



## OFFICE OF THE CITY CONTROLLER CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

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# PRESS RELEASE

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## **City Controller Finds Widespread Noncompliance in School Zone Speed Cushion Installations**

*Engineering review shows almost all inspected speed cushions exceed design and safety standards*

**PHILADELPHIA** – A newly released report by City Controller Christy Brady found that almost all the speed cushions installed near city schools do not comply with contract blueprints or widely accepted engineering safety standards, potentially creating safety risks for drivers, pedestrians, and emergency responders.

Among 140 speed cushions inspected at 44 schools, engineers in the Controller’s Office found that only two of them met the height and ramp length dimensions specified in the contract blueprints. Testing revealed that 95% of the speed cushions exceeded the maximum grade, or slope, that is recommended by state and federal transportation guidelines. Some of the speed cushions had grades two-to-three times the safety guidelines.

“Speed cushions with excessive grades may be steeper than intended for school-zone traffic, increasing the risk of vehicle damage, loss of control, and impediments to emergency vehicles, even when drivers are traveling at posted speed limits,” said Brady.

The City Controller’s Office conducted the review in response to concerns raised by residents across the city regarding newly installed speed cushions. Speed cushions are intended to slow vehicle speeds in school zones as part of the City’s Vision Zero initiative to eliminate traffic-related deaths and serious injuries.

“Traffic calming measures, like speed cushions, are meant to protect pedestrians in our communities – particularly children in school zones,” said Brady. “But that goal is undermined when installations don’t meet design standards. Our review shows a clear need for stronger oversight and accountability to protect public safety, ensure effectiveness, and protect taxpayer investment.”

The City Controller’s Engineering Unit reviewed contract documents and conducted on-site measurements of speed cushions installed between 2023 and 2025 under City Council Ordinance 230103, which required traffic calming measures near schools.

While the contract blueprints themselves met guidance issued by PennDOT, the U.S. Department of Transportation, and the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO), engineers found widespread discrepancies between the designs and the actual installations in the field.

The estimated average cost for speed cushion and related traffic calming installations was approximately \$51,000 per school, totaling roughly \$2.2 million for the projects reviewed in the report.

“The city needs to bring existing speed cushions into compliance with safety standards or seek restitution from the vendors who installed the ones that do not conform,” said Brady. “Ensuring compliance with engineering standards is critical to achieving the safety goals of Vision Zero while avoiding unintended risks to residents.”

The Controller’s report also recommends that the city provide stronger supervision and quality control over contractors during installation and implement standardized inspection and measurement procedures to prevent future noncompliance.

The full report is available for review and download at [controller.phila.gov](https://controller.phila.gov).

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