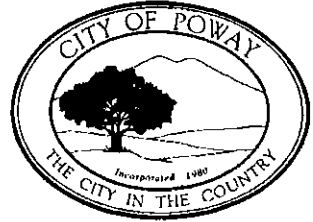


CITY OF POWAY

MEMORANDUM



TO: Traffic Safety Committee

FROM: Tom Frank, City Engineer *TF*

DATE: May 15, 2019

SUBJECT: Excessive speeding on Stone Canyon Road

BACKGROUND

The City received emails from a several residents regarding excessive speeding on Stone Canyon Road. The issues included:

1. The speed limit on Stone Canyon Road
2. Stone Canyon Road classification in the General Plan and a suggestion that it should be changed to Residential Collector
3. Safety concerns with existing conditions
4. An article from the Union Tribune regarding speed limits and enforcement

The article from the Union Tribune regarding speed limits and enforcement is provided in Attachment A.

In 2016, Stone Canyon Road received the existing edge striping as a result of the traffic calming program project effort. The City received positive feedback on the initial edge striping project, however, it has recently received feedback from residents that speeding on Stone Canyon Road is still a problem.

From follow-up discussions with the commenting resident, several residents are discussing the traffic issues and may be presenting the City with a subsequent petition.

Staff discussed the issues with residents providing the feedback and agreed to include the item in this Traffic Safety Committee Meeting agenda.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Traffic Safety Committee receive public comment and concur with an approach for staff to work with the neighborhood in conformance with the City's Traffic Calming Program.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Union Tribune Article by Joshua Emerson Smith dated April 21, 2019 – “San Diego communities have urged officials to keep speed limits low in conflict with state law. Now officers can’t use radar guns on those stretches of road.”

San Diego communities have urged officials to keep speed limits low in conflict with state law. Now officers can't use radar guns on those stretches of road. - The San Diego Union-Tribune - APRIL 21, by Joshua Emerson Smith dated April 21, 2019

San Diegans can drive with little fear of getting a speeding ticket on scores of streets throughout the city — including heavily trafficked stretches of Balboa Avenue, Camino del Rio South, Morena Boulevard, Clairemont Mesa Boulevard and even Zoo Place. The situation is the result of a little known state law that's vexing cities across California. It says that in many cases officials must raise speed limits or give up handing out tickets using radar or other electronic devices. While many San Diegans would rather see lower speed limits than more enforcement, others have called for allowing cars to go faster, said Wally Wulfeck, chair of the Community Planners Committee, which represents the city's more than 50 community planning groups. "It depends on the street," Wulfeck said. "Some say leave it low, other people say don't slow me down.

"In general, there's not enough (law enforcement) resources to really be serious about all this," he added. "If we say leave it at 25, maybe people will only go 35." Of the 656 streets that the city is responsible for setting speeds on, 103 had stretches where police are not allowed to enforce the speed limit by radar, according to data obtained by the Union-Tribune through a public records request. That's more than 110 miles of roadway where the police cannot crack down on speeders. The 4/24/2019 San Diego communities have urged officials to keep speed limits low in conflict with state law. Now officers can't use radar guns on those stretches of road. "Complaints about traffic safety are one of the forefront complaints," he said. "When we don't have the ability to enforce the speed, it's difficult to explain the situation to the public. That's frustrating for us and the community." It all comes down to the state's vehicle code, which requires local governments to update their speed limits every five to 10 years according to what's called the 85th percentile. To get that number, traffic engineers clock how fast cars are traveling on a given section of road. The fastest speed at which the bottom 85 percent of vehicles travel — rounded to the nearest multiple of five — constitutes the new state-mandated speed limit. Put another way, if an engineer records the speed of 100 cars, the 16th fastest vehicle determines the new speed limit. The thinking being that only about 15 percent of people drive recklessly fast. The state law is intended to prevent cities from setting up speed traps while encouraging a smooth flow of traffic. Municipalities are only responsible for conducting these speed surveys on busy arteries, while residential and school zones are set by state law at 25 miles per hour. However, while cities are conducting the speed surveys, they have been declining to update the speed limits on their streets, largely because of neighborhood opposition but also because of concerns about pedestrian injuries and deaths.

Which roads are and aren't radar enforceable is shared with traffic courts, and defense attorneys routinely demand to see the data. San Diego is no different. Engineering officials in the city have said they have intentionally declined to update speed limits after reaching out to communities and determining what's best for public safety. Such decisions are not approved by elected officials in San Diego. "We have consulted with the police department, and we have consulted with the planning groups, and at times we've also consulted with the elected officials and made the determination that the posted speed limit should remain the way it is," said Julio Fuentes, senior traffic engineer with the

Attachment A

city's Department of Transportation and Storm Water. The issue of vehicle speed has taken on growing significance in recent years as cities across the country have embraced Vision Zero, an international campaign to end all traffic-related fatalities by 2025. A pedestrian hit by a car going 20 miles an hour has a 10 percent chance of being killed, compared to an 80 percent chance of death when a vehicle is traveling 40 miles per hour, according to UC Berkeley's Safe Transportation Research and Education Center, or SafeTREC. At the same time, a vehicle's stopping distance increases by 45 feet when traveling 25 miles per hour versus 30 miles per hour, according to the group. "The data shows that speed kills," said Tracy McMillan, a researcher at SafeTREC. "As you increase speed, the risk of serious injury and fatality increases and it increases significantly when we're talking about vulnerable road users, pedestrians and people that are cycling.

McMillan said the major factor determining how fast people drive is not speed limits or the fear of tickets but how streets are designed. However, if speed limits get too high on any particular stretch of road it can be difficult to safely install traffic-calming measures, such as narrowing streets or installing bike lanes and crosswalks. While critics argue the state's system puts people in danger, supporters counter that it allows for the free flow of traffic, ensuring the timely delivery of goods and faster commute times. "Granted drivers are kind of the main users of the road, and there need to be better protections for pedestrian and bicyclists but not necessarily at the cost of restricting driving," said Gary Biller, president of the National Motorists Association. "You get rid of the 85th percentile and it opens up the process to an arbitrariness," he added. "Not only would it create traffic congestion and the loss of productivity, but truck and commerce traffic gets really affected, cost of goods go up." Some cities, such as New York have had some success in limiting the number of pedestrians injured and killed by drivers, in part by lowering speed limits. But in Southern California pledges to save lives have so far not yielded encouraging results. Pedestrian deaths doubled in the city of San Diego in 2018 over the previous year, and in Los Angeles someone is killed by a car every 40 hours on average. The city of Los Angeles put off increasing its speed limits for so long that at one point it couldn't enforce them with radar on nearly one in five street sections it surveys. In December, the city decided to raise speed limits on more than 100 miles of road. "Three years ago, only 18 percent of city streets had enforceable speed limits, and people were speeding with impunity," Anna Bahr, spokeswoman for Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti, said in a statement. "Today, we've completed the state's required survey, and virtually 100 percent of L.A.'s streets will have an enforceable speed.

Many smaller cities have also voiced concerns about the unintended impacts of the 85th percentile rule. Last year, the state Legislature approved Assembly Bill 2363, creating a task force to deliver recommendations on how it could be modified or replaced. Assemblywoman Laura Friedman, D-Glendale, authored the legislation after grappling with the issue as a member of the Glendale City Council. "Without being able to really control the speed limit it was hard to do the holistic traffic calming that we would want," she said. "There were times when you would not only have to keep the speed limit the same, there were times you would have to raise the speed limit because of the way people had been driving in the past." The Zero Traffic Fatalities Task Force is slated to deliver a report to lawmakers in early 2019. The group is expected to include a wide variety of interests, including Automobile Club of Southern California and other groups that have been skeptical of overhauling the current formula.