

Carderock Springs Citizens' Association
May 19, 2011 Minutes – Safety Committee Meeting

Introduction

Phil Rider provided an introduction and overview for the meeting, including some background on the Committee:

- The CSCA Board established the Committee format in May 2010;
- The concept was that each Committee would include a Board member and neighbors;
- The Safety Committee was created in October 2010; and
- The members of the Safety Committee and the CSCA Board introduced themselves.

Phil read a welcome letter he had drafted with the intent that those not present could read the letter. Phil introduced two Montgomery County DOT employees, Fred Lees, Chief of Traffic Engineering Studies and Tracy Wroe, Traffic Calming Engineer.

The structure of the meeting is to provide an information and opinion forum rather than a debate forum.

Jack Orrick, CSCA Member-at-Large, provided an overview of how the decision process has been conducted, how the Board has been proceeding and the transparency of the Board with open meetings, posting of Board meeting minutes on www.carderocksprings.net, write-ups in the community newsletter and notices posted on CS Chat. The result of the Safety Committee study may be to present a set of options for community discussion at a later date.

Phil noted that only Fenway Rd. is being addressed. Through a misunderstanding with County officials, Lilly Stone Dr. had been marked with proposed bump-outs and islands, creating some confusion. Before proceeding with the presentation by the County, Phil stressed that the Board would not proceed without having consensus support from the Community.

County Presentation

Fred Lees, Chief of Traffic Engineering Studies –

In 1994, the county had a fairly aggressive speed hump program in place with installation occurring across the county. There are two criteria currently in place for speed humps that must be met. Fenway Rd. meets one of the two criteria:

1. Speed of vehicles: The prevailing speeds (85th percentile speeds) must be at least 7 miles per hour above the posted speed limit (Fenway meets this criteria)
2. Volume of vehicles: have a peak hour traffic volume of at least 100 vehicles (Fenway does not meet this criteria with only 60 vehicles per hour)

All-way stop sign placement is designed to control right of way and is not employed by the county for speed.

Based on experience and statistical evaluation, the 'perception' of the road has the greatest impact on speed control. A wide, smooth road yields higher average speeds than a narrower road with the same

posted speed limit. In other words, traffic calming works by making the driver “feel” that the road requires slower speeds. The county has seen this and recognizes traffic calming as a proven strategy. The county always works with the community and local fire/rescue before implementing traffic calming solutions.

Tracy Wroe, Traffic Calming Engineer –

Tracy provided an overview of the design and impact of the Fenway Rd. options. He provided statistics of an impact to pedestrians at various speeds:

- The fatality rate for a pedestrian hit by a car at 20 mph is 5 percent.
- The fatality rate jumps to 80 percent when the speed is increased to 40 mph.

Fred Lees mentioned that the funding is part of a county initiative and is available.

Question and Answer

What type of curb will be used?

A 6” vertical curb has been proposed. Mountable curbs (providing access to cyclists, wheel chairs, strollers, etc) could be considered. Fire and rescue vehicles are not delayed based on studies.

What about traffic circles?

Not enough space, particularly for emergency vehicles. There would be significant “earth work” required to put in the circles.

Has “road usage” been considered? What is impact on walkers, dog walkers, etc.?

The data shows that pedestrian safety has improved with traffic calming such as bump-outs.

What is the impact of volume with the new development on River Rd.? Would speed humps be an option if volume increases significantly?

The current volume of vehicles on Fenway Rd. is 60 vehicles per hour; the road would have to meet peak hour traffic volume of at least 100 vehicles to qualify for speed hump consideration.

What data does the county have on Fenway Rd. accidents/collisions?

No data available.

What about snow plows?

Bump-outs and traffic islands do get damaged by snowplows but the county tries to design to minimize damage.

What about a speed hump criteria waiver?

The criteria are set for residential roads and no waiver is available.

Can turns from River Rd. during rush hour be restricted?

This type of action is covered by executive restriction and is very strict. A survey would be conducted to determine the number of cars and the number of “non-local” cars.

As a runner, without sidewalks the bump-outs seem more dangerous; are sidewalks included?

No sidewalks are included in the proposed design. However, the design of the bump outs and islands could be modified to include sidewalks or paths going over the bump-outs and around the

curbs where the islands are located in order to allow passage by runners, bikers or people with strollers.

What about access by wheel chairs and strollers?

Could include sidewalks and access areas on bump-outs.

How does the cost of bump-outs compare to speed humps?

A simple bump-out costs about \$8,000; speed humps are about \$4,000.

Why does the straight section of Fenway Rd. not have bump-outs?

The biggest problem on a roadway is at the nodes (where two roads meet); interval spacing is also needed so that factored in to the placement of the bump-outs

Fenway Rd. seems smaller than the examples provided by the county; does the county consider the speeding on Fenway Rd. an issue and is that why this effort is underway?

The county does not seek sites but was brought in by neighbors to analyze and suggest solutions.

Were cameras considered as a speed deterrent?

Montgomery County DOT does not administer cameras; that is handled by the Montgomery County Police.

What would the timeline be for installation?

The project would be placed in the county queue behind projects submitted earlier. The earliest this project could begin would be late summer. That would include an almost immediate go-ahead and provided that no additional projects were submitted prior to Fenway Rd. submission. Phil Rider added that the Safety Committee and the Board are not in any hurry to move quickly.

Can bump-outs be placed by stop signs such as on Hamilton Spring Rd. and Lilly Stone Dr.?

Bump-outs do not increase compliance with stop signs.

Were streets part of the original covenants/Bennett plan?

Short answer is 'no'; the streets are owned by the county.

The suggestion was made to place islands where speed is generated such as on hills and straight sections of the roadway.

The protest was made that the Board was hiding discussion from the community, not openly reviewing the issue and was in fact trying to railroad the proposal through.

Does painting lines on the side of the road work?

Has been tried with mixed results; not as effective as other traffic calming measures.

What about the upper section of Fenway Rd.?

That section of Fenway is too steep; bump-outs would possibly create hazard.

Why not more consideration of sidewalks?

Sidewalks would separate pedestrians from traffic which is always safer. The installation of sidewalks in a community can be controversial and hard to get approval.

Was additional lighting to help illuminate some of the bump-outs/islands considered?

Lighting was not part of the plan.

Is this plan flexible, i.e., could some parts be done and others not?

Yes, but it would not be as effective.

Key Points

Phil provided a summary of key points he heard and asked those present if there were any to add:

1. Aesthetics of bump-outs
2. What other options are available to the community?
3. The cost of the bump-outs raised as a concern
4. Is there a problem in the first place?
5. Concern about the process applied to the bump-out proposal review
6. Impact on on-street parking, especially for seniors