



Legislation Text

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City Council Meeting Date: October 19, 2021

To: Mayor and City Council
City Administrator

From: David Bennett, Public Works Director/City Engineer

Discussion of Lincoln Parkway/Greenvale School Vehicle Congestion and Related Street, Pedestrian and Bicycle Design.

Action Requested:

The Northfield City Council discusses Lincoln Parkway/Greenvale Park Elementary School Vehicle Congestion and Related Street, Pedestrian and Bicycle Design.

Summary Report:

There has been some public concerns and issues raised related to traffic, pedestrian, and bike safety on Lincoln Parkway in the area of Greenvale Elementary School and the Northfield Community Education Center (NCEC).

Staff met with school representatives from Greenvale and the NCEC on October 2 along with community volunteers who were working on the Walk to School Day event. Concerns raised deal with peak time of drop-off and pick-up at the Greenvale, but also concerns raised outside of those peak times related to safety.

The new Greenvale Elementary School is in its second year of opening and the first year was disrupted with COVID. Staff had a follow-up meeting with district staff on October 13, to listen to observation or issues they are observing. At the meeting, the school district shared the following items:

- Lack of off-street staff parking at the NCEC. Staff need to park on Lincoln Parkway due to lack of off-street parking.
- Two documented crossing guard violations for the current 2021-2022 school year to date. The primary concern is occurring in the southerly lane on Lincoln Pkwy, because the guards are on the north side.
- During pickup, vehicles are regularly backing out onto Lincoln Parkway due to lack of length in the pickup lane.
- Greenvale 2021 school enrollment is roughly 430 students (Note: the projected enrollment growth at the school is 170 students, 600 students total).
- Some parents dropping off and picking up on Lincoln Parkway rather than on the interior drop off/pick up area.
- 50 plus students have opened enrolled, which means they are outside of the walking distance and busing services aren't provided, so parents need to drive their kids to school.

The items the school district identified have been observed by staff during visits/observation of the traffic during drop-off and pickup times. The pickup time in the afternoon is definitely experiencing more traffic issues, as parents arrive early, the pickup lane is full, and there are 10-15 cars parked on the north side of Lincoln Parkway. At the meeting, Police Chief Mark Elliott reviewed the reported crashes to the police department. There has been one crash on September 23rd, it was a westbound vehicle stopped waiting to turn into Greenvale, and was rear ended. The driver that rear ended the other vehicle indicated that the morning sun was in their eyes and didn't see the vehicle that was stopped. No other crashes have been reported to police since the beginning of the school year. In addition, the City has a portable speed trailer, staff was able to look back to Lincoln Parkway data from September 2018 (note this is prior to the new school opening) and the 85% percentile vehicle speed was 31 MPH and .08% exceeding 40 MPH. Therefore, the data results from that speed survey using the speed trailer would indicate the road is functioning properly and within engineering standards with appropriate compliance with the set speed limit of 30 mph.

Thoughts moving forward:

As part of the new Greenvale School, the following condition was added as part of their approval:

Conditional Site Plan Approval

The City approves the Site Plan with the Condition that the School District update the traffic study two years after the new elementary school is open, all services have been relocated and are operating in the old school now the Early Childhood School. The reason for this condition is that the school district is using the best information they have available related to how programming will work in the ECFE building and new elementary school in the traffic model. This information was used in the traffic model for the project to see if there were impacts on the surrounding roadway network.

If school programming is causing unanticipated traffic issues to the roadway network, the School District will be responsible for solutions, which could result in public street improvements and modifications.

Short Term - Fall of 2021

- Staff is pursuing a contractor to move the dynamic speed signs from Second Street to Lincoln Parkway (Note: Staff tried early this summer in partnership and support of the school district, but contractors were too busy and wouldn't provide pricing).
- No parking signs and yellow curb by the crosswalks. This will create setbacks from parking too close to the crosswalk and provide sight lines to pedestrians.
- No parking signs and yellow curb a significant distance east of the Greenvale School entrance. This is anticipated to serve as a more temporary right turn stacking area during drop off and pick up rather than parking.
- More Flagger Training for School District staff. The Police Chief has indicated that training can be very effective at reducing and eliminating crossing guard violations. The current training is under review for potential expansion of training.
- Staff is pursuing the installation of speed counters out before snowfall to get updated speed data.
- Northfield Public Schools is exploring possible contracted parking in the area to serve the staff for added parking.
- Northfield Public Schools expressed interest in coordinating ongoing group walk to school efforts at Greenvale.

Long Term 2022-2023

- The school district is committed to updating its traffic study, this will occur in the spring/fall of 2022.
- The City will complete an independent study in the Spring/Fall of 2022 to complete a thorough observation and data review on Lincoln Parkway Corridor to identify design options to prioritize pedestrian and biking safety along the corridor while also reviewing options for flow of traffic and parking.

There may be opportunities during and after the study in consultation with design consultants analysis to complete temporary trial design changes (delineators, painted bike lanes, signage, biking/walking programs, parent and student education, etc.) in 2022 in conjunction with the study period and prior to significant construction plans.

Major design and construction changes will be considered with the study to add into the 2023 construction plans or later dependent on City Council prioritization and direction.

Greenvale Elementary School Principal Sam Richardson and Northfield Community Development Director Erin Bailey will be in attendance to give the perspectives of Northfield Public Schools and answer any questions.

Alternative Options:

Additional design changes are recommended to be considered in the studies completed in 2022 rather than implementing now.

Financial Impacts:

- A. The school district will split the no parking signs, painting and relocation of the dynamic speed signs on a 1:1 match basis with the City.
- B. Future Long Term improvements are to be determined. There is a conditional approval of Greenvale School from “unanticipated traffic issues to the roadway network” of which the “...School District will be responsible for solutions, which could result in public street improvements and modifications. “

Tentative Timelines:

- See memo for explanation of timing.