

13. SPARKS ROAD AND HOON HAY ROAD – SCHOOL ROAD SAFETY CONCERNS

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| Officer responsible: | Transport & Greenspace Manager |
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PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Board regarding road safety concerns raised by Our Lady of Assumption school, and to provide information requested by the Board at its 5 September 2006 meeting.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sparks Road

2. Any of the options that give a priority road crossing at OLA School would result in that school not having to have a staff member put themselves at risk in the middle of the roadway, waving flags to assist children crossing the road. If a priority pedestrian crossing (school patrol) at OLA School is deemed a safe traffic control device, then the appropriate position for the crossing is considered to be on the north east side of the Rydal intersection. This would overcome the left turn out of Rydal Street versus crossing pedestrian conflict or the right turn into Rydal queue versus crossing pedestrian conflict, as has been observed at the existing OLA informal crossing point on the south west side (Hoon Hay School side) of Rydal street.
4. Following discussion at a meeting held in August with representatives from Hoon Hay School, OLA School and other stakeholder organisations, option 4 (a kea crossing school patrol at both Hoon Hay School and OLA School) was identified as the preferred option. This option was considered to provide the greatest level of convenience for both schools, provide children from both schools with a choice of crossing facilities, help both schools to co-ordinate start and finish times, and provide consistent traffic management along this section of Sparks Road.
5. Council officers advised the schools that now a preferred option has been identified, that an in depth investigation by Council officers into the feasibility of option 4 would occur. Advice received from Land Transport New Zealand is that two school patrols of the same format (in this case – two kea crossings), can operate within the separation distance of 160 metres.
6. A similar situation exists at Innes Road where two school patrols operate within 190 metres of each other and have a 40 km/hr school zone operating at school travel times. This preferred option is subject (like any other capital works project) to the resolution of any issues that arise from the community consultation process. Further advice given was in regard to the financial implications of option 4.

Hoon Hay Road

7. Staff of the Transport & Greenspace Unit advise that a comprehensive traffic management plan needs to be developed for this section of Hoon Hay Road. This is to ensure that any new road crossing facility is safe and convenient for the school community, and does not compromise the safety, convenience and operational requirements of other road users, ie: adjacent bus stops, through traffic, cyclists, church/school parking areas or adjacent service station entrance manoeuvres. The traffic management plan will also need to take into account the proposal to replace the Hoon Hay/Sparks roundabout with traffic signals in 2009/10. While traffic signals will include signalised pedestrian crossing facilities, the distance between these facilities and a facility provided at the road crossing desire line at the school entrance, needs to be assessed in terms of whether pedestrians will be prepared to walk the extra distance.

PROCESS LOOKING FORWARD

8. A traffic management plan for Hoon Hay Road outside OLA School will be completed by Council staff by the end of this current financial year. Implementation of the plan will occur in the Council's 2007/08 financial year. Implementation of the Sparks Road project outside OLA and Hoon Hay schools will also occur in the 2007/08 year. Both of these projects will be subject to the resolution of any issues arising from the consultation process with the wider community.

FINANCIAL AND LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

Financial

9. The existing Council financial year's budget for pedestrian safety initiatives/road safety at schools is committed to projects already underway.
10. The school frontages on Sparks Road and Hoon Hay Road had been identified by staff prior to the meeting held with school representatives, as a priority for traffic safety improvements in the 2007/08 Council financial year. Subject to wider community consultation, the school's agreed option has been programmed for completion in the financial year, commencing 1 July 2007.

Legal

11. Before operation of one new school patrol and one modified school patrol can commence on Sparks Road, the Community Board will receive a report for recommendation to the Council that, pursuant to the Local Government Act 2002 and the Land Transport – Traffic Control Devices Rule 2004, these Sparks Road school patrols are approved.

BACKGROUND ON SPARKS ROAD AND HOON HAY ROAD – SCHOOL ROAD SAFETY CONCERNS

Sparks Road

12. OLA School has raised concerns to the Council regarding safety for students wishing to arrive/leave the school via Hoon Hay Road and Sparks Road.
13. On 30 August 2006, a meeting was held to discuss the issues on Sparks Road. Those attending were:
 - Principal - Our Lady of Assumption School.
 - Principal - Hoon Hay School.
 - Police Education Officer.
 - School Parent & Community Board member.
 - CCC Schools Coordinator.
 - CCC Transportation Planner - Cycling & Pedestrian.
14. Hoon Hay School currently has a zebra pedestrian crossing with extended kerbs located adjacent to its main entrance on Sparks Road. A school patrol is operated by Hoon Hay School on this zebra crossing at school travel times to further assist pedestrians crossing the roadway. OLA School's main entrance is also on Sparks Road, located opposite the Rydal Street T intersection. Apart from a parking restriction at this entrance (some broken yellow lines to assist with visibility), OLA School has no crossing facility on Sparks Road. A 40 km/hr part time school speed zone has been installed on Sparks Road for both schools. Formal surveys of both school crossing points indicate that the crossing activity at each school warrants a school patrol.

Hoon Hay Road

15. In August 1997, the Council proposed a series of road crossing facilities on Hoon Hay Road to provide for students from three schools (OLA, Manning Intermediate & Hillmorton High). Public opinion of this project was strongly against the proposal. Most of the immediately affected residents, ie: those with a proposed island outside their properties, signed a petition verifying their opposition. At the Hillmorton LATMS meeting in December 1997, a large number of Hoon Hay residents attended and expressed their opposition to the proposal. The outcome of this situation was that the funds for this school safety project were transferred by the Community Board to Hastings Street east for the benefit of children from Waltham school, as detailed in a report to the Board in April 1998. In 2002 the results of a "safe cycling to school" project for Manning Intermediate and Hillmorton High were summarised. This summary detailed the findings from a survey of 796 students from both schools. As a result, funding was identified in the Annual Plan in the City Streets cycle ways budget entitled the "Hillmorton Cycle bubble". Funding from the Pedestrian Safety Initiatives/Road Safety at Schools budget was added as there were significant pedestrian safety concerns expressed by the management of Manning Intermediate School.

16. The outcome was the successful implementation of cycle lanes, road crossing islands and parking bays on Hoon Hay Road from Mathers Road to the northwest. This followed a significant petition from the school communities about the safety of children. In considering the issues, the Council placed a higher priority on child safety over the issues raised on residents' parking and access. The final stage of this road safety project was the installation of a 40 km/hr school zone, similar to the zone installed in Sparks Road. An island was not installed outside OLA school as part of this project, as it was:
- (a) well outside the scope of this project (just over one kilometre away) and
 - (b) subject to previous significant objection without any corresponding school community support (as happened with Manning /Hillmorton).

DISCUSSION- SPARKS ROAD

17. Several options were discussed at the meeting to improve safety levels on Sparks Road in August 2006 for both school communities. The potential advantages/disadvantages of each option were agreed by those attending the meeting:

- (a) Install a zebra pedestrian crossing with kerb extensions and operate a school patrol at the OLA entrance which would be identical to the Hoon Hay school crossing facility.

Advantages: Priority crossing for pedestrians wishing to cross at this location with the added protection of a school patrol at peak crossing times.

Disadvantages: Minimal use of the zebra crossing outside school travel times. At similar situations to this option, an under utilised zebra facility on a main road has led to tragic consequences where pedestrians unexpectedly walk out onto the zebra and approaching motorists have failed to stop for them. The installation of a zebra crossing at a location of low or intermittent use by pedestrians increases the risk of a casualty occurring. Additional parking restrictions would also be required outside residential property.

- (b) Install a zebra crossing facility half way between the exiting Hoon Hay school zebra and the OLA school entrance, with kerb extensions and school patrol. This would replace the existing zebra crossing.

Advantages: One crossing facility to serve both schools

Disadvantages: Detour required for students/adults from both schools but mainly for OLA School students. This could create the potential for some to cross the road away from, but still close to the crossing facility, which increases their risk of collision with a vehicle. Parking restrictions would also be required outside at least one residential property.

- (c) Install a kea crossing school patrol at OLA and retain the existing pedestrian zebra crossing at Hoon Hay school.

Advantages: Both schools have a priority crossing (at school patrol time) immediately adjacent to their main entrances.

Disadvantages: Inconsistency of traffic management with two types of crossing facilities very close (150m) apart which has the potential to lead to confusion for the motorist.

- (d) Install a kea crossing school patrol at OLA and replace the zebra crossing at Hoon Hay School with a kea crossing school patrol.

Advantages: Consistent traffic management, particularly in relation to signage and markings. Note: The Hoon Hay school crossing would have the temporary but higher profile orange flags. The flags at both school crossings would be visible to all approaching motorists. In addition, there is potential to improve overall safety at the Hoon Hay School crossing point, as the removal of the zebra crossing would eliminate the pedestrians' false sense of safety at low pedestrian usage times.

Disadvantages: Parking restriction outside property by OLA school. There is the potential for additional delay to traffic on Sparks Road.

- (e) Overbridge and/or Underpass.

Both these options would result in significant increase in travel distance due to ramp gradients required for wheelchair/pram etc access. Experience in other cities has shown that people will avoid detours of this degree. The cost would also be prohibitive.

DISCUSSION – HOON HAY ROAD

18. OLA school management is requesting that a central pedestrian island be installed on Hoon Hay Road outside the school's entrance (via the church grounds). This would be similar to the island proposed in 1997. Since that time, the adjacent petrol station has been enlarged, removing frontage shops as part of the redevelopment.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the information be received.

CHAIRPERSON'S RECOMMENDATION

That the information be received.