



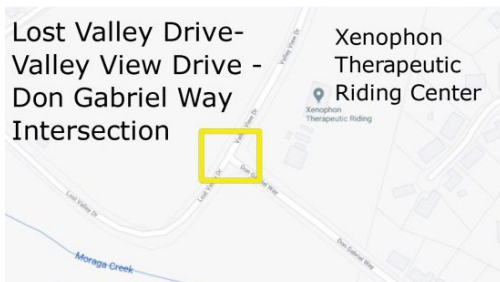
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## Council approves three-way stop signs at Lost Valley, Valley View and Don Gabriel Intersection

By Sora O'Doherty



Map provided

TSAC members in favor voiced agreement with the residents that the installation of all-way stop signs would increase safety, in particular to pedestrians, cyclists, and equestrians. City staff, however, did not recommend installation of the stop signs, maintaining that traffic in the area was not sufficiently high to warrant it, and that in such circumstances, stop signs could lead to an increase in rear-end traffic accidents. This did recommend that the council consider other traffic calming measures for the area.

Travis Blaschek-Miller, a volunteer with TSAC, who had been elected TSAC chair the night before the city council meeting, told the council, "Our bureaucracy is broken here. This group has faced hurdle after hurdle." TSAC prioritizes school routes, Blaschek-Miller told the council, and voted 3-2 to recommend the stop signs.

The council took into account that Don Gabriel Way is used by students to walk to Del Rey Elementary School. A number of those who commented about the stop signs were parents of Del Rey students, as well as staff of the Orinda Union School District. Alicia Shada, who lives on Valley View Drive, explained how her three children who bike to Del Rey have to leave 25 minutes early in order to miss high school students who are driving. She asked for both stop signs and speed cushions, as recommended by the TSAC.

Stuart House, OUSD director of facilities and newly elected vice-chair of the TSAC, told the council, "With respect to Larry Theis and the public works department, we felt very strongly" that stop signs are warranted because, he said, "this particular route has had speeders going up to 90 miles an hour, and goes by an equestrian center with children, some with disabilities, crossing the road."

Liz Daoust, president of OUSD board of trustees, was alerted to this issue two years ago and met with Stuart House and the neighborhood committee. As a runner who runs Lost Valley several times a week, she said that she has had to jump off the road to avoid cars. She also expressed great concern for students in the neighborhood and for children who attend Xenophon Therapeutic Riding Center. Executive Director of Xenophon Jean Johnstone told the council that the Center is "ground zero for this issue." She explained that the center straddles both sides of Don Gabriel Way and serves vulnerable populations including veterans with PTSD and children with disabilities. "We do not feel safe," she said. Speeding cars "spook the horses while vulnerable people are riding, and we can't use pastures across the street."

Daoust urged the council to adopt the stop signs, citing the great difference made to Glorietta Elementary School by the safety measures taken by the council. "Safety near our schools is paramount and time is of the essence," she said, since students are now back in school. "I understand that stop signs don't meet all the metrics, but safety feels more important than those metrics."

The area surrounding the intersection has been of concern to residents for years. There is a sharp curve on Lost Valley Drive where it passes a PG&E substation. Council Member Darlene Gee said that the council's concern is "making sure that whatever we do is truly effective." Council members have had personal experience of the traffic dangers in the area. Council Member Nick Kosla revealed that 30 years ago he was involved in a massive accident at that intersection.

"I thought there would be a three way stop already," he said, adding that he supported a three way stop sign. Vice Mayor Dennis Fay said he also supported the stop signs, although he had some concerns and mixed feelings. "Our son was just out of high school and his car went off the road there," he said, adding

The Orinda City Council heard hours of public comment for and against proposed stop signs at a controversial three-way intersection at its March 16 meeting. Having considered a number of ways to increase safety in the area, the council decided to approve the stop signs, but only as a first step in a campaign that may also include speed cushions and/or improved signage in the area. Official authorization will come on the consent calendar at the April 13 council meeting and Larry Theis, director of public works and assistant city manager, said the actual signs could be installed within a week after that. He agreed that the temporary sandwich signs will remain in place until the stop signs are installed.

At its Jan. 25 meeting, The Traffic Safety Advisory Committee recommended that city staff present the proposed installation of all-way stop signs at the intersection to the city council. The staff report said that

that he always thought the city needed to do something about that curve. Fay believes that speed cushions are more effective, but said, "if we do the stop signs, we can't forget the curve and Don Gabriel Way."

Some speakers were opposed to the proposed stop signs on the grounds that they would cause inconvenience and might hinder an evacuation in an emergency. Although the council agreed to the stop signs, they will continue to look for ways to make the three roads in the area safer for all in the future.

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