



**CITY OF LOS ALTOS**  
**ENGINEERING DIVISION**  
**STOP SIGN POLICY**  
**TRANSPORTATION SERVICES**

**I. POLICY**

**Objective: It is the intent of this policy to install stop signs where appropriate.**

Principles:

- Stop signs are installed at intersections where drivers cannot safely apply the right-of-way rule.<sup>1</sup>
- Stop signs control vehicular traffic conflicts at intersections and promote driver safety.
- The functional street classification system, as described in the City's General Plan Circulation Element, shall be used as the reference system for defining street types used in the warranting procedures.
- Warrants defined in the California Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD) including the amount of daily traffic, the amount of pedestrian activity, high traffic speed, traffic patterns, restricted view, accident records and unusual site conditions, or geometrics will be considered in the evaluation of all stop sign requests.
- Stop signs may be installed to support neighborhood traffic management.
- Stop signs may be installed against the major flow of traffic when unusual intersection design. Limited sight distance, requires such installation to provide adequate and safe operation of the intersection.
- Other methods of slowing traffic to the posted speed limit should be considered before a stop sign is used to slow local traffic. Please refer to the City's Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) for improvement options.
- This policy can be applied to intersections with no current stop control or intersections that have only partial control (T-intersections or two-way stop control)

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<sup>1</sup> Right of Way Rule – The Failure to yield the right of way at an uncontrolled intersection. A person commits the offense of failure to yield the right of way at an uncontrolled intersection (an intersection without any traffic signs or signals) if the person, in a vehicle that is approaching an uncontrolled intersection, does not look out for, and give right of way, to any driver on the right who simultaneously approaches the intersection, regardless of which driver first reaches the intersection.

## II. PROCEDURES

The following is the process that will be followed in the application and approval process for public requests for all-way stop sign control.

1. Submit a stop sign request to Public Works that includes the intersecting streets and contact information for the individual(s) requesting the sign. The request should be mailed to:  
City of Los Altos Public Works Department  
One North San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022  
Attention: Transportation Services Manager  
Or email to: [engineering@losaltosca.gov](mailto:engineering@losaltosca.gov)
2. You will be notified of the Transportation Services Manager's decision following completion of the stop sign warrant evaluation. The data collection and evaluation usually take about three (3) months to complete.
3. The decision may be appealed to the Public Works Director. The appeal must be received by the Public Works Department within 10 days of the mailing of notices of the Transportation Services Manager's decision.
4. The action taken by the Public Works Director may be appealed to the City Manager. The appeal must be received by the Public Works Department within 10 days of the mailing of notices of the of the Public Works Director's decision.
5. The action taken by the City Manager is final. Notices will be mailed regarding the City Manager's decision.

## III. STOP SIGN EVALUATION

One or more of the following traffic criteria, as identified in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), must be met for staff to recommend the installation of a stop sign to the Public Works Director. Conditions which satisfy one or more of the criteria may not necessarily justify the installation of a stop sign. Public Works staff exercises engineering judgment on a case-by-case basis to determine the need for stop signs based on which criteria and considerations are satisfied.

### **Minimum Traffic Volumes and Speed**

Minimum traffic volume warrant provides the necessary criteria for identifying intersections where the main street and side street traffic volumes are sufficiently high such that traffic on the stop-controlled side street suffers undue delay or risk in crossing or entering the controlled main street traffic system. The volume warrant thresholds identified in the MUTCD are met when:

1. The vehicular volume entering the intersection from the major street approaches (total of both approaches) averages at least 300 vehicles per hour for any 8 hours of an average day, and;

STOP SIGN POLICY  
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES

2. The combined vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle volume entering the intersection from the minor street approaches (total of both approaches) averages at least 200 vehicles per hour for the same 8 hours, with an average delay to the minor street vehicular traffic of at least 30 seconds per vehicle during the highest hours, but;
3. If the 85th-percentile approach speed of the major street traffic exceeds 35 mph, the minimum vehicular volumes warrants are reduced 70% of the above values.

When the following criteria are satisfied, the intersection is considered to be located in a residential area and the volume warrant thresholds may be reduced by 60% of the MUTCD values:

1. Both streets have residential frontages with existing 25 mph speed limits
2. Neither street is classified as a collector or arterial street within the General Plan Circulation Element
3. Both streets are two-lane streets
4. No existing stop sign or signal is located on the more heavily traveled street within a distance of 200 feet, minimum
5. Intersection with streets extending 500 feet or more away from the intersection on at least three sides
6. Installation of a multi-way stop is compatible with the overall traffic circulation needs for the residential area

**Visibility**

The visibility warrant establishes the criteria for determining if an intersection has inadequate visibility to maintain safe traffic operations. Providing the appropriate stopping sight distance reduces the likelihood of a collision at an intersection caused by a driver on the minor street crossing or entering the major street in the presence of oncoming traffic.

1. A stop sign is warranted where driver visibility is limited at the minor street approach to the intersection, and causes drivers to reduce their intersection approach speed to less than 10 miles per hour.
2. The stopping sight distance is defined within the AASHTO's A Policy on Geometric Design of Highways and Streets. The City uses the measured 85<sup>th</sup> percentile intersection approach speeds determine if there is adequate sight distance as determined by an engineer in the field. Inadequate stopping sight distance may be mitigated by the installation of red curbing or the trimming of landscaping (trees or hedges) to improve sight distance.

<b>Design Speed</b>	<b>Stopping Sight Distance</b>
25MPH	155 feet
30MPH	200 feet
35MPH	250 feet
40MPH	305 feet
45MPH	360 feet

### **Additional Considerations**

When determining whether to install a stop sign, there are a number of additional engineering considerations that may be considered for evaluation. These factors include:

- **Accidents** – When evaluating the installation of a stop sign, correctible accidents should be considered by the engineer conducting the analysis.
- **Minor Leg(s) of 3 or 4-Legged Intersection** – Stop signs may be erected at the intersection of the minor leg of a three-legged intersection, or where a minor street meets a major arterial, collector street, or a local street that is more heavily traveled. A minimum of 25 vehicles per hour shall be observed on the minor leg approach for this criterion to be satisfied.
- **In Vicinity of High-Pedestrian Generator** – Installation of a stop sign may be justified at an intersection where any facility adjacent to that study intersection generates an unusually high concentration of pedestrian traffic. This may include the use of the intersection by school-aged children, the elderly or physically challenged pedestrians; or the presence of a facility such as a school, playground, park, shopping center, fire station, etc. The installation of a crosswalk may be considered with the installation of stop signs when near an identified high pedestrian generator.
- **Unusual Intersection Geometrics** – Installation of a stop sign may be justified where unusual intersection design or geometrics (horizontal and/or vertical curves, or intersection offsets) require the installation of a stop sign.
- **Visible Signs** – Installation of a stop sign may be justified where visible signs of potential traffic problems exist, such as, skid marks, evidence of fixed object collisions, etc.
- **Volume Equilibrium** – Installation of a stop sign may be justified if the intersection approach volumes for the minor/major legs near equilibrium (45%/55%).
- **Traffic Impacts** - Public works staff will take into consideration area wide traffic impacts due to the installation of stop signs, including impacts to traffic operations or cause in traffic delay
- **Sign Types** – Stop sign installation come in varying types such as, standard retro-reflective, electronic-blinking, reflective poles. Staff will consider sign type on a case-by-case basis.

#### **IV. FINDINGS FOR APPEAL**

A stop sign request that is denied by the Transportation Services Manager based on evaluation of the stop sign warrants may be approved by the Public Works Director only if each of the following findings can be made:

- a. Installation of the stop sign will not prevent the street from operating consistently with its functional classification level (arterial, collector or local street) as defined in the General Plan Circulation Element.
- b. Installation of the stop sign will not unduly restrict the delivery of emergency services to the surrounding neighborhood.
- c. Installation of the stop sign will not create any potentially hazardous conflicts with driveways near the intersection.
- d. Installation of a stop sign will not create any significant queuing at the intersection.
- e. Installation of a stop sign is not expected to result in additional accidents at the intersection.
- f. The installation of a stop sign will not adversely affect any adjacent controlled intersection.
- g. There are no other feasible methods to successfully address the traffic issues associated with the request for the stop sign.

If the Public Works Director is unable to make each of these recommended findings the stop sign request must be denied.