



CITY OF CONCORD

REPORT TO THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Karen Hill, P.E., Transportation Engineer, staff representative for the Transportation Policy Advisory Committee

DATE: July 23, 2024

SUBJECT: Response to City Council Referral: Request for sidewalk and reduced 25 mph speed limit on Iron Works Road.

Recommendation

Accept this report submitted by the Transportation Engineer on behalf of the Traffic Operations Committee and Transportation Policy Advisory Committee in response to a referral from City Council regarding communication from Councilor Schlosser with a resident request for sidewalk and reduced 25 mph speed limit on Iron Works Road.

Background

On May 13, 2024, City Council forwarded to the Transportation Policy Advisory Committee (TPAC) a referral from City Council regarding communication from Councilor Schlosser with a resident request for sidewalk and reduced 25 mph speed limit on Iron Works Road.

Iron Works Road in this area is approximately 25 feet wide with parking allowed on both sides and painted 10 foot travel lanes and painted 2.5 foot shoulders. The street is classified as a Local Street and services approximately 900 vehicles per day. Iron Works Road is posted as a no-thru trucking route. It connects NH Route 13 (Clinton Street) to South Street and the south-end neighborhood. Iron Works Road is posted at 35 mph outside of the Urban Compact (UC) from Clinton Street to Birch Street. The speed limit is reduced from Birch Street to South Street to 30 mph inside the UC. Iron Works Road is in the Single-Family Residential (RS) District and is home to Russel Martin Park.

At their May 28, 2019 meeting, the Traffic Operations Committee (TOC) discussed a similar request that resulted in the installation of a “Reduced Speed Ahead” sign to provide advanced notice for eastbound motorists on Iron Works Road. Although the hope was that the new sign would have an effect on vehicle speed into the City from the west, traffic and speed data were collected before and after sign installation and no change in speed was observed.

Discussion

In advance of the TPAC meeting, the request was discussed at the May 21, 2024 and June 18, 2024 TOC meetings.

Speeds

TOC reviewed prior data and speed data summarized during the month of April 2024 for Iron Works Road, as follows:

Direction	Weekday		Weekend	
	Avg (mph)	85 th (mph)	Avg (mph)	85 th (mph)
Eastbound	33	39	32	39
Westbound	33	40	33	41

85th percentile speed is the speed at or below which 85 percent of the drivers travel on a road segment.

Avg = Average speed

mph = miles per hour

Based on this data, TOC noted that average speeds along Iron Works Road seemed reasonable, but recommended speed enforcement to target the fewer but more-aggressive speeders. The Police Department has agreed to perform directed patrols on Iron Works Road, in addition to deploying their speed trailer during the week of June 26, 2024.

The request was then discussed at the June 27, 2024 TPAC meeting. TPAC reviewed a summary of the resident's concerns and discussions from the TOC Meetings. The Committee agreed that the 85th percentile speeds were concerning for the residential context of the neighborhood, coupled with the presence of a City park and lack of sidewalk. It was discussed that prior efforts in 2019 to increase signing to mitigate speeds were unsuccessful, and that changing the speed limit without changing the context of the roadway will not necessarily result in lower speeds. It is recommended that a "City-wide speed study" be a discussion point in the upcoming master plan update. The Committee does not recommend an isolated study for Iron Works Road prior to that effort, as speed concerns are prevalent, City-wide.

The Committee agreed that a potential short-term traffic calming effort could be to plant some street trees along the park frontage. The Committee also suggested that the park land could be used for public art or a gateway sign, perhaps a student project that could highlight the transition from a rural collector street to an urban neighborhood. The Committee recommends that these suggestions be referred to their proper committees for consideration.

The Committee also recognized the need to study these "gateway" areas, City-wide, in the upcoming master plan update to identify any improvements that could help to mitigate these ongoing concerns.

Sidewalk

TPAC acknowledged that the sidewalk segment on Iron Works Road, between South Street and Birch Street, is ranked #34 out of 117 in the City's Pedestrian Master Plan. The 2021 ranking effort evaluated locations based on criteria including safety, school proximity, new access, latent demand, connectivity, and existing demand.

The Committee recognized that the segments were ranked based off of posted speeds not actual speeds for consistency and with data that was available at the time. The Committee agreed that during the upcoming master planning process that the rankings could be reevaluated based on more specific data.

The Committee also recognized that the segment is ranked fairly high due to its close proximity to the City park and to schools. It was discussed that at this time, this sidewalk segment is not indicated as a “priority” segment and would typically be considered for construction when the street is reconstructed (not yet programmed in upcoming years).

Both TOC and TPAC concurred that enforcement efforts were appropriate in this case. Neither committee recommended sidewalk construction outside of the paving program or a change in speed limit before it is studied further as a part of the upcoming master planning process.

cc: Traffic Operations Committee
Transportation Policy Advisory Committee