

# WESTCOG TRAFFIC CALMING & COMPLETE STREETS TOOLBOX

## Project Advisory Committee Kickoff Meeting Notes

December 10, 2024 2:00-3:00PM ET

**Virtual Link:** Microsoft Teams - [Join the meeting now](#)

**Meeting ID:** 245 293 326 464

**Passcode:** Lf7yX7rg

PAC Members		
Municipality	Name	Agency/Title - Notes
Brookfield	Greg Dembowski	Economic Development
Danbury	Veera Karukonda	City Traffic Engineer
Norwalk	Garrett Bolella	Assistant Director, Traffic and Parking
Redding	James Gracy	Director of Public Works
CT Dept. of Transp.	Kevin Tedesco	Intergovernmental Affairs
CT Dept. of Transp.	Jane Dunbar	Intergovernmental Affairs
WestCOG	Mike Wilson	(Project Team)
Toole Design	Carrie Long	(Project Team)
Toole Design	Shawna Kitzman	(Project Team)

### 1. Welcome and Introductions

- Mike Wilson kicked off the project meeting with welcoming remarks and briefly introduced the project, overall, as well as the Project Advisory Committee (PAC). Carrie followed up with an introductory slide that included an icebreaker activity: Participants shared their favorite memory or form of transportation when they were younger (e.g., *Thinking back to your younger — i.e., middle school-aged — days, what is your favorite memory of getting around?*). Participants shared their unique experiences, and notably most of the PAC discussed biking to school or around town.
- Carrie Long reviewed the agenda for the meeting.

### 2. Project Background, Goals, and Objectives

- Carrie provided a “Traffic Calming 101” introduction to the definition of traffic calming and typical approaches. This included a discussion of the relationship between speed and safety, noting that 25% of fatal crashes in Connecticut involved excessive speed, with the majority (60%) occurring on local neighborhood streets with posted speeds below 40MPH. Key concepts discussed:
  - **Speeds:** *Posted Speed* (the speed limit) vs. *Design Speed* (e.g., the speed to which the roadway features are designed) vs. *Operating Speed* (the observed speed of people driving on the roadway), and the importance of designing a street for the posted speed. In short, traffic calming is a retroactive approach to match the natural operating speed to the posted or desired speed.

- **Transition Zones and Gateways:** *Transition zones* refer to the use of warning devices and other strategies to alert drivers to an upcoming area (e.g., approaching a community center or Main Street). These devices help gradually reduce traffic to a desired operating speed as it approaches the area/community. *Gateways* refer to the physical or visual element that marks where the new operating speed is in effect and alerts travelers to the new environment and context. Gateways can be focused on traffic devices, or can be more art/sculptural, designed to reflect the community's character.
- **Traffic Calming Elements**, such as horizontal deflection (e.g., traffic circles), vertical deflection (e.g., speed humps), physical obstructions (e.g., diverters), and lane narrowing (e.g., adding on-street parking or bike lanes).
- **Principles of Traffic Calming and Resources:** (1) To reduce motorist speed to the desired operating speed as consistently as possible through a corridor, and (2) avoid unintentionally diverting motorists to parallel routes. Examples of materials include FHWA's *Achieving Multimodal Networks*, AASHTO's *Guide for the Development of Bicycle Facilities*, ITE's *Designing Walkable Thoroughfares* and the *Guide to Vertical Deflection Speed Reduction Techniques*, and Design Guides and Manuals from peer regions, states, and cities across the U.S. including Ohio, Pennsylvania, Denver, Montgomery County (MD), and Boston.
- Carrie reviewed the purpose of the toolbox and how this project will provide design principles and strategies for local roads in the WestCOG region.
- **Open Discussion on Project Background, Goals, Objectives**
  - Garrett B. noted in response to traffic calming 101 and the resources listed, that the City of Norwalk recently adopted a complete street ordinance in November and is currently preparing a Design Guide Background and purpose of the project (and Toolbox)
  - Greg D. asked about what may happen or may be feasible on State-owned roadways. Discussed that this is the purpose of the PAC and the project, to engage with the DOT and other agencies on what can be feasible and to reinforce potential solutions.

### 3. Project Tasks and Schedule

- Carrie outlined a high-level task-by-task walkthrough of the project scope, including:
  - Task 1: Project Management and Meetings
  - Task 2: Regional Status Quo
  - Task 3: Best Practices (including emergency response focus groups), and
  - Task 4: Best Practices and Precepts Toolbox
- Carrie and Mike engaged the PAC in a discussion of early tasks and current needs (including a request for data and other information), including **request for standards, documents, or other materials relevant to the project** for inclusion in the Task 2 review, and an **open call for referrals or other recommended contacts for the Task 3 Focus Groups**. PAC members were encouraged to email Mike at [mwilson@westcog.org](mailto:mwilson@westcog.org) with any referrals or materials.

### 4. Role of the Project Advisory Committee (PAC)

- The PAC reviewed the roles and responsibilities of the PAC, including anticipated meetings over the course of the project. Major priorities include providing on-the-ground insight and expertise, reviewing deliverables and content, and to be available for consultation.

### 5. Open Discussion

- **Emergency Response Focus Groups**

- Garrett B. noted that there is an Emergency Services lead that would be a great resource for this project (Michelle DeLuca), will follow up with contact information.
- Discussed engaging LTAs within the focus group as one option.
- Members of the PAC discussed the current engagement with Fire Chiefs/Marshalls on roadway design (e.g., turning radii, curb cuts, etc.)
- **Other Comments on Project Tasks and Approach**
  - Shawna K. discussed the importance of including more perspectives as much as possible, specifically highlighting aging adults/independent living centers, children/schools, and transit operators.
  - Discussed if the team determined a preferred approach or design of the toolbox (e.g., interactive, printed, online, etc.).
  - Emphasized value of using the toolbox to support shovel-ready projects (e.g., projects frequently get stuck at the design phase and determining the right design approach. Noted comfort using concepts that have been implemented and proven in neighboring municipalities — such as raised crosswalks, curb extensions, green infrastructure. Noted some challenges navigating the drainage considerations with curb extension as there are limited standards and details available at the municipal level.
- **Additional Notes (Opportunities or Challenges)**
  - Traffic calming throughout the City/Region will be interesting to contend with the width (excessive space)
  - Population growth in Brookfield leading to increased congestion on secondary roadways. Noted that this congestion is despite travel pattern changes with increased working from home. Discussed opportunities to align efforts with a conservation plan update (in progress, first public workshop recently completed).
  - WestCOG referenced a regional safety plan that was completed a few years ago, which led to an SS4A application (across all 18 municipalities). This project will feature a similar PAC advisory committee, and may be opportunity to cross-reference the efforts of both PACs. Suggested we identify which municipalities have done Safety Action Plans or are interested in doing them (e.g., planning, programming, or infrastructure adjustments).
  - HART transit identified as a key stakeholder and referenced prior efforts that engaged HART with preliminary design for bus shelters and facilities that interact with the bus stops/network.
  - Discussed the considerations related to Highly Automated Vehicles (HAVs) and other emerging technologies. Carrie noted that effective and well-maintained traffic devices are a critical element for enabling physical-digital infrastructure readiness for connected and automated vehicles, and that the designs can incorporate these discussions.

## 6. Next Steps

- Request for any projects or opportunities that may be aligned with the Toolbox
- Request for referrals or recommendations for emergency responder focus group participants
  - Garrett B. to share information for Michelle DeLuca
- Request for recommendations for PAC Membership is open
  - Veera to share information for planning colleagues

**Next PAC Meeting:** Meeting #2 will focus on a review of research tasks and deliverables, anticipated to occur in late **February 2025**.