

Drive 25 Frequently Asked Questions

This process is far more involved and complicated than any of us had imagined, and we have learned a great deal along the way. We appreciate your patience. Below are some frequently asked questions about traffic calming. If after reading these FAQs you have further input or questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to us at dullesfarmstrafficalming@gmail.com.

FAQs:

General Traffic Calming Questions

Why is this taking so long? When will it be done?

There is a great deal of bureaucratic formality and many steps to the process, and each one involves scheduling challenges as it is a large undertaking involving many parties. We are moving through this process as efficiently as we can. We will know by Mid-October if the plans are approved, at which point the Board of Supervisors will need to approve funding prior to installation of any measures by VDOT. We are confident that the BOS will be supportive of funding measures desired by the community. After funding is approved, our neighborhood will be in VDOT's 'queue' for installation.

What is the difference between a speed hump and speed bump?

Speed bumps are much shorter and thus less gentle, requiring a very drastic reduction in speed to traverse (ex: Gum Spring Library parking lot.) Speed bumps are NOT in consideration for Virginia Manor. Speed humps are wider than bumps, inclining at a lower angle, and are half the height. Thus, they cause drivers to slow down rather than stopping completely like speed bumps do. Speed Humps are much wider and more gradual. They are accompanied by a 15MPH sign and require a less drastic reduction in speed to traverse. They are designed to be safely taken at the posted speed limit. While they are a divisive issue, *studies show that they are the most effective common traffic calming measure, reducing speeds 8-10mph on average.* Several speed humps and a raised crosswalk ARE included in the plan to address speeding, increase pedestrian safety, and deter cut through traffic in Dulles Farms.

Wouldn't speed humps be problematic for first responders and snow removal?

We recently reached out to the Loudoun County Sheriff's Office to inquire about police/fire/rescue opinions regarding the cost/benefits of speed humps as a potential traffic calming measure. Their response was that "The LCSO will get to calls for service with care and urgency regardless of road conditions or speed mitigation devices," and they "do not discourage neighborhoods from installing speed humps." Snow removal of VDOT roads is completed by VDOT. They install and maintain humps on these roads and thus are responsible for and capable of navigating snow removal for humps.

There are costs and benefits to any undertaking, and all parties involved are weighing them carefully, as we know Dulles Farms residents will when eventually filling in their ballots on the traffic calming plan. *We believe the possibilities of preventing tragic accidents- particularly by our bus stops and tot lots- as well as a reduction in cars using our streets as bypasses, make humps worthy of our community's careful consideration.*

I hate speed humps. Why can't we simply put in more stop signs?

Stop signs have recently been eliminated by VDOT as traffic calming measures. Numerous studies have found that drivers are far less likely to obey stop signs they see as unnecessary, which creates a dangerous scenario for pedestrians or other vehicles who assume a car will stop when they in fact will roll through it instead. The installation of stop signs on VDOT roads thus have very different, stringent requirements now.

The Ashburn Farms community proved to be an illuminating example of why VDOT does not include stop signs as traffic calming due to safety concerns. They have been through the traffic calming process twice- once in 2014 which resulted in additional stop signs, and then they had to go through the process in its entirety again in 2018 to replace added stop signs with a hump when the stop signs proved problematic/ineffective for those residents.

If not stop signs, why not just pole mounted speed displays instead of humps?

Pole Mounted Speed Displays (PMSD) are useful in some scenarios, but because of their flashing lights must not be placed too close to a residence. They also are ill-advised in certain scenarios where there is a long straightaway and/or hill where they can become what one VDOT official called a 'high score situation,' which has the opposite of its intended effect. There was one suitable location for a PMSD in the Westridge/Stratshire plan, but unfortunately no suitable locations within Virginia Manor's plan.

Why is the approach to humps painted for some of the locations and marked by signs for others?

We would have preferred pavement markings for all of them, but VDOT has very specific rules and guidelines involving the curvature of the street and proximity to intersections that required signs on the approach to most of the humps.

Can I put signs in the road to slow cars down in the meantime?

Please note that 'children playing' signs can be placed by your driveway or mailbox while kids are out playing, but placing them IN the street is NOT actually legal or safe. VDOT has asked us to convey that these signs can and have caused injuries in the past and homeowners who place such signs in the road are liable for those injuries when they occur.

What about crosswalks? We have all these trails and parks and no crosswalks to access them more safely.

The Virginia plan has included a raised crosswalk in a strategic location on Lennox Hale. However, any additional painted crosswalks involve an entirely separate process from this traffic calming endeavor.

Will our HOA have to pay for these measures or their upkeep?

Nope. Any installation of traffic calming measures that are approved/installed will not have any cost to the homeowners and will be maintained by VDOT.

How can I help?

Please spread the word about the plans and ballot process! In the meantime, model safe driving, please continue to be cognizant of your own speed, and put away cell phones while driving.

Stratshire/Westridge Questions

What about Mattingly? Mattingly was created for first responders to enter and exit the community.

Why can't we reduce the speed limit there? We can not reduce the speed more than 10 MPH-per VDOT's rules. Because of the width of the road, it was originally set for 45 MPH. 35 MPH is the most we can reduce the road to.

CHafee Circle is a big issue in terms of parking and visibility at the intersections. What is being done about that? VDOT did review this area and determined that it did not meet the requirements for any traffic calming measures.

Why aren't more measures being installed on the other section of Great Berkhamsted Drive? The traffic count (number of vehicles) or cut thru traffic was insignificant North of Mattingly at the intersection of Great Berkhamsted Drive, thus no traffic measures qualified other than the additional \$200 fine sign applied to the entirety of that street.

Virginia Manor/White Oak Crest Questions

Why isn't Seven Hills and the messy situation in and out of Buffalo Trails addressed in the plan? We tried. Because Seven Hills is a school zone, it is handled by a different department from traffic calming. To our dismay, representatives from this department did not attend our meetings with DTCL, VDOT and representatives from the Board of Supervisors. It was explained to us, however, that the reason there is no light at Gum Springs from Seven Hills is that it would exceed regulations/rules on how many traffic lights can be placed within a certain distance on Gum Springs.

Why is the section by Seven Hills Drive excluded from the ballot process?

We found out when they finalized the plan that homes that have direct access to Gum Springs via Seven Hills Drive will be excluded from the ballot process because they have a close route in and out of the community that has no new measures (humps, pole mounted display, etc.) proposed.

Why isn't Winning Glory in the plan?

Winning Glory was studied 2 times and both times failed to meet the minimum requirements for traffic calming measures. We know that it is a problematic road and pressed for a solution and were at least able to get Watch for Children signs placed in either direction after Seven Hills Drive. We were told that in the future we can request to have it reexamined again if it continues to be problematic.

Why isn't there anything placed further up Lennox Hale?

Much of Lennox Hale has a steep downhill grade. The raised crosswalk in the proposed plan is the earliest we could place a physical barrier on the roadway. If a hump is installed on a hill, it poses particular problems in the winter months because water can collect and create a sheet of ice and thus particularly unsafe conditions. Pole Mounted Speed Displays are also ill-advised on downhill straightaways lest they become 'high score' situations. There will be an additional \$200 fine sign installed on the existing speed limit sign at the entrance to Lennox Hale as a deterrent to speeding down the hill.

Drivers can't really do anything about speeding on a hill anyways, right?

We disagree and find that the brake pedal is very effective. We encourage drivers to use it to traverse Winning Glory and Lennox Hale safely.