



CITY OF WAUWATOSA

7725 WEST NORTH AVENUE

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TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, July 11, 2006

PRESENT: Alds. Donegan, Grimm, Herzog, Sullivan, Treis -5

ALSO

PRESENT: W. Kappel, Director of Public Works; Chief B. Weber, Police Dept.; Ald. Didier

Ald. Sullivan as Chair called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

Request for LED School Crossing Sign Trial – Wisconsin Avenue East of Honey Creek Parkway

The committee reviewed a memo from the Director of Public Works regarding a request from Ald. Didier for a solar powered LED school crossing sign trial on the north side of W. Wisconsin Avenue east of Honey Creek Parkway.

Ald. Didier said that she and Mr. Kappel have come up with an innovative response to community concerns, which she cited in a June 22, 2006 memo: 1) over 100 public and private school children cross at Honey Creek and Wisconsin Avenue every school day; 2) there have been numerous accidents and near accidents over the past three years; 3) traffic flow on Wisconsin Avenue as well as driver speed have steadily increased over the years; 4) the location of the current school zone gives drivers very little time to react; in addition, mature trees block the view of the current sign; 5) LED lights are much brighter and catch drivers' attention better; 6) the new location allows for greater visibility and sunlight for solar power; and 7) neither nearby school is visible from this area.

In addition, Mr. Kappel reported that there have been five personal injury accidents at this intersection since 2003, which is unique in recent history. One pedestrian was struck when crossing with the crossing guard. Annual average daily traffic volume here has increased significantly from 8,300 to 9,500 vehicles from 2001-2004, possibly due to growth at the Milwaukee Regional Medical Complex and the Research Park. Alternative ways of alerting motorists to the school crossing were considered. The proposed installation would be farther east to allow for better visibility considering that the crossing is at the base of a hill.

Mr. Kappel noted that the difference in cost between this and a standard flashing warning sign is \$200, but the existing signs cost \$11.31 each in monthly electric charges. The additional operating cost would be recaptured in less than 18 months. The cost for an electrical drop could be up to \$1,500. A flashing speed display device is also recommended in order to provide immediate feedback to westbound motorists. Another recommended element is an LED stop sign paddle for the crossing guard at a cost of \$150 for each sign or \$300 for a double-sided paddle.

Amy Thompson, 7425 Grand Parkway, said she was one of the personal injury victims. She felt she was visible and was crossing with the guard who was holding up a stop sign, but the driver did not see her. She was

alert enough to jump out of the way, but the car still struck her left side. A child might not have seen the car nor had the reflexes to react in time. There have been countless near-misses at this intersection.

Lisa Blair, 639 N. 79th Street, said she has a number of e-mails and a petition supporting this proposal. She crosses this intersection several times every school day and has witnessed cars speeding, drivers using right lanes for passing or as a secondary lane, vehicular accidents, and too many near misses to count. Traffic is especially heavy when cars are diverted from the freeway. In addition to elementary students traveling to Wilson and St. Jude, bus stops serve students going to Longfellow, Wauwatosa East, and Marquette.

Avaroc Garcia-Valez, 613 N. 72nd Street, said about 100 children walk both ways to school every day. There have been numerous accidents and near-accidents, and traffic volume can be expected to continue to increase. LED lights would be more visible and get drivers' attention sooner, which is important since drivers cannot see the schools and may be unaware of their proximity.

Kristy Casey, 635 N. 78th Street, said that Wilson School is .4 of a mile down Honey Creek Parkway, and St. Jude's also cannot be seen from this area. It is very difficult to cross Wisconsin Avenue. There is room for two lanes and drivers focus on the signal at Glenview. Bus stops along Wisconsin Avenue are also frustrating to motorists. It seems that the flashing lights in the school zone on Glenview Avenue help slow traffic there, but they were not in place until after a child was hit. The parkway is also heavily used by runners, cyclists, and walkers, who also need to be protected.

Ald. Grimm said he appreciates Ald. Didier's efforts. He has observed the area himself and can confirm the comments that have been heard.

Mr. Kappel said that this is a potential stepping stone to efforts that could save money down the road and bring more attention to school zones. If successful, he would consider a phased-in approach to replacement of existing signs with solar LED signs over time. The signs are programmable, so they could be set to flash only as needed.

Ald. Herzog noted Mr. Kappel's strong favorable recommendation. In addition to helping with the school crossing, this is a good location for a test for the rest of the city.

Assuming that funding for the speed warning portion is approved by Budget and Finance, Mr. Kappel said that he should be able to do the installation before school begins. He recommended running the trial from the date of installation.

Moved by Ald. Treis, seconded by Ald. Donegan to approve a 90-day trial of a flashing, programmable LED school crossing sign on W. Wisconsin Avenue east of Honey Creek Parkway and an LED stop sign paddle, such trial commencing on the first day of school. Ayes: 5

Moved by Ald. Treis, seconded by Ald. Donegan to approve a 90-day trial of a solar speed awareness LED traffic monitor display device, contingent upon approval of funding, such trial commencing on the first day of school. Ayes: 5

The Chair commented on the unique factors at this intersection that, taken as a whole, make the request worthy of support. He asked about responsibility for replacement if damaged and also about durability of the LED stop sign paddle. Mr. Kappel said that, if struck by an auto, replacement costs would be the driver's responsibility.

The stop sign paddle isn't that heavy and its use is becoming more prevalent. If successful, the department would consider expanding that use. Mr. Kesner added that the city's crossing guard contractor has purchased and used LED stop sign paddles in a few locations and considered it successful. The paddles lasted throughout the school year.

Parking Changes in Roosevelt School Area

Mr. Kappel presented a plan for parking changes on the east side of N. 73rd Street that were recommended at the previous meeting as an alternative to one-way streets. The change would prohibit stopping, standing, or parking during drop-off and pick-up periods on school days, 7:30-8:30 a.m. and 3:00-4:00 p.m. Three-hour parking would be allowed between those times. This signage would prevent drivers from dropping off students across the street from the school rather than on the school side of the street. The committee has also asked the police department to enforce existing no parking on 73rd and 74th Streets.

Danette Braun, 7727 Livingston Avenue, noted that the first bell for school rings at 8:25 a.m. Mr. Kappel said that he would change the morning prohibition to 8 a.m. to 9 a.m.

Debra Dorn, 2526 N. 73rd Street, said she appreciates this approach and hopes that parents will comply. Police presence will also help. Kristy Casey, 635 N. 78th Street, commented on a similar situation at Wilson School. Tom Dorn, 2526 N. 73rd Street, felt that this change will make it significantly safer and will encourage traffic to flow on the school side.

Moved by Ald. Treis, seconded by Ald. Herzog to approve a 90-day trial, commencing on the first day of school, of no stopping, standing or parking on the east side of N. 73rd Street between W. Wright and W. Clarke Streets between the hours of 8 a.m. and 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. 4 p.m. and three-hour parking from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Ayes: 5

The meeting adjourned at 7:56 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

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