

Complaints about traffic calming measures generally fall into one of two categories: driver exasperation with what is seen as interference with driving and unintended impacts to vehicles. Little can be done about the former, but some steps can be taken to prevent the latter. Most complaints are focused on speed bumps because they sometimes cause damage to snow removal equipment (and the snow removal equipment in turn sometimes damages the speed bumps) they can slow down the response time of emergency equipment, and they create accessibility problems for disabled people.

Although it is very effective, the speed bump is the least elegant of the traffic calming tools available. Other methods use the natural inclinations and behavior of drivers to reach the designer's objective (see Figs. 5.21 through 5.25). It is natural for a driver's attention to increase at changes in the road configuration or layout, and designers can incorporate this knowledge into their design to increase driver awareness of pedestrians and slow down traffic. Changes in road width, changes in grade, and changes in paving surface texture or color are all effective traffic calming methods that do not create some of the problems associated with speed bumps.

Traffic calming strategies can be adapted for use on existing streets as well as on new streets. For example, chokers can be installed at intersections to require drivers turning onto a street to turn more carefully or at midblock locations to require drivers to slow down. Drivers will automatically respond to the chokers by being more aware of pedestrians and allowing them to cross safely at crosswalks. If chokers are used at intersections with collectors, thought should be given to constructing a turning lane on the collector to allow slowed traffic to move out of the travel lanes. In place of speed bumps, grade changes can be used to slow traffic and to reduce the risk of damage to vehicles such as snow plows. Midblock chokers or street closings can also be used to reduce traffic, increase pedestrian use of the street, and foster a greater sense of neighborhood. Neighboring streets may experience an increase in traffic, however.

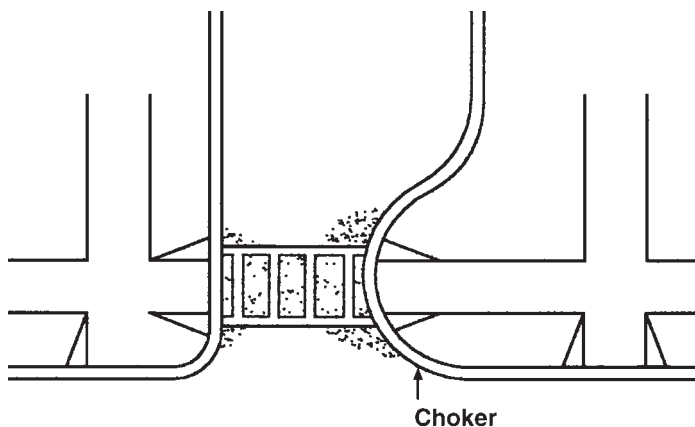


Figure 5.21 A choker used as a traffic calming device.