TO:    HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER        DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND
                  COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

DATE:    FEBRUARY 19, 2002  CMR:147:02

SUBJECT: NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM

This is an informational report and no Council action is required.

BACKGROUND
The purpose of this report is to update Council on the status of the City’s Neighborhood
Traffic Calming program procedures for which were adopted by Council on April 9, 2001 (CMR: 187:01). These procedures set forth qualifying and ranking
criteria for prospective traffic calming projects on one or two local or collector streets. Palo
Alto’s arterial streets and expressways are excluded from consideration from this program.
Staff informally refers to this initiative as “spot treatment” traffic calming. “Spot
treatments” involve limited use of measures such as speed humps and cushions, bulb-outs,
and diverters. The Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program (NTCP) booklet contains full
details on qualifying and ranking criteria, as well as descriptions of representative traffic
calming measures. Council has funded this program at $100,000 per year under the Capital
Improvement Program (CIP  project #19073).

DISCUSSION
Since approval of the program, nine petitions have been received, each representing at least
25 percent of the households on the street or street section nominated. Of these, six have
qualified for a traffic calming study; data is being collected for two to determine if they
qualify for a traffic calming study; and one has been deemed not to qualify for
consideration. Residents on twelve additional streets have contacted staff about the program
and have indicated interest in circulating petitions of support. A full list of requests by street
or street section is shown on Attachment A.

Council did not adopt the formal procedures for traffic calming on an area-wide basis that
staff proposed on April 9, 2001. These wider-area efforts are presently undertaken, as in the
past—Evergreen Park and the first College Terrace traffic calming projects being two
examples—on an ad hoc basis and funded from a variety of sources: developer contribution
(Downtown North traffic calming study), City of Palo Alto General Fund (Downtown North
traffic calming trial implementation), and Stanford University contribution (College Terrace Traffic calming study). In April, staff will prepare an information report updating Council on area-wide traffic calming efforts underway. The following month, staff will return to Council with another proposal for area-wide traffic calming procedures.

Of the six projects that have qualified to date, four projects are in progress:

1) Churchill Avenue between Embarcadero Road and Alma Street—Churchill Avenue is a collector and one of the few Caltrain grade crossings; thus it presents a difficult setting. Average weekday traffic volume of about 4,000 vehicles each weekday is the primary concern of petitioners; 85th percentile speeds of about 30 mph (25 mph is the posted speed limit) is an additional concern. Work to-date includes collection and evaluation of license plate survey data on local and through trips, as well as traffic count and vehicle speeds data. Alternative schemes for volume and speed control are now being considered by the neighborhood working group, in conjunction with Transportation Division staff. This project is currently at Step 4 of the traffic calming program procedure (refer to Chapter III of the NTCP booklet for full detail on program procedure).

2) Louis Road between East Meadow Drive and Charleston Road—Louis Road is also a collector. Vehicle speed is the predominant issue for petitioners on this street. Work to-date includes a demonstration of speed cushions (a narrowed version of the speed hump which can be straddled by fire trucks but not by automobiles—see Attachment B) that has been received favorably by residents, the Fire Department, the Palo Alto Bicycle Advisory Committee. A traffic calming plan has been created that includes speed cushions at five locations between Charleston and East Meadow, a reduced curb radius on the northeast corner of the Louis/Charleston intersection, and a raised concrete centerline divider on the north leg of that intersection. This plan won the support of thirty-six of forty-four households (82 percent) who voted by mail-in postcard. On January 30, the Planning and Transportation Commission voted to recommend to the Director of Planning and Community Environment a four-month trial of this traffic calming program. Evaluation of the trial will be undertaken by analysis of before and after data (speeds, volumes, and accidents), City staff evaluations (Fire, Police, and the Transportation Division staff), and residents advisory committee input. Should the trial be judged to be successful, another residents mail-in ballot will take place on making the program permanent. This project is currently at Step 8 of the program procedure.

3) Ross Road between Colorado and Loma Verde Avenues—Ross Road is a local street. Cut-through traffic and vehicle speeds are the issues of concern to petitioners. The resident working group and staff have agreed to implement a four-month trial traffic calming program consisting of enhanced enforcement, along with traffic safety
education for Ross Road. Specific elements of this effort will include increased traffic police patrol, deployment of neighborhood volunteer “pace cars” that will always drive at or below the speed limit, resident use of radar speed guns to document incidents of speeding, along with publicity about these measures. No formal Planning and Transportation Commission or Council review of this trial is required since Ross is a collector street, no City traffic calming funds are being expended, and there is no proposed change to the street section itself. Evaluation of the trial will be undertaken by analysis of before and after data (speeds, volumes, and accidents), City staff evaluations (Fire, Police, and the Transportation Division staff), and residents working group input. Should the trial be judged successful, a residents’ mail-in ballot will determine if this project should be continued in some variation. If not, the working group and staff will begin working on a program of physical measures. This project is at Step 8 of the program procedure.

4) Indian Drive and Moreno Avenue (Moreno to Greer Road; Indian to Oregon Expressway)—These are local streets. The issue for petitioners on each (they intersect) is vehicle speed and cut-through traffic. At its initial meeting, the residents advisory committee and staff developed a preliminary plan in two phases. The first phase would be implemented and evaluated for results prior to initiation of phase two. The first phase would include deployment of a series of speed cushions and extended curbing at two corners of one intersection to create a “slow point”. Phase two, which would only be initiated should phase one be deemed unsuccessful, would comprise a left turn restriction from Oregon Expressway. Implementing such a restriction would require consultation with Santa Clara County Staff. City staff is presently refining the phase I plan. This project is at Step 4 of the program procedure.

Two additional projects are awaiting initiation. Both have had petitions circulated and submitted, all relevant data has been collected and evaluated on each, and each has been deemed to qualify for the Neighborhood Traffic Calming program.

5) Moreno Avenue between Middlefield and Ross Roads—Moreno, which has a higher-ranking score than Waverley Street, is scheduled to begin by late February.

6) Waverley Street between East Meadow Drive and El Verano Avenue—Waverley Street will start upon initiation of the trial projects on Louis Road and/or Churchill Avenue.
Other Projects Include:

7) Santa Catalina Street (a cul-de-sac off Oregon Expressway)—This is a non-qualifying request. Santa Catalina was determined to be a low-speed, low-volume street without any vehicle crashes within the past three years and not in proximity to a major pedestrian trip generator, thus it did not meet qualifying criteria for the NTCP.

Streets for which a Petition has been Submitted and Data Collection is Underway:

8) Matadero Avenue between Laguna Avenue and Tippawingo Drive
9) Matadero Avenue between El Camino Real and Josina Avenue

Streets on Which Initial Request has been made and Petitions are being Awaited:

10) North California Avenue
11) Center Drive
12) Loma Verde Avenue
13) Miranda Avenue
14) Laura Glen and Alexis Dives.
15) Newell Road
16) Kendall and La Donna Avenues
17) West Bayshore Road between Amarillo Avenue and Chabot Terrace
18) Amaranta Avenue
19) Pepper Avenue
20) Briarwood to Scripps Nelson
21) Cowper (between Embarcadero and past Seele)

Program Evaluation
In late spring Staff will report first to the Planning and Transportation Commission, then to Council on the results of the first year of the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program and recommendations for Program revision.

ATTACHMENTS
A. Table of Traffic Calming Requests
B. Speed Cushion Photo