

City of Santa Cruz Stop Sign Installation: Frequently Asked Questions

Q: I have a concern about safety on my street. Could a new stop sign help address the problem?

An important first step is to identify the issue you are trying to solve. A new stop sign could be the right measure if there are high numbers of collisions, high traffic volumes, large numbers of cyclists or pedestrians, or if some unusual condition exists, like limited visibility, a steep hill, or proximity to a school or playground.

Stop signs are not recommended to slow traffic speeds. Studies of “unwarranted” stop signs (stop signs that do not meet the guidelines of the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices, or MUTCD) show that such stop signs do not reduce traffic speeds, and in fact can increase speeds some distance from intersections as drivers try to make up for lost time.¹ The same studies show that driver compliance is also poor at unwarranted stop signs, meaning that drivers stop less frequently if they feel that a stop sign is unnecessary. Finally, stop signs increase vehicle emissions due to the extra fuel needed to accelerate out of a stop.¹ For these reasons, City staff will evaluate an intersection to see if a stop sign is warranted.

Q: I would like to see a new stop sign installed on my street. What are the steps I need to take?

To request study of a new stop sign, send your request in writing to the Transportation Manager at jburr@cityofsantacruz.com. Public Works staff will evaluate the intersection to see if a new stop sign is warranted. The following criteria, which are based on MUTCD guidelines, are used to evaluate whether a stop sign is needed.

- Traffic collision history in the past year
- Any unusual conditions, such as a nearby school, playground, steep hill, or limited visibility.
- Traffic volume
- Differences in volume between intersecting streets
- Pedestrian volume

The location is assigned points based on each criterion, which are then used to determine whether a stop sign is warranted.

Q: Speeding cars are an issue on my street. Are there other ways to reduce traffic speeds?

You can contact the Santa Cruz Police Department to request speed enforcement on your street. Visit <http://www.cityofsantacruz.com/departments/police/how-do-i/report-a-traffic-concern-in-my-neighborhood> or call the Traffic division at 831-420-5860 to request speed enforcement. It is helpful to record the days and times when speeding is the greatest issue to help guide enforcement.

Unfortunately, Public Works does not have funding for traffic calming measures like speed humps, traffic circles, and pedestrian islands. Grant funding for traffic calming is sometimes available, and is usually focused around improving access to local schools.

There are some things you can do yourself to help reduce traffic speeds: Planting street trees, making yard signs, or installing unusual yard art may cause drivers to slow down. Driving within the speed limit also helps set a model for safe speeds. The [Community Traffic Safety Coalition](#) offers two programs designed to reduce neighborhood traffic speeds: follow the link below for more information and to order a “Please Slow Down” trash can sticker or a “Neighborhood Pace Car” sticker for your vehicle.

<http://www.santacruzhealth.org/HSAHome/HSADivisions/PublicHealth/CommunityHealthEducation/CommunityTrafficSafetyCoalition/Projects.aspx>

1. Source: “Multi-way Stops - The Research Shows the MUTCD is Correct”. W. Martin Bretherton Jr., P.E.(M), Institute of Traffic Engineers.

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