



VILLAGE OF RIVER FOREST TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES Wednesday, November 20, 2024

A regular meeting of the River Forest Traffic and Safety Commission was held on Wednesday, November 20, 2024.

ROLL CALL AND CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order. Present at this meeting were Chairman Rees, Commissioner Gillis, Commissioner Hoyt, Commissioner Karrow & Commissioner Osga.

Chairman Rees asks if there are any comments on the minutes from September 18th, 2024? Commissioner Gillis pointed to one minor change to the minutes. No other comments were received.

Chairman Rees requests a **MOTION to approve the Minutes. Minutes were approved and all were in favor.**

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jason Eppink resides in Oak Park. Indicates when regularly traveling by bicycle on Franklin Avenue and encountering a traffic signal on Washington Boulevard he waits a long time for the light to turn green. Suggests recommendations increased signage and for placement of sensors/induction loop.

COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Gillis indicates that he is a scooter driver and after 2 minutes a motorcycle or bicycle can go through a red light legally. The Secretary of State is a great resource for this information.

Chairman Rees asks Jason if the signage is more friendly to pedestrians and harder for cyclist to see the signage and use it. Is that part of the problem?

Jason indicates that it is two-fold. The signage is far away and not turned towards the road. Does not address cyclists at all.

Chairman Rees asks if Director Bielak mentioned that we are looking at the whole Washington Corridor which you mentioned in your remarks. When that light changes it is short, which doesn't give kids time to cross that intersection. We should consider these issues as part of the Washington Corridor.

Chairman Rees directs conversation to Sean Herring as he presented a request for a stop sign at Iowa and Monroe stopping north/south traffic. I believe we requested you to get a petition.

Sean Herring (via ZOOM), resident, inquiries about traffic and safety devices. He did receive an email that there was a Traffic Speed/ Volume Study performed at that intersection and that accident data was reviewed. To date, has not seen any traffic safety devices. I would like to review reports.

Chairman Rees indicates that Director Bielak can give you the summary of the data which is in the agenda and available on the Village website.

Director Bielak talks about the methodology for the collection of data. Staff uses a small device that drivers do not see so we can observe conditions as they are without drawing attention to collect real data. Director Bielak discusses the results of the data.

Chairman Rees indicates to Sean that the Village commissioned a Village Wide Study by Thomas Engineering. Over the years, we try to use various traffic standards to review whether stop signs or other calming devices are justified. As a result, we came up with a Scoring Matrix where you assign objective points to certain criteria. This report also provides an Improvement Matrix and different Levels.

Commissioner Hoyt indicates that the data was taken from mid to end of August when school was not in session. With school in session, it would create more traffic. Concerned if this would change traffic data slightly.

Director Bielak suggests we could collect more data. The accident history wouldn't change as I'm not aware of any accidents that happened there. There may be slight adjustments in other places which would get us to Level 2 but would not justify the stop sign which is what the request was in this situation.

Chairman Rees directs a comment to Director Bielak indicating that the packet included current maps with current stop signs. We try to space out the stop signs at every other block. For us to make an exception, we require a strong reason in my view. Maybe Sean, we can act on this tonight or table it to give you a chance to review the data and discuss it in a future meeting. Does anybody else on the commission have questions or comments?

Commissioner Karrow comments about the scoring system. For something like a stop sign, I'm strongly inclined to let the petition of the neighbors carry the day.

Commissioner Hoyt asks if we want to discuss any other measures or are we only discussing stop sign verses no stop sign?

Sean Herring agrees with Commissioner Karrow and with Commissioner Hoyt. Obtaining more data is a great point. I would like to know alternative measures short of the stop sign that can help as this warrants a closer look.

Director Bielak indicates that when you are looking at the traffic, engineering and planning of traffic flow through an entire Village when it comes to development or subdivisions, Thomas Engineering came up with criteria regarding warrants for a stop sign. These come from the Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) which are federally accepted laws/practices provided to the State, County and local agencies on how to guide the flow of traffic. If we put up stop signs where requested without regard for warrants we can end up in a situation where we have stop signs on every corner, and have situations where they are less likely to be followed because they aren't warranted for traffic. Reputable studies have shown that people tend to speed up between stop signs to make up time.

Chairman Rees directs a comment to Sean that when looking at the petition, what is it that you and your neighbors are trying to address? Is it controlling volume/speed clarifying right-of-way or signage? My suggestion is that we should take a vote at the Commission level for the request for a stop sign or decision to table it for a future meeting. If your request fails for the stop sign with this Commission, would there be other measures you would like to pursue based on a Level 1/Level 2 category?

Commissioner Gillis indicates that we worked very hard on the Safe Routes to School that reviewed the locations of current four-way stop signs. I don't think adding a stop sign is necessary, based on the current data as there would be too many that we would add throughout the town. We are not seeing a lot of speeding going on. On Augusta there is a four-way stop, and Chicago has a stop. I would be inclined to not putting in a stop sign.

Commissioner Osga agrees with what everybody said. Doesn't feel inclined to overrule the study that we worked so hard on regarding the Safe Routes to School to add another stop sign. I do agree with Director Bielak that people speed up between stop signs and barely stop at all. Maybe we can come with a recommendation for a Calming Measure with the use of a yellow pedestrian or children crossing sign. I may be inclined to vote for that.

Commissioner Gillis looked at Google Maps and there does not appear to be a speed limit sign either direction on that two -block stretch. May be that is something we consider putting in.

Commissioner Osga indicated he would consider a speed limit sign or pedestrian crossing sign or another traffic calming measure.

Chairman Rees asks if there any other comments? I propose we take a vote on the request for a stop sign. My Motion would be to deny the request for a stop sign but to add speed limit signs both north and southbound to alert people to the speed. At least do that as an initial action and then Sean if you and your neighbors want us to collect more data, we can do that. If you think that a speed limit sign is an inadequate first step, the challenge is knowing what problem we are trying to solve.

Sean Herring indicates that the challenge we are trying to solve is speed. I respect everything that goes into this. After being here for four years, there is a problem. If there are alternatives to a stop sign that can help with the speed which is the issue. It would be worth obtaining more data to determine if we are going to get to another Level.

Chairman Rees asks Director Bielak if we should collect more data while school is in session?

Commissioner Karrow indicated that we are using our own tools, so we don't have to pay for this.

Chairman Rees mentions that the Village did invest in equipment that we are talking about so we can collect data easier. As part of our recommendation, we still do need to take a vote, deny the stop signs for now and revisit another day if the data changes.

I feel we should have a reason to depart from the standards and recommended warrants. If we deny the stop sign tonight, we can at least propose installation of a speed limit sign and based on collecting additional data, we can consider what additional measures we can take at a future meeting.

Sean Herring indicated that he would be in favor of that.

Chairman Rees makes a Motion to deny the request for the stop sign on Iowa and Monroe and Public Works to install speed limit signs on both northbound and southbound on appropriate locations on that two-block area. We also collect additional speed and volume data and update the crash data to see if this changes anything. Make sure we collect the data in a two-week period when school is in session. That is my Motion.

Commissioner Karrow asks if we can split that into two Motions so I can vote for the stop sign and vote for everything else.

Chairman Rees indicates that is a good idea.

Commissioner Osga would like to add something as well. When looking at this map here, I've been a huge fan of these brightly painted crosswalks. When looking at the Safe Walk to School page, we have a crosswalk at Jackson going east/west. I am wondering at Iowa and Monroe, since the arrows for the crosswalks are going east/west and we are talking about north/south stop signs if we can add that to the list for our painters in the spring.

Commissioner Hoyt asks if you can tell in Google maps if there are clear crosswalks?

Commissioner Osga indicates that there are standard crosswalks and high-visibility crosswalks. There is a standard crosswalk on Jackson, and I don't know if there is any on Iowa and Monroe. With the addition to speed limit signs, we are going to talk about, I would also suggest that we do a standard or high-visibility crosswalk going east/west on Iowa as cars see that as well as the lighted crosswalk. These are the two things we can do soon to elevate some speeding down Monroe.

Director Bielak talks about the striping; I agree that the Safe Routes to School has Iowa identified north/south in either direction along the stop. Based on Google Street view, it does not show them striped. I will check to make sure if they are or not. If not, I agree that it has been identified in our Safe Routes to School so we can look at this during our thermoplastic program for next year as to striping it.

Commissioner Osga indicates that we will be implementing crosswalks, recommending implementing speed limit signs and more data.

Chairman Rees suggests doing two motions. I will move to deny the request for a stop sign on Iowa and Monroe and to convert that into a four-way.

Commissioner Hoyt seconds the Motion.

Chairman Rees indicates to take a vote on the Motion for the stop sign.

VOTE TAKEN

Chairman Rees – Yes. Commissioner Gillis – Yes. Commissioner Hoyt – Yes. Commissioner Karrow – No to the Motion. Commissioner Osga – Yes.

Director Bielak indicates Motion passes to deny.

Chairman Rees asks if anyone else would like to make a Motion with respect to the other interim steps that we would like to purpose tonight with respect to that area?

Commissioner Osga would like to propose a Motion to make sure to implement the suggested crosswalks at Iowa and Monroe as well as to install speed limit signs north and southbound on Monroe between Augusta and Chicago Avenue. Also, to collect more data during a two-week period when school is in session.

Director Bielak indicates that the traffic counter is out right now as I did receive a different inquiry. I do have it working. December is coming around with people out of school and Christmas break, I'm thinking this won't happen until January.

Chairman Rees indicates he agrees it is better and Sean if you do agree, it is better to collect the data when we have the most traffic.

Sean Herring agrees.

Commissioner Hoyt seconds the group Motion.

VOTE TAKEN

Chairman Rees – Yes. Commissioner Gillis – Yes. Commissioner Hoyt – Yes. Commissioner Karrow – Yes. Commissioner Osga – Yes.

Chairman Rees asks if any of this action required by the Village Board? None of this requires action by the Village Board Sean. You should at least be seeing the speed limit sign. The striping for the crosswalk probably won't happen until spring as that is when they do the next round of striping. When we collect the data in January Sean, we will let you know. We will leave it to you Sean if you and your neighbors want to put it back on the next agenda. Let Director Bielak know.

Sean Herring indicates that it sounds good and thanks everyone for their time and commitment.

Chairman Rees indicates to Julie Sciaraffa we have your request and let us know what you are looking for.

Julie Sciaraffa (via ZOOM) indicates I had the same questions that Sean had. Our concern is the traffic that comes off North Avenue heading south onto Franklin. From North Avenue, traffic is going east or west and there is no turn allowed left or right onto our street, which motorists often ignore. I would like a solution. Maybe add a bump out.

Chairman Rees indicates Director Bielak collected data. You can see this on the Village website.

Director Bielak provides a summary regarding the data that was collected with the traffic monitor regarding the average daily traffic. For the two weeks there were 728 cars in total that went southbound and a ADT of 48. In terms of the 85th-percentile speed, 28 m.p.h., the traffic report from September 23rd through October 8th is for a two-week period. This was for the incoming traffic coming from the North Avenue side. The outgoing traffic, which is towards North Avenue, you have an ADT of 134. The total number of cars was close to 2000 over that same time period and the 85th-percentile speed was 28 m.p.h. The speed limit there is 25 m.p.h. so 3 m.p.h. over what the speed limit is.

Commissioner Karrow asks about the graphs.

Director Bielak explains that he added the graphs as it would be a good point to show you what time periods of the day it is for.

Commissioner Karrow asks why is the base line two vehicles?

Director Bielak replies that this is just how the system reported it. I do not have control on manipulating the data.

Julie Sciaraffa asks to explain in simpler terms so she can convey this back. Is there any decision to move forward to the next step?

Director Bielak explains the traffic data. In terms of accidents, I did reach out to the police department to gather that information. A total of 7 accidents occurred over a 5-year period. None of the accidents involved a right turn onto Franklin from North Avenue. Four occurred directly on North Avenue as a rear end or side swipe. The other three were private property with one being a roll out of the driveway due to car having a bad transmission. None of the crashes were due to traffic incidents. The scoring matrix is 19.5.

Chairman Rees indicates to Julie, in simple terms, based on the data, this area receives a low score. Based on the matrix, it would not justify any calming measures or anything blocking traffic.

Commissioner Osga asks if looking at the data, over a two- week period, 728 total vehicles went south on Franklin?

Director Bielak answered correct.

Commissioner Osga indicated that it is clearly marked, no turn.

Commissioner Karrow indicated that some of those vehicles could be people pulling out of driveways onto Franklin.

Commissioner Osga indicates that we don't know of 728 cars turned illegally south on Franklin?

Director Bielak replies correct. Where we put the traffic monitors, we try to find an area that is safer from North Avenue but also making sure we capture clear data.

Commissioner Osga indicated he just wanted to clarify that.

Julie Sciaraffa indicates that if she sits outside on a summer day, she can count at least 15 cars turning on a low day.

Commissioner Osga indicates to Ms. Sciaraffa that he tends to agree with her.

Commissioner Karrow asks if we thought of installing any temporary or can we use bollards? On Washington we installed temporary bollards and I'm wondering if this might work. Even if you have half of the 748 people that were illegal right turns off North, I feel it warrants signage or something.

Director Bielak indicates if the 700 were 100% all not legal turns off North Avenue, I would somewhat agree. The other caution in terms of what is happening is speeding and other types of situations. It very clearly signed. What we would be talking about is adding another traffic calming measure. Putting up a physical barrier would not stop residents going around it.

Commissioner Osga indicates I am more inclined to go with the data.

Commissioner Gillis indicates to the point about the traffic, I think your experience is down by Harlem that they are close enough to the Lathrop light heading east. When they see that turn yellow, they turn right. A lot of that traffic is cut through. It would be interesting to see the counts if we did put up the bollards for a period.

Commissioner Karrow indicates that one of the comments that a resident made that was emailed around indicated that the bus top sign on North Avenue heading east hinders vehicles from seeing the no right turn sign. Is there anything we can do for visibility for that sign?

Commissioner Hoyt asks how signatures as a percentage are on the petition?

Director Bielak indicates that my understanding is that 75% was met when I spoke to Bill Koclanis, Civil Engineering Technician.

Commissioner Hoyt asks if it includes the whole block or what is it when calculating the percentage?

Director Bielak indicates that you have a lot of them at the apartment buildings at the top, but it goes throughout the block.

Julie Sciaraffa talks about the homes on the block and the accuracy.

Commissioner Hoyt asks if the denominator is in the calculation for everyone that lives on the 1500 block of Franklin?

Director Bielak indicates yes, and it did take into account the whole block of Franklin and not just the buildings up top.

Commissioner Hoyt indicates the 75% includes for any owner or resident from the 1500 block and they did hit 75%?

Director Bielak indicates yes, they did hit 75%.

Commissioner Hoyt asks if the petition was for the bump out?

Director Bielak indicates eliminating turning off North Avenue by placing bump out, yes.

Commissioner Osga indicates that one more thing about the pictures. When you look across the street and at Elmwood Park, they have a sign that indicates Do Not Enter. Do we have a sign here?

Commissioner Hoyt indicates that the Do Not Enter signs are one-way streets.

Commissioner Gillis asks if you can put Do Not Enter there and can you put the words no right turn? I think we had that on some of our other signs.

Commissioner Karrow asks if we could make this street one way heading north, from right north of that driveway? It would make it visually apparent that you couldn't turn on to it as you would be going the wrong way on a one-way street.

Chairman Rees indicates that you would be violating Commissioner Osga's prediction that suddenly, we would get neighbors that would flout the rule thinking they are allowed to turn down the street.

Commissioner Karrow indicates that to be fair, I feel that when the neighbors showed up when we put the barricades on Bonnie Brae it was that they were legally able to do something and then no longer legally able to do it.

Chairman Rees indicates that his reaction is there may be some interim things like Do Not Enter or some signage improvements that we can make at least as an initial step to see if any that helps.

Commissioner Osga agrees with that. I would think that most of the people that turn south on to Franklin reside in those apartment buildings as it is easy to get to your unit instead of going around the block than come all the way back to North Avenue to park behind the building.

Julie Sciaraffa strongly disagrees. They park in the lot behind those buildings. I can count three neighbors that disobey it regularly.

Chairman Rees asks if there is interest by the Commission to propose some signage?

Commissioner Hoyt asks Director Bielak if we can put a Do Not Enter sign up when it is not a one-way street?

Director Bielak indicates that due to the way the signage is, it can be a Do Not Enter as it already indicates no turning onto the street, so you are not to enter there.

Commissioner Hoyt indicates that the volumes are very low. 48 daily is not a big number. I do not want to do a lot but a Do Not Enter sign is a simple solution if it is allowed.

Director Bielak will double check to see what can be done, but given by law that is already there, which is no turning onto the street, I think additional signage can be done without changing rules or Ordinances.

Commissioner Osga indicates to Director Bielak that when driving east on North Avenue, you see the bus sign and the no right turn sign is not really a warning but a surprise as it is literally on the corner. If a bus is parked there picking up passengers, you may not see it. Is there another idea you can come up with like putting up a no right turn sign further west of the immediate corner so people see it?

Director Bielak indicates that he would like to verify this to see if it makes sense. To your point if it is two-sided, then it is impacting that one. I would like to see if I can move that one closer so you can see it sooner.

Commissioner Osga indicates that it is two-sided.

Chairman Rees asks if you can piggyback up the Pace sign and add one below that?

Commissioner Hoyt asks if you can add the words no right turn below so you can see more clearly?

Chairman Rees asks or if you can use the Pace pole and add something below Pace that reads no right turn?

Director Bielak indicates that he has never seen that as Pace is the one that typically installs those signs.

Chairman Rees indicates to Director Bielak if you think that keeping that sign – the request is if you can beef up the signage as you are east bound on North Avenue, so you are not surprised by the no right turn onto Franklin. Maybe add Do Not Enter like Elmwood Park has.

Director Bielak indicates he will check MUTCD to make sure we are using it properly. In terms of the no turn right sign, see if we can do another one under the current sign.

Chairman Rees indicates Julie Sciaraffa that the data collected does not support placing a barrier there but maybe adding additional signage to discourage people from turning down Franklin. If you see a continued problem, you can ask to have this put back on the agenda so we can talk about this again.

Julie Sciaraffa indicates that when talking about the Do Not Enter, that sounds like a happy medium for now but how about the traffic going west on North Avenue and turning left?

Chairman Rees indicates that there is signage there, but I do not know what more we can do from people not to turn left from North Avenue.

Julie Sciaraffa indicates that is where an accident will happen.

Chairman Rees indicates to be clear on this Do Not Enter, Director Bielak will check to see if we can do that as of right now, you can't turn left and can't turn right as it should be consistent. The questions are if we can do that when it's not a one-way street. That kind of signage might keep people from turning left.

Julie Sciaraffa indicates that this may help.

Chairman Rees indicates that the recommendation is that we start with the signage. You can have your colleagues look at the data that Director Bielak collected. We can put this back on the agenda if you would like to revisit this.

Julie Sciaraffa thanks everyone and asks if there will be a way she knows if it will be done.

Director Bielak indicates that I will let you know after doing the research if it could be done. If you see a sign go up before our next Traffic & Safety Commission meeting in January, then you will know that we can.

Chairman Rees asks Director Bielak to talk about some ideas that staff can help when these issues come in so you can communicate to the people regarding the matrix and data so they can consider if this is worth their while.

Director Bielak asks if you would like to take a vote on declining the request for the bump out?

Chairman Rees indicates if you would like so this would be consistent. Let's make two motions. One Motion to decline the petition for the bump out.

Commissioner Gillis makes a motion to decline the bump out at Franklin near North Avenue.

Commissioner Hoyt seconds the motion.

VOTE TAKEN

Chairman Rees – Yes. Commissioner Gillis – Yes. Commissioner Hoyt – Yes to decline.
Commissioner Karrow – Yes. Commissioner Osga – Yes.

Chairman Rees asks Commissioner Hoyt if she would like to make motion to consider adding a do not enter sign and better signage for the no right-hand turn sign on the southwest corner of the intersection before the Pace bus sign.

Director Bielak asks if there is a second?

Commissioner Osga seconds the motion.

VOTE TAKEN

Chairman Rees – Yes. Commissioner Gillis – Yes. Commissioner Hoyt – Yes. Commissioner Karrow – Yes. Commissioner Osga – Yes.

Director Bielak indicates as Chairman Rees mentioned, the final item is the discussion of procedure for staff fielding traffic requests and explains the procedure.

Chairman Rees indicates that we should have this matrix, at least the basic tool, up on the website under the Traffic & Safety Tab so people can see how we apply these levels and the scoring matrix to show how we collect points.


Commissioner Hoyt indicates this would be helpful.

Director Bielek talks about another traffic request that was received and offered to put up the traffic device before we go through further steps.

Chairman Rees indicates that is helpful and being on the website would be beneficial.

A motion was made and seconded to adjourn the meeting. All Commissioners voted in favor of the motion. Motion passed.

Respectfully Submitted:


Jack Bielak, Director of Public Works
& Engineering


Doug Rees, Chairman
Traffic & Safety Commission

Date: 5.21.25

