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Investigative Review

FILE NO: 25-0033-C

SUBJECT MATTER: Allegation of NTMP Disregarding Criteria for Installation of Speed Bumps

STATUS: Final

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April 21, 2026

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Date of Approval

DISTRIBUTION:

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AUTHORITY AND DEFINITIONS

The Office of Inspector General's (OIG) mission is to promote a culture of integrity, accountability, and transparency throughout the City of Albuquerque (City) to safeguard and preserve public trust. Investigations, inspections, evaluations, and reviews are conducted following Association of Inspectors General (AIG) Standards.

City Ordinance 2-17-2 states the “Inspector General's goals are to (1) Conduct investigations, inspections, evaluations, and reviews in an efficient, impartial, equitable, and objective manner; (2) Prevent and detect fraud, waste, and abuse in city activities including all city contracts and partnerships; (3) Carry out the activities of the Office of Inspector General through independence in both fact and appearance, investigation and interdiction; and (4) Propose ways to increase the city's legal, fiscal and ethical accountability to ensure that tax payers' dollars are spent in a manner consistent with the highest standards of local governments.”

As defined in the Inspector General Ordinance § 2-17-3, “fraud is the knowing misrepresentation of the truth or concealment of a material fact to induce another to act to his or her detriment. Waste is the thoughtless or careless expenditure, mismanagement, or abuse of resources to the detriment of the City. Abuse is the use of resources or exercise of authority contrary to rule or policy, or knowingly inconsistent with any established mission or objectives for the resource, or the position held by the person exercising the authority. Abuse does not necessarily involve fraud or illegal acts.”

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 3, 2025, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) received a complaint expressing concerns that the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) planned to install speed bumps on Hanover Road between Market Street and Laurelwood Parkway. The referring party alleged that the application for this type of traffic calming did not meet the criteria for NTMP requests, per what is cited on the NTMP website under initial assessments for NTMP Requests. The referring party stated they sent an email to the NTMP office citing their concerns and repeatedly requested a written explanation as to why this application was accepted in the first place, but received no response.

In accomplishing their missions, OIGs use a variety of approaches. OIGs typically have responsibilities that include work such as inspecting, evaluating, reviewing, studying, monitoring and/or analyzing government operations, programs, contracts, and agreements for the purposes of providing information for decision-making, and making recommendations to improve programs, policies, or procedures. The objectives of these processes include providing a source of factual and analytical information, monitoring compliance, measuring performance, and assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of operations.

Although the complaint did not fall under an investigation related to fraud, waste or abuse, the OIG determined that a review into the program was appropriate. The purpose of the review was to determine if the NTMP adhered to the criteria that is required in order for the area in question to be eligible for the installation of speedbumps.

The review revealed that there were three (3) separate requests for traffic calming between March 2020 and October 2022 from residents who lived near Hanover Road NW. All three (3) cited speeding as the reason for the request, with one also citing “safety, bicycle or pedestrian”. The initial request was determined to be ineligible by the NTMP. However, the requests were then determined to be eligible following the determination of a speed study that was conducted in June 2023. As a result, it was determined that Hanover Road between Market Street and Laurelwood Parkway qualified for traffic calming measures.

The review also revealed that a mailer was sent in December 2024 to residents in the Hanover Rd area informing them that a traffic study was completed and that the Department of Municipal Development (DMD) proposed to install five (5) speed cushions at regular intervals on Hanover Rd between Market St and Laurelwood Parkway to reduce speeding and cut-thru traffic and to improve safety. The mailer also stated that if more than 1/3 of the residents oppose installation, DMD will send follow up letters informing residents that DMD will not move forward with the project.

In a meeting held with the Engineering Division Manager (EDM) for DMD Traffic Analysis, the EDM explained that the current design of speed cushions aims to slow down passenger vehicles but allow emergency vehicles and school buses to go through with minimal impact. The EDM also explained that if DMD does not receive responses from at least 1/3 of residents opposing a proposed project, then DMD assumes that most residents are in favor of the project and the project will therefore move forward.

No evidence was identified during this review indicating that NTMP processes were applied arbitrarily, inconsistently, or outside the scope of program authority.

ABBREVIATIONS

AIG:	Association of Inspectors General
City:	City of Albuquerque
DMD:	Department of Municipal Development
EDM:	Engineering Division Manager
NTMP:	Neighborhood Traffic Management Program
OIG:	Office of Inspector General

INTRODUCTION

The mission of the Office of Inspector General (OIG) is to provide independent and objective insight, oversight, and foresight in promoting integrity, efficiency, overall effectiveness, accountability, and transparency in government to safeguard and preserve public trust. Investigations, inspections, evaluations, and reviews are conducted following AIG Standards.

This report was conducted as an OIG Review. An OIG Review is a limited-scope, fact-based assessment designed to evaluate programs, operations, or activities for compliance with applicable policies, procedures, and established criteria, and to identify opportunities for improvement. Reviews do not seek to determine wrongdoing or assign fault, but rather to provide objective analysis and recommendations.

Complaint:

The referring party expressed concerns regarding a notice issued by the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) indicating that speed cushions would be installed on Hanover Road NW between Market Street and Laurelwood Parkway. The referring party stated they contacted the NTMP office by email to request a written explanation as to why the application for traffic calming was accepted but did not receive a response.

The referring party asserted that, according to the “Initial Assessment for NTMP Requests” section of the NTMP website, the application should have been denied because:

- Hanover Road is designated as an emergency route.
- At least 80% of the roadway borders residential backyards.
- The original application was submitted by one resident, and the NTMP criteria require participation from at least seven different homes.

Background:

The Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) is designed to address speeding and cut-through traffic on local residential streets through the use of traffic-calming strategies. These include physical measures, such as lane narrowing, turn restrictions, curb bulb-outs, and speed cushions, as well as non-physical measures such as radar speed signs and targeted enforcement.

The NTMP Policy Manual, adopted by City Council in October 2020, outlines the process by which neighborhoods may request traffic calming, establishes eligibility and prioritization criteria, and identifies the range of traffic-calming tools available.

INVESTIGATIVE REVIEW

Analysis/Evidence:

NTMP Webpage

The NTMP website outlines a general process for submitting requests for traffic calming, in which the following steps are required:

1. Submission by a City resident on behalf of their street.
2. Participation from at least seven supporting residents from separate homes on the street.
3. An assessment by the Traffic Engineering Division to determine whether the street segment meets the Minimum Guidance Thresholds established in the NTMP Initial Assessment.

The website further states that during the initial assessment:

This process will be evaluated by a City of Albuquerque (COA) Engineer in order to determine if the request will meet preliminary criteria as described in the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) document. This will assist in prioritizing projects. The proposed process for the NTMP is as follows:

- *Any roadway that is greater than a collector roadway will be automatically denied by the online application system for traffic calming. Classifications of roadways are determined by the COA's planning department and MRCOG [Mid-Region Council of Governments]. View a map of emergency routes and ineligible roadways.*
- *Requested streets must have at least 40% of their length fronted by homes. Streets that border only back yards do not qualify.*
- *The application for traffic calming must include residents from at least seven different homes on the requested street. This information must be provided to ensure the neighborhood is in agreeance for new traffic calming measure.*

Site Observations – Hanover Road

During a site visit, the OIG observed that one side of Hanover Road is bordered by residential backyards separated from the roadway by a wall and sidewalk. The opposite side of the road is bordered by a sidewalk and landscaped area, which then borders an alley that provides access to alley-loaded garages for adjacent homes. These homes have driveways and garages which border the backyard, as opposed to the front yard. While these homes do not front the roadway in a traditional manner, they are located in close proximity to Hanover Road.

Traffic Calming Requests

A review of the NTMP online request map showed three traffic calming requests submitted between March 2020 and October 2022 by residents near Hanover Road. All cited speeding as a concern, with one also citing bicycle and pedestrian safety. An initial request was deemed ineligible, but later eligibility was established following completion of a speed study.

Speed Study Review

The OIG reviewed a speed study prepared by Lee Engineering and published in November 2023. The study analyzed roadway conditions, traffic volumes, vehicle speeds, and crash data collected over a 48-hour period in June 2023. The study concluded that two of the nine NTMP threshold criteria were met, qualifying the segment of Hanover Road for traffic calming measures under NTMP guidance.

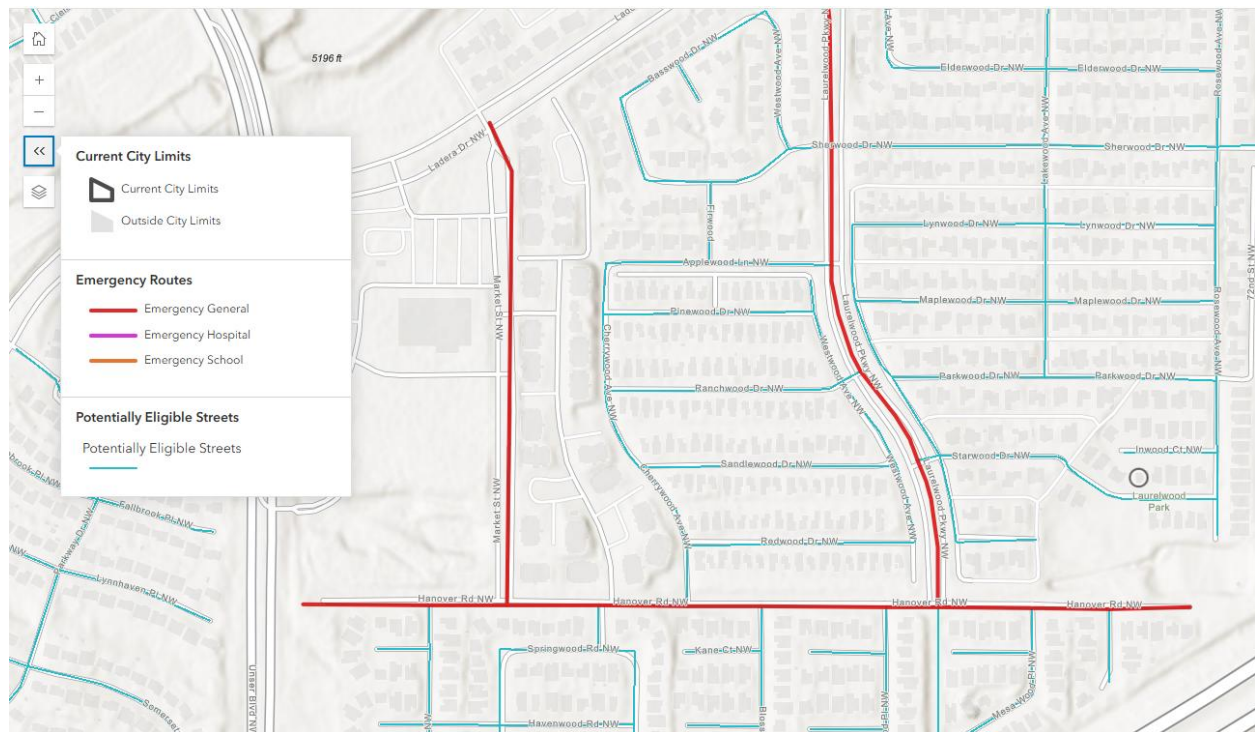
Emergency Route Considerations

The OIG reviewed the NTMP policy manual, which addresses how different types of traffic calming measures are determined. There are factors that limit the types of traffic calming measures that can be implemented on a street. As stated in the NTMP policy manual, one of those limiting factors is:

- ***Designated Emergency Routes:*** On designated emergency response routes, only non-physical control measures and those physical control measures that do not slow emergency vehicles will be considered.

The OIG reviewed a map of emergency routes and ineligible roadways, which is made available on the NTMP webpage.

The map shows that Hanover Road NW is marked as an emergency route (emergency general).



Community Notification and Response

The OIG reviewed documents provided by DMD. The OIG identified a December 2024 mailer informing residents near Hanover Road that a traffic speed study was completed and as a result, five speed cushions were proposed for installation. The mailer also stated:

- If more than two-thirds of residents supported the project, installation would proceed.
- If more than one-third opposed installation, the project would not move forward.

Of approximately 63 mailers sent, DMD received 13 responses: 9 opposing and 4 supporting the project. These responses did not meet either the support or opposition thresholds described in the mailer.

Interview with Engineering Division Manager

The OIG spoke with the Engineering Division Manager (EDM) for DMD Traffic Analysis, who explained that when a request for traffic calming is submitted, it is assessed in order to determine if the request will meet preliminary criteria as described in the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program (NTMP) document.

After an initial assessment is done, the next step may be a traffic study. EDM stated that when an area is approved for a traffic study, things like volume, crashes, speed, and cut-through traffic are looked at to determine if there is a traffic issue. EDM stated that the study also considers if the area is in a school zone and if there has been bicycle or pedestrian crashes.

EDM confirmed that once a study is completed and it is determined that a road qualifies for a traffic calming project, letters are sent to every home that borders the road where the proposed project is set to be. The letter informs residents of the plan for a traffic calming project and if residents object, they are instructed to reach out to Traffic Engineering to express that they object to the project. Residents are given three (3) to four (4) weeks to respond. The OIG asked what happens in the event that Traffic Engineering does not receive enough responses to meet either the support or opposition thresholds. EDM explained that Traffic Engineering generally proceeds with projects unless sufficient opposition is received, operating under the assumption that non-response indicates no objection.

Even though Hanover Road is labeled as an emergency route, EDM stated that certain traffic calming measures can be placed on emergency routes. EDM shared that speed cushions are not true speed humps, but rather are modified speed humps with wheel tracks cut out to allow vehicles such as school buses, fire trucks, and ambulances to basically align their wheels with the wheel tracks so they go right through and do not go over any part of the hump. These type of speed cushions function similar to a hump but do not impact emergency vehicles and school buses; they can still get to where they are going with minimal impact. EDM explained that speed cushions have become NTMP's default used along emergency routes, of which there are many.

The OIG pointed out to EDM that Hanover Road NW between Market Street and Laurelwood Parkway borders backyards. The OIG further noted that the homes on one side of Hanover Road have alley-load garages, in which the driveways and garages are located at the rear of the house and are next to the backyard. Therefore, these homes should not be viewed as bordering front yards. EDM stated that they consider side yards part of the fronting percentage. Multi-family dwellings or apartments are also considered residential. With regard to Hanover Road, the NTMP was receiving complaints about generally high speeds, which was concerning because the backyards are very small and therefore the homes are close to the road. Traffic Engineering and the NTMP were concerned there could be a road departure crash at some point. If a vehicle leaves the road and impacts the wall, debris from the wall can hit the house.

The EDM explained that NTMP criteria are applied with professional judgment and flexibility, particularly where roadway characteristics and safety concerns warrant further evaluation. The EDM stated that while Hanover Road may not strictly meet the 40% frontage guideline, the proximity of residences, documented speeding concerns, and results of the speed study supported moving forward with traffic calming measures. EDM further stated that they do not want to be so strict with the criteria that they are potentially overlooking problems.

Allegation Conclusion:

Based on the information reviewed, the OIG determined that the Department of Municipal Development and the Neighborhood Traffic Management Program generally applied NTMP policies and guidance in a manner consistent with the program's stated objectives when evaluating Hanover Road NW for traffic calming measures.

While certain eligibility criteria -- such as residential frontage thresholds -- were applied with professional judgment rather than specific numeric thresholds to the 40% frontage guidelines, the decision to proceed was supported by documented speeding concerns, roadway characteristics, and the results of a formal speed study.

No evidence was identified during this review indicating that NTMP processes were applied arbitrarily, inconsistently, or outside the scope of program authority.

OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Observation 1: The resident notification process relies on an assumption that lack of response indicates support or no objection. This assumption is not clearly communicated in the notification letters provided to residents.

Recommendation: The Department of Municipal Development and Traffic Engineering should consider revising resident notification letters to clearly state that in the absence of sufficient responses, the project will proceed by default. Clear communication would improve transparency and help ensure residents understand the importance of responding if they oppose a proposed project.

Management Response:

DMD agrees that additional clarity in the resident notification mailers would improve transparency and better communicate how project support or opposition is determined. The current language states that if two-thirds of residents support installation, the project will proceed, and if more than one-third oppose it, the project will not move forward.

To address the recommendation, DMD will revise future mailers to explicitly state that the project will proceed unless more than one-third of residents submit objections. The following language will be incorporated into future notifications:

“DMD will hire a contractor to complete the project unless more than one-third of the residents object. There will be no further outreach beyond this letter until a two-week notice is provided prior to construction.”

This update is intended to ensure residents clearly understand that non-response will be interpreted as no objection and that timely feedback is necessary if there is opposition to the proposed improvements.

Observation 2: DMD and Traffic Engineering do not strictly adhere to the preliminary criteria, as described in the NTMP document, when assessing requests for traffic calming measures. NTMP criteria are applied with professional judgment and flexibility, to avoid overlooking potential safety concerns.

Recommendation: DMD and Traffic Engineering should consider a written policy clarifying that they have a certain amount of discretion when deciding whether to implement traffic calming measures. DMD and Traffic Engineering should specify the preliminary criteria are more like

guidelines or a starting point, but that deviations may be warranted when supported by sufficient safety concerns.

Management Response:

DMD acknowledges the recommendation to formalize the role of engineering judgment when evaluating traffic calming requests that may not meet every preliminary criterion but present legitimate safety concerns. In practice, NTMP criteria function as initial screening guidelines, and professional engineering judgment is applied to account for unique roadway conditions and documented safety concerns, including those related to excessive speed and crash history.

To address this recommendation, DMD will update the NTMP website to clearly state that engineering judgment may be applied for roadways that do not meet every listed requirement but are generally residential in nature and demonstrate safety issues, such as speed-related crashes. Updating the website ensures this information is visible and accessible to the public, as most users rely on the website for guidance rather than reviewing formal reports or policy documents.

At this time, no changes to the formal NTMP policy manual are proposed.