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## Council opts for speed reduction measures and parking restrictions in Burton Valley area

By Jennifer Wake



Children riding and walking in the travel lane on Merriewood Drive Photo City of Lafayette Staff Report

Finding safe routes to school has been a decades-long push for some Lafayette residents. Burton Valley Elementary School, tucked between Merriewood Drive and Rohrer Drive, is one of the only schools without dedicated sidewalks or pathways for pedestrians and cyclists, thus requiring students, pedestrians and bicyclists to enter traffic lanes to pass parked vehicles on the roadways.

After Lafayette city staff received a grant to conduct a year-long "Safe Routes to School" pilot study for the area, Engineering and Public Works Director Mike Moran and Associate Traffic Engineer Slavash Shojaat presented options to the city council Aug. 23 following four public Transportation and Circulation Commission meetings held to discuss safety alternatives. More than two dozen residents participated via Zoom in the Public Comment portion of the council meeting, with hundreds of emails and letters flooding city offices both for and against the proposed changes following TransCirc

meetings.

The most divisive issue, Moran noted in a staff report, involved the proposed installation of a berm-protected path, with some residents supporting the berm because it would provide a physical barrier and separation between pedestrians and vehicles, while others expressed concern that the berm would create a tripping hazard and present an obstacle for mail delivery and garbage pickup and create an additional parking hazard.

Merriewood Drive resident Joshua Baker, who is permanently disabled due to Multiple Sclerosis, spoke during the Public Comment portion of the meeting about his fear of the proposed project in front of his home and the dangers a berm would pose to him, due to his difficulty with balance and gait and his current need to use a cane.

Mike Maurer, who is an Americans with Disabilities Act expert and has been involved in this project, explained that installing a berm would be considered an alteration to the roadway and "if you're increasing the use or changing the use, that's going to be an ADA trigger."

According to the staff report, the proposed berm-protected path would not meet ADA requirements. Alteration to the road would trigger additional ADA compliance measures and the city would be required to flatten the cross slope existing on the shoulder. The cost would easily exceed \$700,000 to effectively reconstruct the entire street. "If you were really willing to spend that much money, you could probably pay for sidewalks," Moran said. Based on this information, staff did not support the installation of the berm-protected pathway.

Moran and the council also discussed pursuing a sidewalk option; an assessment district would need to be formed and residents would need to pay for construction and future maintenance of the sidewalks themselves through this assessment on their property taxes. While adding sidewalks would involve a lot of work, Moran said this is probably the best neighborhood to add sidewalks along Merriewood to Silverado.

The discussion turned to speed reduction and safety measures such as the addition of 11 speed humps, vegetation pruning and painting curbs red near corners to improve line of sight. Paint striping and speed humps would not trigger ADA compliance issues. The city council also discussed the addition of crosswalks at Merriewood Drive and Silverado Drive and having a speed survey done after the pilot program is complete.

After a lengthy discussion, council members voted to add parking restrictions during school days from 7 to 9 a.m. and 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. on the west side of Merriewood and Silverado from Merriewood to Community Park and the north side of Rohrer from Silverado to Merriewood. Staff would talk to the school district to verify hours prior to posting signs.

The council also directed Moran to return with a recommendation for a consultant to look for a best solution for a protective pathway and the possibility of installing a sidewalk.

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