

NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC OPERATIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Who has the right-of-way at an intersection?

Under State law, when two vehicles approach an intersection with no stop signs at about the same time, the driver on the left shall always yield to the driver on the right. This is also true for intersections that have a traffic circle or all-way stops.

How do I turn left at a traffic circle?

State Law does not distinguish between a traffic circle and a larger roundabout. Consequently, a driver turning left at a neighborhood traffic circle must proceed counterclockwise around the traffic circle. However, we recognize that there are instances when drivers may need to turn left before a traffic circle, such as when cars park too closely to the right side of a circle or when a driver can't maneuver a larger vehicle around to the right. Turning left in front of a traffic circle in those instances can be safely performed if the driver exercises reasonable care and yields to pedestrians, bicyclists, and oncoming traffic.

What is the purpose of a traffic circle, and how do I get one installed on my street?

Seattle has well over 1,000 neighborhood traffic circles. They are effective at reducing crashes at intersections. They also reduce speeds at the intersection and multiple traffic circles can reduce speeds along the entire street corridor. We receive many requests for traffic circles, although there are funds to install only about 10-15 each year. Traffic circles are prioritized on how many crashes have occurred at the intersection, as well as on the measured speeds and traffic volumes.

A traffic circle near us needs the landscaping maintained, who do we call?

The city does not maintain traffic circle landscaping, but rather by community volunteers. Those volunteers do their best at keeping the landscaping in good condition. However, if you feel a traffic circle is becoming overgrown, or if you are interested in volunteering to help maintain an existing traffic circle call our Urban Forestry Section at 206.684.TREE (8733) and we will try to get in touch with the volunteer and/or include you in our volunteer program.

If you and/or your neighbors want to completely renovate the landscaping in the traffic circle, there are limited funding opportunities through the Department of Neighborhoods at www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/nmf/smallsparks.htm.

Can we install stop signs to slow traffic?

Stop signs are intended to help drivers and pedestrians determine who has the right-of-way at an intersection. Stop signs are installed where crashes or other data show that drivers are not observing the right-of-way rule under State law. Seattle, like many jurisdictions, does not install stop signs to slow traffic. When stop signs are installed as "speed breakers", crashes don't decrease, and sometimes INCREASE.

Wouldn't additional speed limit signs help to slow traffic?

Speed limit signs alone don't necessarily slow traffic. In Seattle, the speed limit on residential streets is 20 mph and 25 mph on arterial streets unless otherwise posted. Drivers are expected to know and obey the speed limit. The City does not install speed limit signs on non-arterial streets. Speed limit signs are installed on arterial streets where the speed limit changes, and at periodic intervals along the street. Learn more about [speed limits in Seattle](#).

What can our neighborhood do about people who speed on our street?

Speeding is a concern for many of our residential neighborhoods, and addressing this concern requires active participation by residents working in a strong partnership with SDOT. Together, we seek ways to influence the generally reasonable driver to travel on your street in a safe and prudent manner. It is always done in a phased approach starting with ensuring that SDOT and the community have a clear and common understanding of the concern. We then seek ways of educating the drivers that use the street, whether they live in your neighborhood or elsewhere, and directing enforcement where it will have the most benefit. As we move through the process, we might identify relatively simple measures (such as reconfiguring parking on your street), or develop traffic calming projects that are both feasible and fundable.



Seattle
Department of
Transportation

Can't we install speed humps right away?

Traffic calming devices such as speed humps may not be the best answer to a speeding problem. Every traffic calming device has advantages and disadvantages and selecting the device that is most appropriate for the street is a collaborative process. Additionally, high demand and limited funding require SDOT to prioritize those streets where such measures will have the most benefit.

My street has a lot of cut-through traffic, can the street be made one-way or can we install "Local Traffic Only" signs?

"Local Access Only" signs aren't enforceable and as such are ineffective. Making a street one-way, can have negative consequences such as encouraging people to speed or crashes can increase if drivers don't comply with one-way designations. Our residential streets are public streets, and everyone has a right to use them. The main goal is to encourage those drivers that do use your street to drive safely.

What about installing children at play signs?

The City of Seattle does not install these signs. We want drivers to be aware that children could be present on or near any street. We also don't want either children or their parents to feel that such signs make children "safer". It is important to note that in jurisdictions where such signs have been installed, they were shown to have no effect in reducing collisions or vehicle speeds.

How do I get Vision Zero yard signs?

Pick them up at one of the city's six [Customer Service Centers](#) in Ballard, the Central District, Lake City, Southeast, Southwest, and the University District. [This map](#) shows them all. Most are open Monday through Saturday, but be sure to check the website for specific hours. You may also want to call ahead to confirm they have the signs you want. Questions about Vision Zero? Contact Allison Schwartz, allison.schwartz@seattle.gov or (206) 386-4654.

There is speeding on our alley, what can I do?

The speed limit on alleys is 15 mph. SDOT does not install speed limit signs in alleys and installs traffic calming in very few alleys. Residents are welcome to participate in the Traffic Calming Program if they believe vehicles are speeding in their alley.

Is there anything we can do about speeding on my arterial street?

If you have speeding concerns on an arterial street, you are welcome to participate in the Arterial Traffic Calming Program. SDOT prioritizes speeding concerns on arterial streets that come from residents annually and we develop appropriate traffic calming measures for the streets that rank highly. Traffic calming on arterial streets is challenging because of the multiple purposes served by arterials. Sometimes, the only feasible solution is enforcement. You are always welcome to contact the Seattle Police Department at 625-5011 directly if you desire additional enforcement.

I have other safety issues on my residential street. Who can I call?

You can email Neighborhood Traffic Operations staff at Neighborhood.Traffic@seattle.gov, call us at 206-684-0353, or go to our website, [Neighborhood Traffic Operations](#).

