

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE REPORT
May 27, 2009, 2:05 PM
City Council Chambers

Members Present: Jason Wiener (Chair), Ed Childers, Dick Haines, Bob Jaffe, Renee Mitchell, Dave Strohmaier, Pam Walzer, John Hendrickson

Members Absent: Jon Wilkins

Others Present: Steve King, Kevin Slovarp, Jon Wilkins, Bob Giordano, Jim Hausauer, Ethel MacDonald, Mark Muir, Maxine Lane, Ryan Morton, Harold Hohne

I. ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

- A. Approve minutes of May 20, 2009 as submitted or corrected - Approved as submitted
- B. Announcements – Recent discussions with the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) regarding restriping and reconfiguring bike lanes have been positive. They will try to plan that into all future Missoula projects.
- C. Public Comment on Non-Agenda items – Ethel McDonald expressed concerns about the intersection of Reserve Street and Mullan Road. She stated that the redesign includes the loss of pedestrian islands, which would create a hazard. Also, the south side of South Avenue between Reserve Street and Village Health Care had no sidewalks, and the installation of sewer would be an excellent time to install sidewalks, she said.

Jim Hausauer stated that discussions about the crossing at CS Porter school suggested they should look at the speed limit on all of Reserve Street. He stated the speed showed an average of 42 mph at the 85th percentile, so the speed limits should be reduced.

Bob Giordano from the Missoula Institute for Sustainable Transportation (MIST) stated that it was encouraging to have dialogue on bike lanes and rail travel, and he was also concerned about losing the pedestrian islands and bike lane at Mullan and Reserve.

II. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

- 1. Review the Rattlesnake Valley traffic engineering study. (memo) (Speed Study) (Jason Wiener) (Referred to committee: 8/25/08) **REMOVE FROM AGENDA**

Motion: The committee recommends the City Council direct staff to draft a resolution to lowering speed limits to 30 mph on Rattlesnake Drive from Missoula Avenue to Creek Crossing and on the length of Duncan/Greenough.

Mr. King stated that in the Rattlesnake on Greenough Drive, Public Works moved the sign for the 25 mph zone based on a traffic study. The posting was done several years ago without Council concurrence, which was a mistake by Public Works staff. Council requested a speed study, which was performed last year, and the speed was still in the 35 mph range on that section of road. There would be a benefit to having smoother speeds, and they may want to have a 30 mph speed in between. The operating conditions, including wildlife, schools, and children, are known by the drivers.

Mr. Strohmaier stated that on Rattlesnake Drive, 30 mph could be appropriate on based on conditions and the speed of collector roadways in town. Mr. King stated that three of the sites where speeds were collected were on Rattlesnake Drive, and all were in the 35 mph speed zone area. Southbound between Murray and Powell, there was an average speed of 35 mph, with the 85th percentile at 38 mph. Northbound at Rattlesnake School, average speeds were 32 mph with the 85th percentile at 35 mph. Rattlesnake northbound north of Sunflower had average speeds of 35 mph with the 85th percentile 40 mph. That area has a posted speed limit of 35 mph. There is some traffic calming and sidewalks in progress in some areas. Mr. Strohmaier stated that he wanted to see Greenough Drive to Lolo Street, and Rattlesnake Drive from

Creek Crossing to Van Buren speeds lowered to 30 mph, which may deviate from the 85th percentile, but takes into account the extenuating circumstances of lack of pedestrian infrastructure and wildlife. He stated it would be worth considering a special school zone of 25 mph for Rattlesnake School.

Mr. Strohmaier made the motion to direct staff to draft a resolution to change speeds to 30 mph on Greenough/Duncan Drive, and Rattlesnake Drive from Missoula Avenue to Creek Crossing.

Mark Muir, Chief of Police, stated that the creation of a lower speed limit in an area where people feel comfortable driving on a physical roadway that lulls them into thinking they can drive faster results in higher incidence of speeding and the need for more enforcement. Change of behavior only occurs with a super saturation for a long term. Speeding occurs even beyond the levels of the heightened speed limits. Law enforcement can only effect change for limited periods of time; for a long-term behavior change, engineering is the only answer. On Waterworks Hill, they get speeders every day, regardless of the posted speed. It can create the idea they are trying to create speed traps, which leads to a negative view of the Police Department as just trying to make money. Engineering and enforcement are expensive; one without the other doesn't solve a long-term problem.

Mr. Childers asked whether the motion included road restructuring to make it a 30 mph road, with traffic calming. Mr. Wiener replied that it did not.

Mr. Strohmaier stated that some traffic calming is in the works by Rattlesnake School.

Bob Giordano of MIST and Greenough Drive and would advocate 25 mph there. He stated that if it was 25 mph, people would drive 30 mph. He stated that safety was a priority and wildlife was a problem. There was a narrow shoulder and he didn't want to see dead pedestrians or bicyclists. The stopping distance is twice as long at 35 mph as at 25 mph. He stated that 25 mph was a safe and reasonable speed.

Maxine Lane of Rattlesnake Drive stated that she would support a 25 mph speed limit on Rattlesnake and Greenough Drive. The safety of people crossing is paramount, and there was no school warning sign for Clark Fork preschool. From Missoula Street to Creek Crossing there are six bus stops and no crosswalks. Murray to Lolo is a major wildlife corridor. They have asked for traffic calming and for roundabouts, which would be good at the school especially. A good education program with good engineering and enforcement can change behavior.

Harold Hohne, a Rattlesnake resident, stated that the energy in an accident at 35 mph was doubled versus one going 25 mph, and the travel time saved was one minute. In the Lower Rattlesnake 25 mph is what they drive. There is no record of close calls. He stated that there were intermittent sidewalks and curbs and there were no bike lanes. He asked what was wrong with making money off a speed trap.

Ethel MacDonald stated that she wanted a 25 mph to keep it in compliance with the rest of the city and for safety reasons.

Ryan Morton stated he would support the 30 mph speed limit. The intersection of Greenough Drive with Cherry Gulch has sight obstructions and people going downhill are more likely to be increasing speed as they go around the corner. North of Cherry Gulch has more controlled access, but he was not sure why it was 35 mph at Cherry Gulch. It has made a difference to their quality of life.

Mr. Strohmaier stated that the motion was not meant to imply they should increase speed limits that were already posted at 25 mph.

Mr. Jaffe stated that he was supportive of the motion to lower the speed limits, and it was one step in the process to change behavior. He would like to see an ongoing effort to make modifications to roadway.

Mr. Wiener stated that when the item came back, they would hash out the particulars, and that the goal was a uniform speed limit, so some areas may go to 30 mph.

The motion passed with five ayes and three abstentions (Childers, Mitchell, Haines).

III. REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

1. Authorize speed limits (memo) (Speed Limits Memo – Steve King) (Presentation Maps).—Regular Agenda (Ed Childers) (Referred to committee: 12/08/08) **HELD IN COMMITTEE**

Steve King, Public Works Director, stated that the discussions were a follow-up to concerns about posting of speed limits in subdivisions and regular city streets without Council concurrence. The memo in the packet identifies the locations in the community that were a concern. It had discussion points and recommendations for action. He stated that Kevin Slovarp, current City Engineer, was not the City Engineer at the time the speed limits were posted.

2. Change the speed limit on George Elmer Drive to 30 mph throughout. (memo) (Speed Study) (Bob Jaffe) **HELD IN COMMITTEE**

Kevin Slovarp, City Engineer, stated that George Elmer Drive was designed as an access road for the first phases of the 44 Ranch subdivision and the speed limit was set at 45 mph in 2007 by Public Works and the consulting design engineer, which at the time was Mr. Slovarp. It is currently an access road to 44 Ranch, with no other subdivisions adjacent. There is a proposed roundabout at George Elmer Drive and Cattle Drive as part of the Flynn Ranch subdivision. When the speed limit was set in 2007, there was enough information to make a functional classification on the road, which helps set speed limits on new roads. The information was contained in the 2004 long-range transportation plan and the 2005 Wye/Mullan West comprehensive area plan, which was approved by Council. The information in both plans helped define the classification of the roadway to set the speed limit, but they were not entirely consistent in arterial and collector classifications. The subdivision was designed with limited access to George Elmer Drive. The Mullan Road vehicular volume count east of Flynn Lane was 12,460 when George Elmer Drive was built, which helps determine functional classification. George Elmer Drive could have comparable traffic when the area is fully built out and when it is connected to Broadway. Collector roads have approximately 1,000 to 8,000 vehicles per day and speeds of 25 to 35 mph. Arterials have between 4,000 and 15,000 vehicles per day with speeds ranging from 30 to 45 mph. The classification is useful for setting standards for ROW, spacing driveways, defining intersections, setting speed limits, and implementing street function features. George Elmer Drive had access management along the corridor by not allowing driveways from the homes in 44 Ranch and limiting access onto the road. It is a straight corridor with minor grades. It could be construed that it was constructed to either arterial or collector road standards, and Public Works recommends keeping the existing 45 mph speed limit until other subdivisions are built and create more side friction. New subdivisions will have new intersections, side friction, and can have roundabouts to physically reduce the speed. The roundabout at Cattle Drive should reduce speeds to 25 mph at and through the intersection. Another speed limit study can be conducted in the future as those factors change.

Mr. Jaffe stated that he agreed with everything presented; George Elmer Drive was engineered as a highway and higher speed was appropriate, but he worried they would run into trouble like on Reserve Street, with a park on one side of the street and subdivisions on the other. He stated that movement of cars was the only thought in mind, and the problem might happen in 20 years from now. Current conditions support the 45 mph, but now is the time to readjust it. He was not sure how to do it, but assumed traffic calming could be done now instead of waiting for future friction, because once people are used to it a certain way it becomes harder to change. He agreed that it was not a problem right now.

Mr. King stated that George Elmer drive was a city street, unlike Reserve Street. The Council has authority over approval of land development and road features and the ability to physically affect the street it chooses. They already have a comprehensive plan approved by the Council for that area. With subsequent developments, the Council has the ability to require intersections. Changes are not warranted until the neighborhoods are built out and there is no money to do it now.

Ms. Walzer asked what the speed limit study had to be to reduce speeds in the future. If they have concerns about kids crossing, and so on, and the Council wants the limit at 30 mph but a speed study doesn't support that, she asked what would be done. Mr. King stated that posting a sign does not change human behavior; it requires changes to the structure of roadway, enforcement, advocacy, and societal expectations as well. People will drive at the speed they perceive is appropriate for conditions. That has been shown in studies, including one which took place in over 100 locations in 22 states over several years.

Mr. Childers stated that with the Flynn Ranch subdivision, Council discussed expectations for traffic speeds in the future and thought 35 mph would be reasonable. Public Works thought it should be 45 mph. He would like some way for Council or Public Works change the limit to 40 mph or 35 mph when a certain condition is met. The speed should be reduced as drivers approach the roundabout intersection.

Mr. Strohmaier stated that when they have subdivision proposals, he was willing to condition them to get the speeds they want. It would be helpful for Public Works to make clear what speeds to expect from the engineering of the roadway, so they could require traffic calming as part of the proposal.

Bob Giordano from the Missoula Institute for Sustainable Transportation stated that the speed limit on George Elmer Drive should be 35 mph at most, and the roundabout speed should be 20 mph or less. Slowing down but smoothing out speeds reduces travel times.

IV. HELD AND ONGOING AGENDA ITEMS

1. Discussion on the sizes of grease interceptors for the restaurant industry ([Grease Interceptor PowerPoint](#)) ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Stacy Rye and Bob Jaffe) (Referred to committee: 04/21/08)
2. Consider restructuring the city's Sewer Loan Program along the lines of the recently approved change to the Sidewalk & Curb Loan Fund.—Regular Agenda ([Chapter 3.16 – Sidewalk & Curb Loan](#)) ([Chapter 3.18 Sewer Loan](#)) ([Ordinance 3344](#)) (Ed Childers) (Referred to committee: 06/26/06)
3. Discussion item to consider vacating portions of an 1896 petition County road on the westerly side of Miller Creek Road. ([memo](#)) (Monte Sipe) (Referred to committee: 10/6/08)
4. Discussion item regarding complete streets. ([memo](#)) (Jason Wiener) (Referred to committee: 10/27/08)
5. Information item to present the City's Master Sidewalk Plan. ([memo](#))—Regular Agenda (Doug Harby) (Referred to committee: 01/12/09)
6. Discuss CS Porter School Crossing issue and develop approaches to remediate ([memo](#)).—Regular Agenda (Ed Childers) (Referred to committee: 02/23/09)
7. Discussion of local, city-sponsored energy production ([memo](#)). (Ed Childers) (Referred to committee: 12/22/08)
8. [Resolution](#) of intention to close and vacate certain portions of Miller Creek Road and Lower Miller Creek Road generally located between Briggs and the "Wye". ([Resolution A](#)) ([Resolution B](#)) ([Staff Report](#)) ([map-6 MB file size](#)) ([memo](#)) ([PW](#)) (Returned from Council floor: 4/13/09)
9. \$500 rebate or coupon toward connection of sewer through December 31, 2009 for existing homes. ([memo](#)) ([SDF Ordinance Changes](#)) ([SDF Analysis](#)) (Returned from Council floor: 05/18/2009)

V. ADJOURNMENT

Respectfully Submitted,

Jessica S. Miller
Office Manager
City Public Works Department