SLOW STREETS

Reduce traffic volume and speed to a minimum so that people can walk, bike, and run safely.

CONTEXT
• Streets with low vehicle volume and low to moderate speeds, where vehicle volumes have dropped, or serve redundant through-traffic role during COVID disruptions.

KEY STEPS
• Install temporary traffic barriers and “Local Traffic Only”, Slow/Shared, or branded signs (e.g. “Stay Healthy Streets”) at main vehicle entry points.
• For neighborhoods, establish a grid of entry points into the local street network where barricades should be installed.
• Identify stewards to take care of and monitor barricades.
• Allow local access, deliveries, and emergency vehicles.

TIMELINE: One week.
DURATION: Days to months.

Brussels, Belgium

Brussels created a 20 km/h (12 mph) zone in the downtown core, allowing pedestrians to walk more safely in the roadbed.

Credit: European Cyclist’s Federation
• Identify a network of streets that can be closed at key entry points, where interior intersections remain unobstructed.
• Examine proposed neighborhood greenways, bike boulevards, or routes that await implementation.
• Consider including other low-volume streets or those with low to moderate speeds.

Engagement
• Reach out to homeowners associations or other residential district organizations.
• Partner with bike/walk and health coalitions and bike shops; reach workers through advocates and employers.
• Partner with stakeholders and advocates to place flyers or safely contact local residents.
• Tap community groups to identify key obstacles or issues affecting design or segment length.

Design + Implementation
• Identify which intersections to close fully and which to partially close, preserving local access but preventing most through-movements.
• Place light separation to partially block streets and indicate restricted use and lower speeds (typically 5-10 mph / 10-15 km/h).
• Use temporary “Local Traffic Only” signs, which can be attached to barricades or A-frames if necessary.

Monitoring
• Key criteria: number and percent change in demand; use an automated device, such as a tube counter, to gather bike volume counts and short (15-minute to 1-hour) sample pedestrian counts if practical.
• Use counts or conduct surveys to determine whether and where segments should be expanded.

Oakland, CA, USA
Oakland used signs mounted on A-frames to designate streets as local access only, creating a 74-mile “slow streets” network.

Dunedin, New Zealand
Dunedin approved a plan that reduced speeds to 10 km/hr and allowed city center businesses to extend into the streets, creating shared spaces for multiple modes.