



Sheridan Road residents are intimidated by its traffic, while those living west of the street have difficulty reaching parks and Lake Michigan beaches.

in the ward is Marine Drive, a north-south arterial street paralleling Lake Shore Drive that serves as a major transit and emergency vehicle route. By means of a landscaped curb extension, the street was narrowed from 40 feet to 22 feet at all seven intersections between the two major commercial streets on the north and south. At bus stops, the curb extends out to meet the bus while all other traffic waits behind it. This device, known as a bus bump-out, allows the bus to dictate the flow of traffic.

Other benefits include reduced pedestrian exposure to vehicle traffic, additional on-street parking, quicker bus loading and unloading times, and significant landscaping opportunities. Even the fire department became an advocate for the design, recognizing that curb extensions into the no-parking setback zones eliminated the threat of illegally parked cars.

Samuels says good design should guide drivers and pedestrians through an intersection safely, with minimal signage and yellow curb paint. "If you control drivers' perceived margin of safety, that allows you an incredible amount of flexibility in design," he says.

Landscaping is installed by the city and maintained through signed agreements with adjacent apartment building owners. Despite

initial concerns of the city's traffic engineers, the project proved that designing a street for pedestrians and transit riders first also benefits all other users of the roadway, including cars and trucks. Samuels was invited in 1998 to present the Marine Drive project at the Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) annual meeting in Toronto. When the meeting took place in Chicago in 2001, registrants for a Marine Drive tour had to be turned away because of high demand.

The long road to success

Despite all these efforts, Smith says she is still frustrated in her dealings with the engineering establishment. Paraphrasing Daniel Bornstein's *The Americans*, she says that engineers seem to believe that "losses have become acceptable." She adds, "Engineers understand the negative implications of the status quo, yet they still resist proven ways out of this mess. This is shocking to me as a civilian."

At first, the roadblock occurred not when she took a new project idea to the top decision maker, in this case Mayor Daley or the transportation commissioner, or even in securing funding, but rather when CDOT engineers reviewed the project. In the past, she says, CDOT has been unwilling to see a successful

project as precedent, being quick to revert to old, established ways when the leadership changes hands or they feel their credibility is threatened.

Samuels agrees, saying engineers are often leery of challenging their "holy goal of free

Resources

Reading. "Traffic Calming: Creating Livable Communities" is available from the Campaign for Sensible Growth at www.growingsensibly.org. Jeb Brugmann's "Strategic City: Sustaining Local Values in a Global Economy" can be found at www.gvrd.bc.ca/sustainability/LivReg&SustainConf2002/Brugmann2002.pdf. For *Balanced Growth Study for Northeast Chicago and the Northeast Suburbs*, contact the Illinois Department of Transportation at 2300 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield, IL 62764.

On the web. For information about Safe Routes to Schools, visit www.saferoutestoschools.org. For the City of Chicago Department of Transportation Traffic Calming Program or Walkable Edgewater, see w5.ci.chi.il.us/trans/Transportation.html.



A landscaped chicane slows traffic on a residential street near a school. Chicanes are curb extensions that alternate from one side of the street to the other, grabbing the attention of drivers and forcing them to slow down.



A bus bump-out on Marine Drive prevents traffic from coming up from behind the bus while passengers board. In addition to protecting passengers boarding the bus, it also has the effect of generally slowing traffic on the rest of the street.



A Chicago Streets and Sanitation vehicle does a trial run around orange cones before the installation of a traffic circle.

and fast-moving traffic regardless of cost to community safety." That was frustrating because status-quo thinking can sabotage important projects and create what looks like a fragmented, poorly conceived traffic-calming initiative.

Some lessons

Smith and her team know that hostility is futile, so they cultivated a relationship with CDOT that seems to work. Smith describes her relationship with the agency as "currently very good," and says ideas formerly dismissed are now given consideration. Smith's chief of staff, Greg Harris, offers these lessons:

- Know the limitations of the transportation department. Smith's team is fully aware of what CDOT can realistically accomplish.
- Understand that progress between two opposing views starts with relationship building. Smith's team uses a sales strategy that starts with knowing the "product," including its features and benefits. The team understands the needs of the customer—in this case the local DOT—and then "sells" it on an idea.
- Consider yourself a versatile project manager. Rather than concede to the norm, the Smith team tries to establish change. They also understand that it cannot always happen immediately, methodically, or even with a predictable outcome.
- Be willing to take the heat. Not all traffic calming is well received by residents, and the Smith team makes itself fully accountable. There is no finger pointing when a project fails or needs modification. Conversely, CDOT is given fair recognition when a project succeeds.

The work is far from over, but Smith credits her success to "home-grown advocacy." With her help, the mayor and the National Safety Council launched the country's first Safe Routes to Schools initiative in 1997. In her ward, neighborhood schools have become 24-hour centers of activity for children and adults alike.

Central to the program is strategically implementing traffic calming along dedicated pedestrian routes to and from schools. This program was adopted by communities and governments around the U.S; California recently legislated \$30 million a year toward its implementation. Although Chicago has yet to see a top-down policy for traffic calming, perhaps this is the incentive it needs to create one.

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