



Legislation Text

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Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Update.

Staff:

Chris Blue, Chief
Donnie Rhoads, Captain
Bergen Watterson, Transportation Planning Manager

Department:

Police
Police
Planning

Overview: The Town of Chapel Hill strives to be a community where bicycling and walking are safe and convenient, everyday choices. Staff work hard to make our policies, ordinances, programs, and infrastructure the best they can be to encourage and support non-motorized transportation. However, the period between December 31, 2021 and February 1, 2022 saw nine people, including five children, injured in six different crashes with people driving cars.

Council will receive an update on Town bicycle-pedestrian safety initiatives and projects, an overview of the recent crashes and Town response, and next steps and upcoming projects to improve safety for vulnerable road users.

Next steps: In response to the recent string of bicycle and pedestrian crashes noted above, the Chapel Hill Police Department has stepped up its crosswalk enforcement efforts, committing to 4-hour operations twice a week for the next 6 weeks at high crash risk locations, and 3 times daily as part of regular traffic operations. In addition, The Town is making interim safety improvements on Estes Drive before the Estes Drive Connectivity Project begins construction in the spring:

- Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) will be installed at the Caswell Rd./Estes Dr. and Somerset Dr./Estes Dr. crosswalks as early as next week, and at the Granville Rd./Estes Dr. crosswalk in March or April.
- Flashing speed display signs are on order and will be installed at the edges of the school zone on Estes Dr. in the next month.

Staff is coordinating with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) to conduct a speed study on Estes Drive and a comprehensive evaluation of traffic signals in Town and potential safety improvements. Additionally, staff will collaborate with the Highway Safety Research Center (HSRC) on additional safety studies and data collection. Finally, a number of capital projects are underway or set to begin soon that will improve safety and accessibility for bicyclists and pedestrians in Town (more detail will be provided in the presentation).



Recommendation(s):

That the Council receive the update and offer feedback.

Key Issues:

- The Town has several ongoing bicycle-pedestrian safety efforts: staff Bike/Ped Team, Vision Zero, Watch for Me NC, and Governors Highway Safety Program enforcement.
- Chapel Hill's Vision Zero program is gaining momentum with the launch of the Executive Committee and several pedestrian safety projects underway around Town.

- In 2019, there were 43 crashes involving bicyclists or pedestrians, including 1 fatality and 0 serious injuries.
- In 2020, there were 38 crashes involving bicyclists or pedestrians, including 1 fatality and 2 serious injuries.
- In 2021, there were 38 crashes involving bicyclists or pedestrians, including 1 fatality and 7 serious injuries.

Fiscal Impact/Resources: The near-term safety improvements require funding; some through a generous donation and another through NCDOT. The policy and enforcement efforts require staff time and resources, including grant funding. The Town has received two years of funding from the Governors Highway Safety Program grant (\$67,000 in FY21 and \$64,450 in FY22) to fund the Vision Zero staff and programming. The Town has applied for a third year of grant funding (\$77,500 for FY23) to continue the program. Staff will consider additional funding opportunities and program needs as part of the FY23 budget discussions.



Attachments:

- Draft Staff Presentation

The Agenda will reflect the text below and/or the motion text will be used during the meeting.

PRESENTER: Bergen Watterson, Transportation Planning Manager
Donnie Rhoads, Police Captain

RECOMMENDATION: That the Council receive an update on bicycle and pedestrian safety efforts and offer feedback.