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Council approves reflective beacon alert installation at St. Perpetua crosswalk

By Lou Fancher



Location of proposed Advance Warning Sign for RRFB (driving up the hill on Hamlin Road) Photo provided

activities at St. Perpetua Church or to walk in the neighborhood. Officials at the school and church and local residents requested the council partner the safety mitigation effort with approval and funding of half of the project's projected costs.

Moran said excessive speeds due to the road's steep downhill grade contributed to the problem. Despite the presence of a crossing guard enlisted by St. Perpetual School, significant public input had demonstrated to the Transportation Circulation Commission the requested safety measures were advisable. A flashing reflective alert signal and funding of half of the project cost as requested by St. Perpetua School was recommended to the council by the commission. The commission had also discussed zoning the area at 15 mph during school hours. Making such a change would require a traffic study and a change of ordinance by the council. Representatives from the school, Moran said, were interested in the council addressing the reduced speed zone topic as soon as possible.

While allowing that the crosswalk is a public right-of-way whose primary users are local residents, church attenders and children attending a private (not public) school, Moran said making the improvements and sharing the costs was best. "If the school and church don't exist, that crosswalk doesn't exist. The (general) public doesn't need it. If for some reason the school and church went out of business next week, we wouldn't put a beacon crossing there. We would delete the crosswalk because it wouldn't be placed there in the first place." But, he emphasized, the crosswalk is used by children and protecting their safety is paramount to the neighborhood and the city.

Council Member Teresa Gerringer asked about the history of city-supported speed mitigation actions: who had paid when there was a new school or other new development being built (in that case the developer would pay 100% of the costs, Moran replied) and in what past projects had traffic studies been funded by the city. Moran said overall and ongoing concerns about the speed of cars in the city, and a grant applied for in 2012, demonstrated traffic safety measures are recurring issues that "finally hit the head" with St. Perpetua's request. Asked about the timeline for returning the topic to the commission and the process leading to an exception to be made to the Assembly Bill 321 code for speeds on two-lane streets, Moran said approval of a new 15 mph zone would require approximately two to three months to complete.

The timeline for adding the safety beacon and radar sign approved at the meeting Moran said is subject to material delivery schedules. During the pandemic and even as the restrictions of the past 15 months are lifted, schedules for public works projects and other city activities remain difficult to predict. Council members voiced support for the project to move as swiftly as possible and for the speed zone to be considered and implemented prior to the fall and students' return to school. Council Member Carl Anduri offered praise and said the project represented "a case study in neighbors and institutions (the school and church and city council) working together to find solutions."

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