

CITY OF NEWARK
Newark, Delaware

Traffic Committee Minutes
August 16, 2022
3:30 p.m.

Members Present: DC Mark Farrall, Tim Filasky, Marvin Howard, Dave Gula, Tom Parkins, Lt. Chris Jones

Guests (In-person): Cathy Johnston
Richard Turner

Guests (Virtual): Dwendolyn Creecy, Councilwoman
Margaretann O'Rourke
Tom Rogers
Josh Shannon, Newark Post

Meeting Convened: 3:30 p.m. Council Chambers (In-person)/Microsoft Teams (Virtual)

Deputy Chief Mark Farrall called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m. and thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

1. Request for a "Children at Play" sign on Peach Road.

DC Farrall read the request into the record. The request was received from a resident through an email to Councilwoman Creecy. The resident states her family purchased a home in 2019 and has a one-year-old daughter. She would like to encourage through traffic on Peach Road to slow down. She also said her neighbors across the street have young children as well.

DC Farrall said Murray Road intersects with Peach Road and is an L shaped road connecting S. Main Street and W. Park Place. DC Farrall said currently a "Slow Children at Play" sign exists eastbound on Murray Road however, traffic from Park Place onto Peach Road doesn't see the same type of sign. DC Farrall noticed in traveling throughout the city other residential streets have some version of this type of sign.

Mr. Filasky said the city must follow state and federal guidelines regarding signage. The general consensus is “Children at Play”, or “Slow Children at Play” are not acceptable within the MUTCD manual. The appropriate sign is a “Watch Children” sign or to add a “Watch Children” rider/plaque under the existing sign. Mr. Filasky doesn’t intend to take down the existing sign until it becomes unreadable. Mr. Filasky said he feels this sign is appropriate due to the residential nature and temptation for traffic to use as a cut through. Mr. Filasky said he would put this sign up where appropriate and leave the existing sign as well.

Motion by Marvin Howard, seconded by Dave Gula to add “Watch Children” to the existing sign on Murray Road and install additional signage on Peach Road where appropriate

Vote: 5 to 0, Unanimous

2. Request to install 4-way stop intersections on Barksdale Road at Rahway Drive, Blue Hen Ridge and Country Hills Drive and reduce the speed limit to 35 mph.

DC Farrall said this request was received by Councilmember Suchanec due to a constituent speeding complaint.

DC Farrall said Lt. Jones and the Traffic Unit conducted a speed survey on Barksdale Road in the area of Country Hills Drive which is a 40-mph zone. In both directions, at the Christina River the speed limit changes westbound from 35 mph to 40 mph and eastbound from 40 mph to 35 mph.

DC Farrall stated in June 2022 for one week, the speed measuring equipment was installed in westbound direction from 6/2-6/9 and eastbound direction from 6/10-6/17. The equipment was activated in “dark mode” meaning motorists are unaware of the speeds being recorded. DC Farrall stated a speed study is generally conducted first to determine if complaints are merely perceived or are justified.

DC Farrall said data in the westbound direction on Barksdale Road with a speed limit of 40 mph, indicated an average speed of 37.3 mph and the 85th percentile speed was 46 mph.

DC Farrall said data collected in the eastbound direction on Barksdale Road with a speed limit of 40 mph, indicated an average speed of 39.1 mph and the 85th percentile speed was 45 mph.

In addition, DC Farrall asked Lt. Jones to compile crash data within the last year for the entire length of Barksdale Road. DC Farrall said there were a total of 3 crashes and all 3 involved vehicles vs. animals.

DC Farrall confirmed with Mr. Filasky that the MUTCD manual states stop signs are not used to control speed. Mr. Filasky confirmed this is correct and added as it would seem most may believe stop signs would slow speeds, stop signs are not a measure to make people slow down. Mr. Filasky said 3 way and 4 way stop intersections provide a false sense of security that motorists will stop. This can create a much larger cause for safety and concern when motorists don't stop for stop signs. Mr. Parkins agreed with what was said.

Mr. Gula said with his work for WILMAPO it has been found that roadway design is more effective in controlling speed than stop signs or speed bumps. For example, wide lanes, motorists will generally travel faster. Mr. Gula also stated police officers on patrol are dealing with manpower constraints and generally have larger concerns than dealing with speed enforcement. Mr. Gula said stop signs aren't used to control speed, however in the long-term looking at the design of the road to include reducing lane width. Mr. Howard agrees stop signs aren't a favorable direction to proceed and feels based on the results of the study, speeding, in this case, seems to be a perception.

Public Comment:

DC Farrall read an email received from a resident into the record that was unable to attend the meeting. "I am a resident of Briarcreek in Newark and drive Barksdale Road every day. I fail to see the need for three stop signs in such short increments along that road. To encourage drivers not to speed, could you not set random law enforcement checks such as those on Route 4 between Elkton Road and 896, or speed bumps to slow rather than stop traffic? My opinion is that three stop signs in tandem is too much of a nuisance and could be handled in better ways."

Ms. Cathy Johnston lives on Rahway Drive and has lived there for 50 years. Ms. Johnston stated she is a walker. Ms. Johnston said the stop signs are overkill and will cause trouble. Ms. Johnston said the speeding is not that bad and stated there are a lot of people taking their kids to school and feels all of these stop signs will only aggravate people.

Mr. Turner lives in Elan off of Barksdale Road and has lived there for 40 years. Mr. Turner said like the old saying, "If it isn't broke don't fix it". Mr. Turner made a recommendation to consider reducing the speed limit to 25 mph. Mr. Filasky said the speed limit is based on the 85th percentile based on the free flow of traffic and speed data collected may actually suggest a slightly higher speed limit than 40 mph. Mr. Filasky feels the current speed limit at 40 mph is appropriate.

Mr. Rogers has lived in Abbottsford for 30 years and stated he travels this road frequently. He agreed with Ms. Johnston that this request is wacky. Mr. Rogers said all of these stop signs within 1600 feet would create a backlog. Mr. Rogers would characterize Barksdale Road as one of the safest roads he has traveled. Mr. Rogers

agreed with others that the speeding is usually those traveling from Maryland but doesn't feel as though it is excessive.

Ms. O'Rourke has been a resident of Abbotsford for 31 years. Ms. O'Rourke feels any stop signs would be excessive. Ms. O'Rourke has been a runner and walker along this road with animals and small children. Ms. O'Rourke said she has never felt endangered and doesn't believe traffic is excessive and feels safe. Ms. O'Rourke feels stop signs would make motorists aggressive just to get through them and as a result would make the road dangerous. Ms. O'Rourke said she appreciated the speed study being completed proactively and feels the results of the study confirmed how she feels.

DC Farrall said Mr. Suchanec would like the Traffic Committee to consider all options to enforce the speed on this stretch of road. DC Farrall stated Mr. Suchanec didn't have the speed data prior to sending his email and was unaware that speeding appears to be more of perceived problem than an actual problem. Mr. Suchanec suggested using the illuminated speed signs to display speeds of the driver. DC Farrall said we do have this equipment, however, have found it doesn't have a big impact on driver behavior. DC Farrall said following this meeting we would temporarily deploy the signs to this area.

Mr. Parkins asked if the intersection of Valley Road and Barksdale Road is considered Delaware or Maryland. DC Farrall said it is Delaware, however the crest of the hill is Maryland. Mr. Gula said the next time Barksdale Road is due for repaving he would recommend considering reducing lane widths to reduce speed.

There was no motion on the table.

Vote: 0 to 5, motion dies.

Ms. Creecy asked if a speed study is being conducted on Madison Drive. DC Farrall said that is ongoing, however the committee is discussing Barksdale Road. Ms. Creecy said she agrees if someone is given a ticket there and there is a police officer in that area it would tend to slow motorists down. Ms. Creecy said she doesn't want to be the person caught there with a random ticket. Ms. Creecy said she agrees with the last person that spoke.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:09 p.m.



Mark Farrall, Deputy Chief