

CITY OF NEWARK
Newark, Delaware

Traffic Committee Minutes
June 18, 2024
3:30 p.m.

Members Present: Chief Mark Farrall, Stefan Rukowicz (Proxy for Tim Filasky), Marvin Howard, Dave Gula, Tom Parkins

Guests: Paul Eldridge, Newark Resident
Cynthia Barry, Newark Resident
Mike Ferrara, Newark Resident
Tarra Mays, Newark Resident
Mike Woodside, Newark Resident

The meeting was called to order at 3:33 p.m. by Chief Mark Farrall, Chairman.

1. Request an all-way stop at the intersection of Mulberry Road and South Dillwyn Road.

Chief Farrall said this item was reviewed by the Traffic Committee back in October of 2018. This was a resident request through Mayor Clifton and following the study and discussion the Traffic Committee did not support the addition of a 4-way stop at this location.

On March 4, 2024, there was an accident at this same interstation, prompting another resident request for an all way stop at this location. Our Traffic Division completed a speed study, and the Public Works Department completed a stop sign/line of sight analysis.

Mr. Rukowicz is the Public Works Department, Planning and Design Engineer, and presented an all-way stop traffic warrant analysis. The police department provided a 10-year span of crash data and a recent speed and volume study that was conducted for one week in April. This data was then applied to the criteria with DelDOT's MUTCD to perform an all way stop analysis.

Mr. Rukowicz said S. Dillwyn Road is the major road at the intersection with no stop sign. Both Adelene Drive and Mulberry Road have stop signs. The main criteria reviewed were frequency of crashes, traffic volumes and sight distance issues.

From March 2014 through March 2024, there were six (6) reported crashes. Typically, to warrant an all-way stop according to DelDOT's standards there would need to be at least five (5) crashes within a one-year period. Data reflected all the crashes were due to inattentive driving, and speed was not a factor for any of the crashes.

Mr. Rukowicz stated volume data was received from the police department. The volume did not meet the criteria according to the MUTCD. To warrant volume, it would require at least 300 vehicles per hour within an 8-hour time span.

Mr. Rukowicz said the speed study revealed the 85th percentile speed in the northbound direction on S. Dillwyn Road was 27 mph with a posted speed limit of 25 mph. A design speed is calculated as 5 mph over the speed limit, to 30 mph. In this case, the 85th percentile speed was in fact lower than the design speed. Data was also collected in 2018 and 2021 and both of those years the 85th percentile speed was less than 30 mph. Based on this data, the speed was within the tolerance of the roadway.

Mr. Rukowicz said intersection sight distance was also reviewed. On a 25-mph road, a 30-mph design speed was used. There is a certain distance to be provided for a motorist turning off the minor roads to see a vehicle from a certain distance away. Mr. Rukowicz said both Mulberry Road and Adelene Avenue looking in both directions met the sight distance for a 30-mph design speed.

Mr. Paul Eldridge lives at 19 Wynwood Road. In 2018, the president of the civic association brought before Councilmember Clifton at which time signs were installed advising of cross traffic. Mr. Eldridge said the biggest issue he sees is no stop at all. He stated he is completely opposed to the request.

Ms. Barry said she's lived in Windy Hills for 46 years. She states due to the offset it is a much wider intersection making it difficult for pedestrians to get across. Ms. Barry said for the pedestrians this is not a safe intersection.

Ms. Mays said upon exiting the neighborhood a motorist coming up Mulberry Road as she was on S. Dillwyn Road didn't stop. She also stated she walks throughout the neighborhood. She said it is a difficult intersection to cross. She said if an all-way stop isn't approved, she would recommend consider wayfinders or installing a crosswalk. She said it is very challenging as there are many pedestrians and feels it isn't safe.

Mr. Ferrara said he sent an email that he would like read into the record. Chief Farrall stated he would read his email into the record.

Chief Farrall read the below email into the record:

"The statement that there is a lot of speeding isn't supported by the data. The statement that there have been a lot of accidents here is not supported by the data. And to suggest that you have to run to get across the street is a gross exaggeration. And what constitutes a near miss.

This is not data, this is perception. I agree with the statement of Lt. Aniunas at the meeting on 8/21/18. His experience with stop signs can lead to bad behavior overall due to motorists running stop signs. Cpl. Vernon made a similar statement at the meeting on 8/21/18. There have been studies conducted with stop signs installed at 4-way intersections throughout the country. Statistics show out of 100 cars only 5-20 make a legal stop, 40-60 perform a rolling stop and go through the intersection at 5 mph or less and 20-40 cars go through the intersection over 5 mph. As the right of way is clearly defined adding two additional stop signs will confuse the right of way and cause more problems than it solves. It is my understanding that the decision to install the additional stop signs should be driven by data and the data clearly doesn't support this change. I don't believe that simply wanting an intersection like Park Place is a sufficient reason to add the additional stop signs. I have not seen the results of the line-of-sight survey but in my 50 years of going through that intersection in a car, motorcycle, bicycle and as a pedestrian I have never had an issue with line of sight or had to run to cross the street safely. For these reasons, I urge the committee to vote no on the request to add additional stop signs to this intersection. Thank you."

Chief Farrall read an email into the record received by Newark resident Valerie McCartan.

"Dear City of Newark Traffic Committee, I write in opposition to the request for an all-way stop at the intersection of Mulberry Road and S. Dillwyn Rd. in Windy Hills. As a 20-year resident of the community and active walker who often crosses as a pedestrian at this and other intersections in the neighborhood, I see a lot of poor driver behavior, including motorists blowing through stop signs on every side street that leads into S. or N. Dillwyn. The behavior problem is not just limited to the intersection in question, and so the problem is a broader one than added stop signs can resolve. Furthermore, the proposal does not meet certain criteria required by the MUTCD for placement of an all-way stop sign and has potential to cause more safety hazards than those the lack of an all-way stop is said to create.

I understand from a past review of this issue that the intersection did not qualify on a number of counts. One was the engineering and geometry of the intersection, which is stated as important criteria in the MUTCD. Because Mulberry comes into S. Dillwyn at a greater than 90 degree angle, the intersection doesn't lend itself well to the four approaches treating each other as equal. All-way stop signs are best situated at intersections where the roads come together and traffic faces the other at 90 degree angles.

Second, traffic flow through the intersection of an all-way stop should be of a minimum volume and each approach should have about equal traffic volume. Although I have not seen the data collected, my educated guess is that the traffic volume does not meet the minimum amount required and that the volume of traffic on S. Dillwyn in each direction is greater than the combined volume of traffic approaching the intersection from Mulberry and Adelene. The imbalanced volume of traffic, with S. Dillwyn serving as the major road in and out of the development, makes this intersection a poor choice for an all-way stop. I am concerned that an all-way stop could create more safety hazards with traffic traveling on S. Dillwyn in either direction being rear-ended or traffic crossing from Adelene or Mulberry getting T-boned by traffic on S. Dillwyn that does not abide by the new stop sign.

I learned through a post on NextDoor, that the main support for placement of the all-way stop is generated by safety concerns for children waiting for the bus stop at this intersection. Of course, children's' safety is paramount. However, the corner of this intersection should NOT be the designated bus stop. DE Regulation 1150 School Transportation Responsibilities of Districts and Charter Schools 3.1.24.1.2 states that "Bus stops should not be within 100 feet of an intersection and shall not be within an intersection." No school district's bus should be stopping anywhere near this intersection. 100 feet from it is approximately midway along Adelene between the intersections of Hawthorne and S. Dillwyn. I would recommend contact with the school districts to ensure their drivers are aware of this requirement in the law, or request that bus stops be moved away from this location altogether. Less traveled roadways in Stafford and Windy Hills seem more appropriate for school bus stops.

There are other ways that the concern raised could be addressed. 1) Speed enforcement. Motorists definitely travel up S Dillwyn from Kirkwood Hwy and throughout the neighborhood at speeds sometimes well-exceeding 25 mph. I stated above, the overall problem is not limited to this intersection and is caused by broader poor motorist behavior habits. 2) Pruning the purple leafed tree at the NE corner of S. Dillwyn would aid motorists' sight distance as they approach the intersection from Mulberry and S. Dillwyn exiting the neighborhood, 3) establishing no parking on the SE corner of S. Dillwyn and the SE corner of Adelene, (Title 21, Section 4179(e)(7) of the Delaware Code states, "no parking within 30 feet upon the approach to any flashing beacon, stop sign or traffic-control signal"). Establishing this requirement would aid in providing sufficient lane availability and sight distance for traffic turning right from Adelene onto S. Dillwyn and would minimize traffic turning right from Adelene onto S. Dillwyn having to utilize the middle of the roadway to avoid vehicles that are sometimes parked too close to the corner, and finally, again, 4) contact with the school District, asking that they move the bus stop in question or ensure that they are abiding by the 100 feet stop from an intersection requirement required by Delaware regulation as stated above.

I appreciate your consideration of these concerns and hope the Committee will discuss alternate traffic safety options with the residents who raised this issue."

Mr. Mike Woodside said he is the president of the Windy Hills civic association. He said the issue with the intersection is that it is a pedestrian safety issue. He has crossed this road many times and is a safety concern during Halloween. Mr. Woodside requested a copy of the study. Mr. Woodside stated there is a home located on the southeast corner that has five vehicles lined up along S. Dillwyn Road that you must creep out into the intersection to see to pull out. Mr. Woodside said he hoped the committee would vote in favor of the all-way stop at this intersection and thanked the committee for their time.

Mr. Parkins asked when the study was conducted was it observed if motorists were obeying the stop signs on Mulberry Road and Adelene Drive. Mr. Rukowicz said during the time he was out there he did not notice motorists not obeying the stop signs.

Chief Farrall said he believes the problem with crashes and reports of speeding, it seems to be more of the outliers.

Mr. Parkins believes an all-way stop provides a false sense of security and can be more dangerous. Mr. Parkins said if stop signs are placed and enforceable he doesn't believe it would impede anyone's life.

Mr. Gula said he is with the Wilmington Area Planning Council. Mr. Gula said he is not in favor of stop signs as a safety measure. However, there may be alternative safety solutions to consider at this intersection considering the width of the roadway and potential line of sight concerns with vehicles parking along the roadway. Mr. Rukowicz said based on the data, it doesn't support all way stop control but there may be things that can be done to improve the intersection to address the line-of-sight issue. Mr. Gula suggested striping at the intersection to enforce illegally parked vehicles. Mr. Gula is in favor of striped crosswalks or a sign to stop for pedestrians in the crosswalk. Mr. Rukowicz said they can investigate this. Mr. Rukowicz said this could also create a false sense of security as well if motorists don't yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk.

Chief Farrall said other safety measures that don't require an ordinance change could be implemented through the Public Works Department and wouldn't need approval from the Traffic Committee. Chief Farrall said he would agree that stop signs and crosswalks provide a false sense of security.

Mr. Parkins made a motion, seconded by Mr. Howard, to install an all-way stop at the intersection of Mulberry Road and S. Dillwyn Road.

Vote Failed: 0 to 4

Ms. Mays asked when the study was conducted the intersection was observed and asked how often this occurs. Chief Farrall said it is not routinely performed at intersections. It occurs when a request/complaint is received. Mr. Rukowicz said he performed his site inspection during 3:30-4:00 p.m. Ms. Mays suggested performing a site visit at the intersection during rush hour times before 9:00 a.m. and evenings between 4-6 p.m. Ms. Mays said there a couple other streets to observe Hillcroft Road and Newbrook Road. Chief Farrall said these roads are not within city limits and wouldn't fall withing the purview of the City of Newark or Newark Police Department. Chief Farrall said the City of Newark is working on a pilot program for speed bumps within the City of Newark.

Mr. Gula said WILMAPCO hosts projects called walkable community workshops. You would apply to WILMAPCO for staff to review during traffic hours and review challenges and work with the community to find solutions to issues. This is one option to consider through www.wilmapco.org to setup a public forum to go through the process. Chief Farrall and Ms. Mays thanked Mr. Gula for this information.

2. Request to remove parking on Hillside Road between New London Road and W. Main Street.

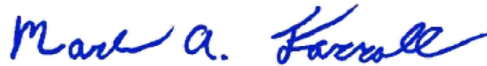
Chief Farrall said this was an oversight when DelDOT redesigned this stretch of road. The parking signs were never removed, and it was never removed from the municipal code.

Chief Farrall said the way the road and lane markings are designed parking on this road is not feasible based upon the design of the roadway.

Motion by Dave Gula, seconded by Tom Parkins to remove parking on Hillside Road between New London Road and W. Main Street.

Vote Passed: 4 to 0, Unanimous

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:17 p.m.



Chief Mark Farrall, Chairman