slow Down Days week. The accident, fortunately with no deaths or serious injury, made our point.

6. Education and enforcement are an important part of traffic calming but don't work on everyone and aren't in place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Engineering, especially on a street such as Strawberry Hill Avenue, with its three schools and topography that encourages speeding, is badly needed. Once the traffic calming projects are complete at this location, Strawberry Hill Avenue can be a showcase for effective traffic calming strategies – a concrete visible example of what's possible.

Once again, I urge you on behalf of the Board of Directors, and other members of the Eastern Norwalk Neighborhood Association, to approve the full funding of the Strawberry Hill Avenue Traffic Calming item.

Sincerely,
Laurel Lindstrom, President