

# Traffic Control or Traffic Calming?

Differences in goals and processes

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## Traffic Control or Traffic Calming?

- Traffic Control
  - Intended to assign right-of-way in otherwise confusing circumstances
  - In absence of signals or signs, right-of-way is assigned by statutory rules of the road
- Traffic Calming
  - Intended to modify driver behaviors with the result of slowing vehicles or decreasing cut-through traffic

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## Traffic Control

- Traffic Control Devices
  - Traffic Signals
  - Stop Signs
  - Yield Signs
- Application of Devices
  - Warrants for use are in Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which is a national law
  - MUTCD is legally adopted by State of Wisconsin
  - City policy for stop sign study is consistent with laws

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## Traffic Control

- Laws and standards recognize that traffic control devices have negative consequences, and should only be applied where their benefits outweigh their problems
- Traffic control devices should only be applied following an engineering study
- Extensive research and continuing study support the conclusion that the warrants in the MUTCD are in the best public interest

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## Traffic Control

- Negative consequences of traffic control devices include:
  - Increased crashes
  - Increased delay
  - Increased fuel consumption
  - Increased noise from deceleration and acceleration
  - Increased vehicle emissions

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## Stop Signs

- Stop signs are a valuable and effective traffic control device when used under the right conditions
- When stop signs are applied without warrant:
  - Drivers often don't stop completely, perceiving that the sign isn't necessary
  - Intersections can actually be made less safe as drivers train themselves not to stop for certain stop signs
  - Drivers often increase their speed to make up for lost time if they feel they have been unnecessarily delayed
  - Even though the original problems aren't addressed, police are tasked with trying to enforce the stop sign

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## Unwarranted Stop Signs

- Most drivers are reasonable and prudent
- When faced with a perceived unreasonable restriction, flagrant violations have been observed
- Unwarranted stop signs can lead to driver contempt at the same time they contribute to a sense of safety for pedestrians
- These two conflicting attitudes can lead to tragic consequences

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## Traffic Calming

- Research overwhelmingly shows that stop signs do not control speeds
- In many circumstances, other measures are needed to maintain safety
  - Parking restrictions
  - Tree and shrub trimming
  - Speed enforcement
  - Pavement markings
  - Traffic calming measures

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## Traffic Calming

- Traffic calming devices may be installed as part of the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP)
- Information on the NTMP is available on the City of Middleton web site

[www.ci.middleton.wi.us](http://www.ci.middleton.wi.us)

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## Traffic Control or Traffic Calming?

- To help determine which solution might best address your concern, contact the City Engineer:

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