



TRAFFIC IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION FACT SHEETS

“TO INSTALL OR NOT TO INSTALL; THAT IS THE QUESTION.”

Efforts to achieve an acceptable balance between good practice and good politics in government is a universal problem.

Elected officials' challenge in weighing acceptable practice against politics most often surfaces in requests for traffic signs and signals. There are few issues that more frequently divide traffic authorities and elected public officials. The installation of a “political” sign or signal, one which does not meet established warrants, may satisfy a small group, but the problems created in non-compliance, risk, liability and in the public's loss of respect for the traffic engineering process are significant and lasting.

The following are two examples of requests for traffic control devices, (neither of which meets established warrants or standards) in which cost/benefit decisions must be weighed:

- A large corporate taxpayer requests a traffic signal at a factory exit driveway as a matter of convenience for its employees.
- Residents want Stop signs installed on their residential street to control what is perceived as a speeding problem, even though there is virtually no crash history. There is a strong probability of a high rate of non-compliance with potential for increased accident experience.

The first consideration in such requests is usually given to the perceived needs of those who initiated the request. Both the immediate and long-range impact of the decisions should be carefully weighed and the answers to the following questions should be considered:

- Does it meet established warrants?
- What is the likelihood of non-compliance?
- What is the potential for an increase in traffic crashes and liability?
- What will be the impact on traffic flow (delays with resulting costs, energy losses, air pollution, noise generation, etc.)?
- Who would be opposed to this change?

Perhaps the most important questions to ask are these:

- Will this help maximize both the safety and efficiency of the pedestrian and vehicular traffic?
- Will it help ensure that all of our citizens will maintain a healthy respect for our community's total traffic control system?