

# The Courier-Times

Roxboro, North Carolina • www.personcountylife.com

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2017

75 Cents

## DOT will study intersection

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Roxboro City Council members spent about 45 minutes at their Aug. 8 meeting listening to N.C. Department of Transportation engineer John Sandor discuss ideas on how to improve the safety of the intersection of Morgan Street and Long Avenue, where 15 crashes have occurred in the past five years.

Sandor said his preferred solution would be a four-way stop at the intersection, combined with a "road diet" in which a turn lane on Morgan Street in front of the

Person County Office Building would be eliminated and the road reconfigured to make room for on-street parking in front of that building. However, before implementing this solution, he said he wanted to collect more data on traffic patterns when Earl Bradsher Preschool opens in about a month.

Sandor said DOT first got involved in changing the intersection almost two years ago when someone called with concerns after a wreck there.

The DOT investigated, Sandor said, and uncovered a pattern of 15 high-angle crashes, broadside, which can be the most severe

kind, in the last 15 years. Nine of those involved injuries, including a recent one that required a driver to be hospitalized.

"It needs some kind of treatment," Sandor said. "We can't ignore a crash problem like that."

He said the problem was that Morgan Street is being used as a cut-through road by drivers and it is straight and wide, which contributes to a speeding issue.

In this situation, the road "met an all-way-stop warrant," he said, "which meant throwing up stop signs on all four approaches. They work very well to eliminate a crash problem such as this, so it is an effective tool in our toolbox

that we like to deploy in a situation like this."

But at the same time, he wanted to pay attention to the desires of the community.

"It is a DOT road, but is a very local road, with a park, church, school nearby," he said. "So instead of DOT steamrolling a solution, I wanted to bring this to you."

### MORGAN STREET NEEDS ROAD DIET

He said he had talked to former Person County Planning Director Mike Ciriello and they both agreed the road was a good candidate for

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## TRAFFIC: DOT says it wants to study motorists' patterns

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a road diet, shrinking the travel lane by eliminating a turn lane and using that for on-street parking.

"It helps to get speeds down," he said. "While that might not be popular for those that use it as a cut through, I think the local stakeholders would see some benefit."

He said on-street parking wouldn't happen right away, but when the road gets resurfaced, within the next five years.

He said Lauren Wrenn, the city's planning and development director, had heard some concerns that these parked cars might get hit by other vehicles, but Sandor said said this was unlikely.

"It is an impeding factor which causes cars to slow down," he said. "It works a little bit better than just going out there and throwing up some stop signs."

Councilman Sandy Stigall said he much preferred a traffic light, but Sandor said NCDOT engineers had run their data, and this was not the best option.

"We ran it and it didn't meet the warrant so it would be what we call an

unwarranted signal," he said, "which we don't just like to throw up traffic signals where we have crash problems."

He said a traffic light would stay on green about 90 percent of the time to accommodate drivers on Morgan Street whereas a stop sign would force people to stop.

"Everyone would have to stop and think," he said. "There are some significant safety benefits by going this route."

Police Chief David Hess said it was important to take into account the heavy congestion caused by vehicles around Earl Bradsher Preschool during morning drop off and afternoon pick up. He said a stop sign could cause a public safety problem by backing up traffic in a congested area that is already congested during school hours.

"At a similar designed intersection, in the last three weeks, we have issued over 50 enforcement actions at a four-way stop sign where people were traveling anywhere from 20 to 25 miles per hour directly through the intersection," he said, "so they did not pay attention to the

four-way stop sign. It is my professional opinion that putting a four-way stop sign at this intersection could increase a risk to public safety."

He said his two recommendations were either for a traffic circle or a stop light.

### ROUNDBOUT NOT AN OPTION

Sandor said a roundabout would solve the problem, but it would cost more than \$1 million, and have almost no chance of getting funded because it would be competing with busier roads around the state.

He said even a mini roundabout, such as was built at Carver and Broad Streets at a cost of half a million dollars, has had problems.

"They blow right through it like it doesn't exist," he said.

He said the benefit to stop signs is that winning funding is "a slam dunk when you submit a project like that and the results speak for themselves in terms of getting the crash problem under control."

Traffic signals are more expensive and stand less of a chance of potentially

getting funded.

DOT performed a before-and-after study at the Chub Lake Road and Morgan Street stop light, and while the signal light brought the incidence of crashes down, it did not eradicate them completely.

Sandor said he will continue to study the problem.

"Your concerns are relevant to me," he said. "There is a school. There is a park. I am happy to provide you with as much evaluation as we can do without getting into something we don't want to get into, with too much data accumulation."

Councilman William Davis said he appreciated Sandor coming to the council to work with them on picking the best solution for the community.

Sandor said he would come back to Roxboro in the next month or so when the preschool was in session to get more traffic counts and see what kind of traffic stacking was occurring.

"We definitely don't want to create a traffic problem," he said, "and it does sound like there might be one on the horizon so we don't want to make anything worse."



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Engineers will study this intersection to look for ways to make it less dangerous.