

May 5, 2009

**SUBJECT: COLLEGE TERRACE TRAFFIC CALMING PROJECT – NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEY**

Dear Resident,

The evaluation of the trial of the College Terrace Traffic Calming project, including assessment of the effectiveness of the traffic calming measures, in terms of traffic safety as well as meeting neighborhood expectations, is now complete. The purpose of this letter is to summarize the results of the trial, present options for moving forward, including a Modified Traffic Calming Plan, and to request your response to a project survey.

Staff has been working closely with the City's transportation consultants, College Terrace Residents' Association (CTRA) Board and the nine member Project Advisory Committee (PAC) of neighborhood residents, to evaluate the existing plan and develop an alternative to the current project that would achieve the same goals for traffic safety and speed and traffic volume reductions, while addressing neighborhood concerns about the existing plan.

**Trial Project Evaluation:** Overall feedback on the speed tables on Stanford Avenue and California Avenue has been very positive. These measures are recommended for permanent retention. The speeds and traffic volumes have been lowered in the interior/exterior of the neighborhood. Before and after data has shown that overall speeds in the neighborhood have been reduced by 10% and cut through traffic has been reduced by more than 1100 vehicles/day. However, the two traffic circles on upper College Avenue are generating incremental safety issues for drivers, pedestrians and bicyclists. The most common concerns expressed by residents are the uncertainty about right-of-way for vehicles traveling around the circles and cars encroaching into the pedestrian crosswalks as they try to maneuver around the circle. Other concerns with the circles are reduced visibility at night, unsafe vehicle speeds and cars taking short-cuts by using the wrong lane of traffic. A summary of the completed technical evaluation and speed and volume data is posted on the project website (see website address on reverse side).

**“Modified Plan” endorsed by the PAC and CTRA Board:** After hearing all the comments and concerns from the neighborhood about the traffic calming measures in the interior of the neighborhood, City staff, Project Advisory Committee and the engineering consultants have developed a modification to the current plan that we feel will address most of the neighborhood's concern about the current plan while achieving the same traffic safety and traffic calming goals of the trial project. The elements of the Modified Plan (as depicted on Exhibit A) are:

- Retain existing speed tables on Stanford Avenue and California Avenue.
- Remove existing traffic circles at Columbia and Oberlin.
- Install small center median islands with stop signs on College at Columbia, Hanover and Oberlin.
- Install 4 speed humps to control speeds on College (see map on Exhibit A for general locations)
- Keep the traffic circles on Yale at College and Cambridge and add curb extensions to approaches.
- Add a new speed table on upper California Avenue.

**Description of “Modified Plan”:** The traffic circles on College at Columbia and Oberlin will be removed and replaced with center median islands. These islands will be placed at the intersections of Oberlin, Columbia and Hanover (where the traffic circle was removed and replaced with a 4-way stop sign last August) and will help to slow down cars that are turning left onto College and keep vehicles in the correct lane. The median islands will also enhance the visibility of the stop signs on College Avenue, as well as provide a refuge for pedestrians crossing the street.

Four new speed humps will be placed roughly half way between stop signs on College Avenue in areas that affect the greatest volume of cut-through traffic. The primary purpose of speed humps is to reduce travel speeds to approximately 25 mph between the humps and 15 mph at the humps.

The Modified Plan retains the two traffic circles on Yale at Cambridge and College. These circles have resulted in a significant decrease in both speed and volumes and the residents in this area have been very supportive of keeping these circles as part of the plan. These circles would be further enhanced by adding curb extensions on the east and westbound approaches. The curb extensions would slow down cars as they maneuver around the circle and will also prevent cars from driving straight through.

The Modified Plan will keep the well received speed tables on Stanford and California and will add another table on California between Columbia and Dartmouth. The additional table will help slow traffic that is traveling to and from the upper Terrace neighborhood and will also discourage cut through traffic.

In order for the “Modified Plan” option to be approved for a short 6-month trial, it must receive a “yes” vote from a majority (50+) percent of survey respondents. If supported by the neighborhood survey, this plan could be implemented in conjunction with the street resurfacing project later this summer. The trial would end in the first quarter of 2010.

**Postcard Survey:** Enclosed with this letter is a postcard survey for each resident to vote on whether they (1) support the permanent retention of the speed tables on Stanford Avenue and California Avenue, (2) support the Modified Plan for a new 6-month trial, or (3) support complete retention or removal of the existing traffic calming measures in the interior of the neighborhood. If the neighborhood supports the Modified Plan with the new traffic calming features, staff will work with the neighborhood to expeditiously evaluate the results of the trial after 6 months. Residents will also be asked to vote for the permanent retention or permanent removal of the Modified Plan existing traffic calming devices at that time.

Please take some time to read the enclosed materials and ***fill out the enclosed survey card and mail it no later than May 29, 2009.*** Please note that only one survey card per household is permitted. ***It is very important that as many College Terrace Neighborhood households as possible participate in the survey.***

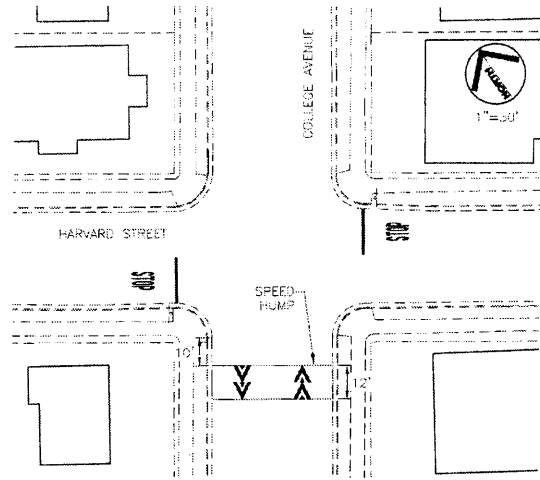
**Next Steps:** Transportation staff will present ballot results and staff recommendation at a public hearing by the Planning and Transportation Commission. The Commission’s recommendations will be considered by City Council (date to be determined). If Council approves, installation/removal of the approved trial measures would take place late summer 2009 as part of Public Work’s College Terrace paving project.

Additional detailed information on the history and background of the project can be found at the project website: [http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/knowzone/city\\_projects/transportation/college\\_terrace.asp](http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/knowzone/city_projects/transportation/college_terrace.asp). If you have any questions please email me at [Shahla.yazdy@cityofpaloalto.org](mailto:Shahla.yazdy@cityofpaloalto.org) or call me at (650) 617-3151.

Shahla Yazdy  
Transportation Engineer

## Description of traffic calming measures in “Modified Plan”

Speed Humps – Speed humps are proposed along College Avenue to replace the circles at Oberlin, Hanover, and Columbia. The humps would primarily be installed to create a deterrent to cut through traffic since most drivers travel at or near the posted speed limit in this area. Four humps would replace three circles and would be located on College Avenue just west of Wellesley, Princeton, Harvard, and Dartmouth. These locations represent roughly half the distance between the adjacent stop signs on College Avenue. Speed humps are not the same as speed tables. They are 12 feet across and 3 inches tall. Their design is slightly more abrupt than a speed table and therefore vehicles must slow down more when traveling over the feature.

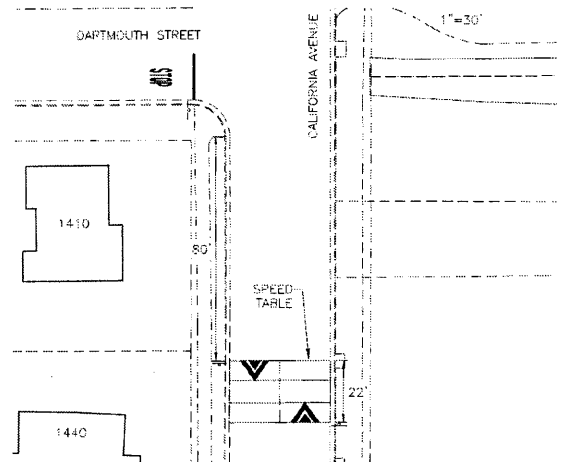


Speed humps are placed roughly half way between stop signs on College Avenue in areas that affect the greatest volume of cut-through traffic. They are near the intersections but not at the corners; similar to the placement of some speed tables on Stanford Avenue. Speed humps are formed by a gradual rise and fall in the pavement surface, usually with a parabolic profile, to a maximum height of three inches. They extend over a distance of 12 feet in the direction of travel.

The primary purpose of speed humps is to reduce travel speeds to 15 mph at the humps on neighborhood streets, which is posted as the advisory speed. The speed humps will not be placed directly in front of driveways and they do not affect parking spaces. Existing speeds of 32 mph could potentially be reduced to about 26-29 mph along the street and about 15 mph at the two humps.

Local examples of speed humps in Palo Alto are on Cowper Street and Ross Road south of Oregon Expressway, Marion, and Colorado Avenue, east of Cowper Street and on Lincoln Avenue between Fulton and Channing.

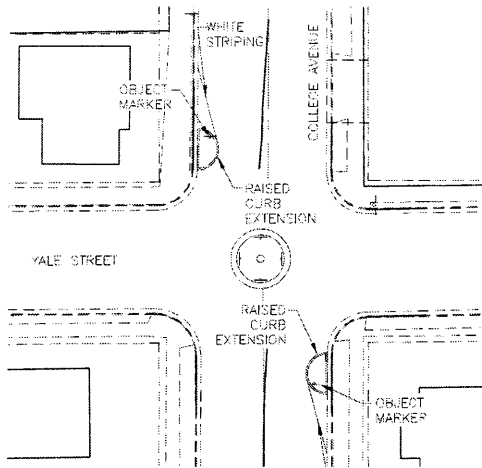
Speed Table – A new speed table is proposed on California Avenue between Dartmouth and Columbia. The table would be the same design as the speed tables previously installed on Stanford Avenue. The table would be 22 feet across the crown of the feature and 3 inches tall. The table is intended to help slow traffic that is traveling to and from the Upper Terrace of the neighborhood and discourage cut through traffic.



Curb Extensions at Circles – The traffic circles on Yale have been very successful in reducing speed by 4% and volume by 60%. In order to enhance the effectiveness, rather than removing the two traffic circles, it is proposed that curb extensions be added to the features.

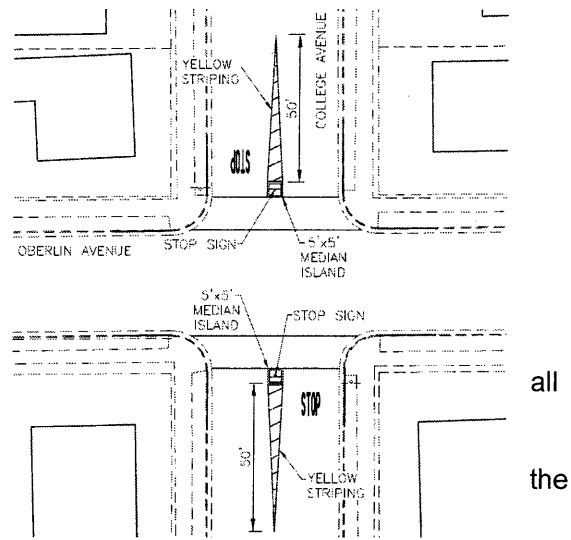
The curb extensions would slow down cars as they maneuver around the circle and will also prevent cars from driving straight through.

The extensions will be located on the free flow approaches to the circles in what is currently striped as a no-parking zone; therefore no additional parking spaces will be removed. The features will be semi-circular in shape and extend from the curb roughly the width of a parked car. This physically prevents vehicles from parking too close to the circle where they may interfere with sight distances or the movement of large trucks and emergency vehicles through the intersection. They also keep vehicles from driving along the gutter to avoid having to slow down around the traffic circle. It should be noted that at the Yale/Cambridge circle, a curb extension is only needed in the southbound direction. Northbound traffic is unable to drive in the gutter to avoid slowing in this direction.



Curb extensions are placed on the inbound approach to the intersections with circles where greater speed reduction is desired. They would have the same width as a parallel parking space. Curb extensions are not attached to the curb, a gap remains between the curb line and the new island in order to maintain gutter flow. The curbs are mountable by fire trucks.

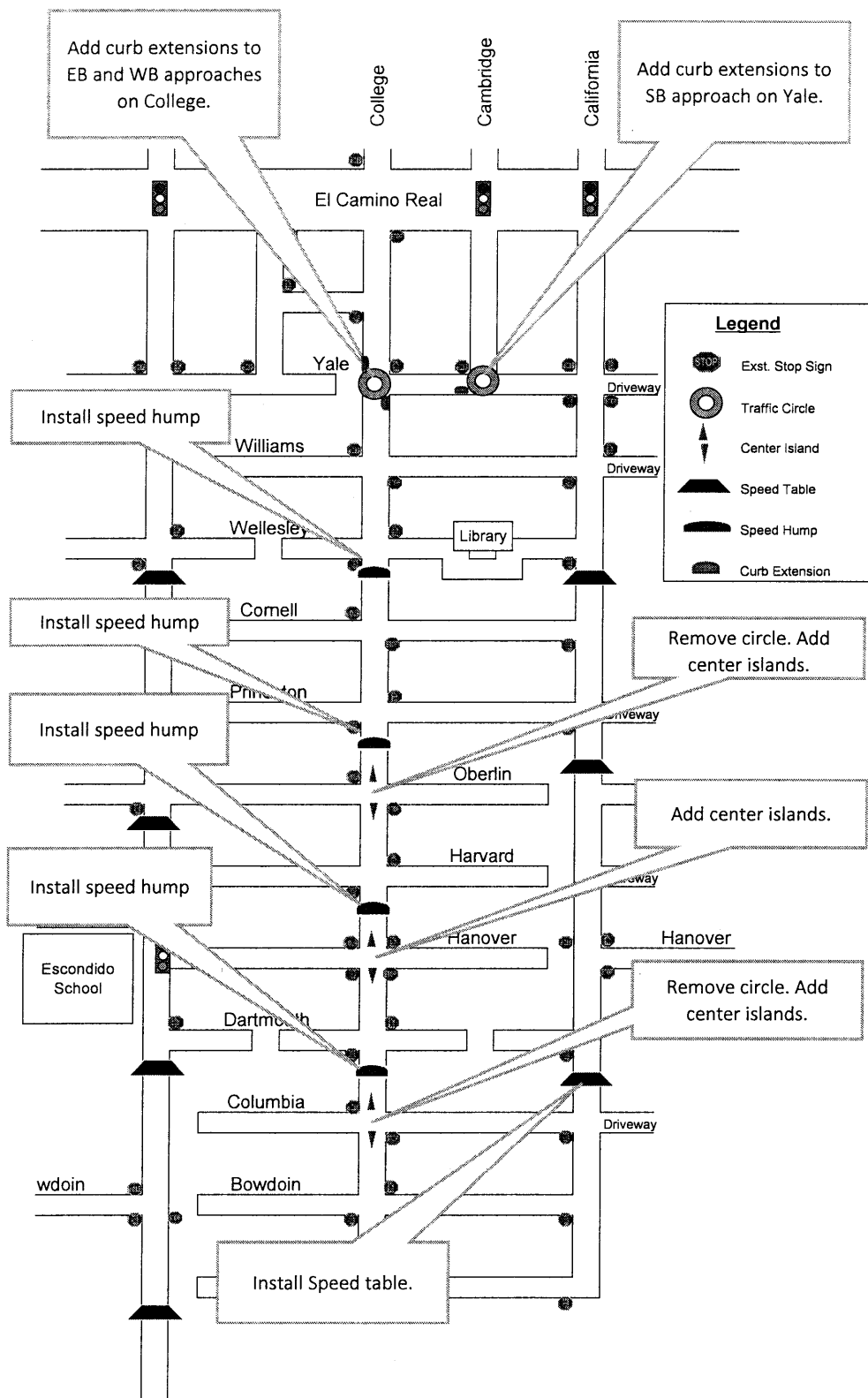
Median Islands – Median islands are proposed to be located on College Avenue at the intersections at Oberlin, Hanover, and Columbia. The islands would be installed along the centerline of the street behind the striped (or implied) cross walk. Two islands would be installed at each location. They would be roughly 5 feet square with striping to direct traffic to drive around the feature and would be small enough to avoid interfering with access to residential driveways. The medians will reinforce to drivers on College Avenue that they must stop at the intersection, as well as provide a refuge for pedestrians crossing the street. At these locations, not side street traffic is required to stop and frequently speeds from the cross street onto College Avenue while cutting the corner and sometimes temporarily traveling in opposing travel lane. The islands will cause traffic to slow down as they make the turn and keep them in the correct travel lane. This will particularly improve the safety of pedestrians and cyclists crossing the street. It will also act as an additional deterrent to cut through traffic.



Local examples of median islands can be found on Maybell Boulevard at Amaranta and Coulombe (by Juana Briones School), on Channing at Alester (by Duveneck School) and on West Meadow at Wilkie Way.

EXHIBIT A

College Terrace Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan  
"Modified Plan"



# College Terrace Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan

## Existing Traffic Calming Measures

