CITY OF CHOWCHILLA CALIFORNIA

STOP SIGN, SPEED HUMP AND CROSSWALK

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why don't they put in more stop signs?

A: A stop sign is one of our most valuable and effective control devices when used at the right place and under the right conditions. It is intended to help drivers and pedestrians at an intersection decide who has the right-of-way.

The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) is a set of well-developed, federal and state recognized guidelines that help to indicate when such controls become necessary. These guidelines take into consideration, among other things, the probability of vehicles arriving at an intersection at the same time, the length of time traffic must wait to enter, traffic delays, and the availability of safe crossing opportunities.

Public understanding of the function of stop signs is one of the most critical elements in reducing speeding and traffic accidents. The following information explains the City of Chowchilla policy on intersection traffic controls and the correct use of stop signs:

Q: What is the purpose of a stop sign?

A: The stop sign is used to assign right of way at an intersection and to make sure that traffic flows smoothly and predictably.

Q: Will a stop sign reduce speeding in my neighborhood?

A: Because a stop sign is used to assign right of way at an intersection, it is not an effective means to control speeding. Research shows that where stop signs are installed as "deterrents" or "speed breakers," there are high incidences of intentional violations resulting in accidents.

When vehicles must stop, the speed reduction is only near the stop sign, and drivers tend to speed up between stop sign controlled intersections. When not required to stop

by cross street traffic, only 5 to 20% of all drivers come to a complete stop, 40 to 60% will come to a rolling stop below 5 mph, and 20 to 40% will pass through at higher speeds. Signs placed on major and collector streets for the purpose of speed reduction are the most flagrantly violated.

Stop signs are not warranted in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) as an effective measure to reduce speeding.

Q: Will increasing the use of stop signs in my neighborhood, better control traffic?

A: As with any traffic control device, overuse of stop signs will cause many drivers to ignore them, creating a more hazardous situation, especially in low volume areas, such as residential neighborhoods.

Because a stop sign causes a substantial inconvenience to motorists, it should be used only where needed. Studies have shown that, sometimes, after installing a stop sign there is an increase in rearend collisions. Also, the stop sign may cause such an inconvenience that traffic detours through residential streets, parking lots, etc.

A little known fact is that the "stop and go traffic" resulting from the placement of stop signs will increase carbon dioxide emissions, thereby further impacting the air quality in your area. There is a noticeable noise increase in the vicinity of an intersection from acceleration and braking. Additionally, deceleration, idling, and acceleration of vehicles increases fuel consumption.

Q: How can I get a stop sign on my street?

A: The City's Police, Fire, Engineering, and Public Works Departments employs a consultant to evaluate intersections of concern, following State and Federal guidelines, to ensure uniformity in traffic control. The survey includes reviewing the following criteria outlined in the MUTCD:

- Vehicle and pedestrian volumes
- Traffic speeds
- Visibility (sight distance) at the intersection, i.e., trees, shrubbery, hills, and curves
- Accident history

Experience has shown that improving the intersection visibility by prohibiting parking near the intersection or removing other sight distance obstructions, is often more effective in reducing traffic accidents.

Q: What are the uses for multi-way and two-way stop signs?

A: Ordinarily, a multi-way stop sign should be used only where the volume of traffic is nearly equal on both intersecting roads. In situations where the volume is extremely heavy, a roundabout or traffic light is more effective. Also, a multi-way stop sign is often used at an intersection where signals are urgently needed, but have not yet been installed. The multi-way sign can be installed quickly to control traffic while arrangements are being made for the signal installations.

Two-way stop control is used in areas where one street has a much higher traffic volume than the street it intersects. A two-way stop may be suitable under the following circumstances:

- Where one street is a major street
- Where sight distances approaching the intersection are substandard and traffic approaching under the general rules for uncontrolled intersections would run a strong risk of being involved in collisions
- Where a crash pattern exists that could be corrected by right-of-way controls, yet conditions do not require traffic on both streets to stop.

Q: Can the City lower the speed limit?

A: In California, speed limits are governed by the California Vehicle Code (CVC) 22348 through 22413. The CVC allows local authorities to set speed limits between 25 mph and 55 mph on the basis of an engineering and traffic survey. The engineering and traffic survey determines the 85th percentile speed which is defined as the speed at or below which 85 percent of traffic is moving. Speed limits established on this basis conform to the consensus of those who drive on the roadways as to what speed is reasonable and safe, and are not dependent on the judgment of one or a few individuals.

Some widely held misconceptions are that a lowered speed limit reduces vehicle speed, minimizes accidents and increases safety. Before and after studies have shown that there are no significant changes in average speeds after new or revised speed limit signs have been posted. Research has also found no direct relationship between posted speed limits and accident frequency.

Posted speed limits which are not based on actual driving behavior encourage intentional violations, do not reduce vehicle speed, and are not enforceable when challenged in court.

Q: What are speed humps and can the City install them on my street?

A: A speed hump is a rounded device used to reduce vehicle speed and volume on residential streets. Speed humps are placed across the road to slow traffic and are often

installed in a series of several humps in order to prevent cars from speeding before and after the hump.

The City of Chowchilla does not have a speed hump program; residents may still have speed humps installed on their streets, provided they meet the City's speed hump requirements **AND** can provide a funding source. It should be noted and understood that there are many disadvantages to the installation of speed humps such as speeding after and between speed humps, increased noise from vehicles with poor suspension going over speed humps and items bouncing around truck beds and trunks, increased physical pain for passengers with medical problems, increased pollution from vehicles slowing and accelerating, reduction in emergency response times and ambulances carrying passengers must slow to almost a stop before crossing a speed hump.

Q: Can we have a crosswalk installed?

A: California Vehicle Code 275 defines crosswalk as, (a) That portion of a roadway included within the prolongation or connection of the boundary lines of sidewalks at intersection where the intersecting roadways meet at approximately right angles, except the prolongation of such lines from an alley across a street. (b) Any portion of a roadway distinctly indicated for pedestrian crossing by lines or other markings on the surface. Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this section, there shall not be a crosswalk where local authorities have placed signs indicating no crossing.

The purpose of a "marked" crosswalk is to encourage pedestrians to use a particular crossing. National studies have shown that marked crosswalks can actually increase the risk to pedestrians crossing the street. In these studies, it was found that pedestrians are given a false sense of security at "marked" crosswalks, and tend to blindly cross the street, trusting the crosswalk to keep them out of harm's way. As such, it is important that pedestrians remain attentive and cautious of on-coming vehicles on a roadway before crossing a street, regardless of the presence, or lack of, a crosswalk. California Vehicle Code 21950(b) section states that this does not relieve a pedestrian from the duty of using due care for his or her safety. No pedestrian may suddenly leave a curb or other place of safety and walk or run into the path of a vehicle that is so close as to constitute an immediate hazard. No pedestrian may unnecessarily stop or delay traffic while in a marked or unmarked crosswalk.