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Minutes for Traffic & Safety Committee Meeting held
06/19/2025

Meeting Date and Time: 06/19/2025, 10:00am

Attendees:

Committee Members:

Max Rehlander, Engineering
Brian McDonald, Police
Katie Travis, Public Works
Ellen Kapitan, City Council
Maggie Clifton, Community Engagement

City Staff:

Bob Thompson, Planning
Ashley Miller, Engineering
Joe Hall, Police

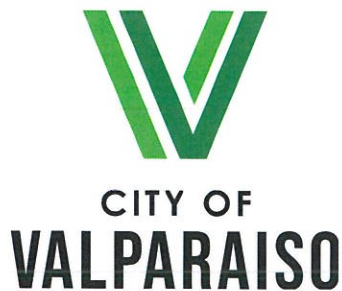
Members of the Public:

Carol McCreery
Frances Saar
James Ferguson
Sue Neff

Absent Committee Members:

Mike Cervik, Fire

Max welcomes everyone to Traffic & Safety, the June edition. We have a few new faces, so I'll kind of just go over general rules and what traffic and safety covers. Generally, this is just more of a public comment community. That way, if you guys have concerns about traffic or safety concerns within the city, you can come to the Police Department, Engineering department, or Public Works Department. Ultimately, the committee has very little authority, anything that kind of takes regulatory action needs to go before the Board of Works for formal approval. However, the committee does take a vote on agenda items that need to go to board of works to say, hey, this has a 6-0 in favor of a trip to safety. So just one kind of step in the process is to make sure community engagement has happened prior to the board of works approval. OK, so with that said. Let's go around the table & do introductions, my name is Max Rehlander, I'm the

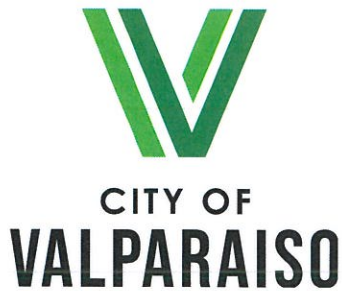


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city engineer. Then we will go to my right. Brian McDonald, the patrol commander of the police department, Joe Hall, captain of Support Services, James Ferguson, a Valparaiso resident, Sue Neff Valparaiso resident, Phyllis Sear another Valpo resident, Barry Sear, a Valpo resident, Francis Saar Banta neighborhood, Carol McCreary, I live in Keystone, Ashley Miller, with engineering, Ellen Kapitan City Council, Bob Thompson, director of planning, Maggie Clifton, Community engagement director for the City, & Katie Travis, Public works. All right. Thank you all for coming. Then Max asks if Sue was the County Assessor, she responds with yes but today she is just a concerned Valpo resident. Max continues with welcoming everyone and thanking them for coming and give a brief explanation regarding our process as well as who makes up the committee members, so traffic and Safety Committee is made up of six different committees members engineering, police, public works, engagement and City Council, as well as absent today, is fire. It's typically Mike Cervik who comes so again as far as any agenda items that need formal voting on, it's those six members who cast the vote. With that said, we can go ahead and get started.

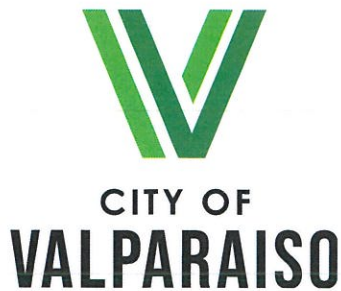
1. Discussion Items

- a. Blind Driveway Sign - Max states Barry, I believe you were who I talked with a couple weeks ago, Barry responds with Yes, he was. The first item being along 562 Woodlawn Dr., there's a request for a blind driveway sign. I talked on the phone with Mr. Barry Shears a couple of weeks ago. Max then passes it along to Barry to speak about the situation, yes, we live at 562 Woodland Dr., and we've been there about 30-40 years. And when you're coming South going down Woodlawn, our driveway is invisible until you're right up on it, so I took some pictures that I don't think I really need to show but I'll show you if you like and we've done OK with it over the years and but, being a little older and being a little slower, it seems like it might help us to have a sign there that indicated that there was a driveway that you couldn't see when we back out into the street. We have a car with the rear-view camera, so when I'm backing out the rear end of the car is headed south down Woodlawn, I can see all the way down the ravine



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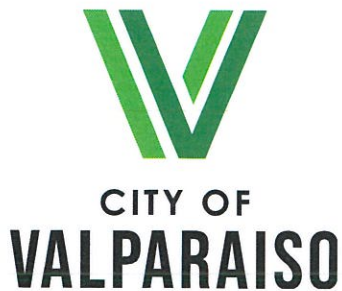
which is fine, but going the other way, you know, it's really blind. Even when I pull out into the street headed north over at the right side, you still can't see them coming until they're on top of you. This is the essence of it, really. We've never had an accident there. And it's a small street so you wouldn't expect there'd be a lot of traffic and there really isn't, but you know some, sometimes people feed through there, the kids who are late for high school, the Catholics who are late for mass. Max jokes, I may or may not be one of those. Barry continued when we spoke briefly and I learned that we didn't have to fill out any forms, that was it. I was in. You were very helpful immediately and I praise parts of the services in the city here several times already this morning we have great services from all the departments and wherever we go we get help in a friendly manner. That's efficient and smart, but we really love that. Max states thank you for that information and especially with the Police Department here, I'm kind of going to kick it out to them more, not to mention your driveway, but more just Forest Park neighborhood you mentioned. I kind of want to hear from them as you had mentioned, there's been no accidents. However, in other locations, Brian, could you just talk more about Forest Park driveway access? Brian states well, there is not really a whole ton of traffic volume coming through there and you know without talking to Joe and looking at, you know, traffic stats. Joe states stats in that general area it's a little bit harder to speak on it, but you know off the top of my head we in general don't have very many traffic crashes in that area, you know, especially serious ones. We could certainly use our Urban SDK program around and you know, see what kind of traffic volume is coming through there we have speeds calculated, you know of vehicular traffic, and you know kind of base enforcement action off that. But in general, it's not an area that that we've identified as being problematic as far as vehicle crashes are concerned. You mentioned as far as people speed through the area, we get the complaints about people speeding through their relatively often, you're going downhill, and it's hard not to



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speed. Max continues, at this point in time, just based on information, I wouldn't say it's warranted for now, but I would like to have the police drive themselves, you know, see if they come to the same conclusion or if they think otherwise. Also, Katie and Maggie and Ellen, if you guys just want to drive it and just kind of see if you think a sign is appropriate as of right now, I will say I don't think it's appropriate based on the whole neighborhood that way. So, if we provide a sign for your driveway, we'll then remain assigned for the next driveway and the next driveway and it will turn more into a signage pollution issue. Rather, drivers just need to understand that in the residential neighborhood and you need to drive slowly. We will table it for now, and then I'll just provide an update for the next meeting.

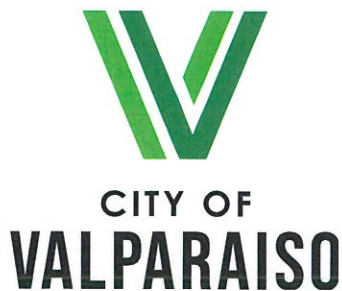
- b. Promoting Safe Driving among VHS Student Drivers - Ellen states last year this came up in conversation when we talked about Vale Park Road and especially during school times pretty sure I talked about it here about the tech school on Washington Street, just north of the tracks that their principal had set something in motion for speeding cars. My neighborhood was #1 on the list on saying like, what these kids are going so fast because they're late for school. It's 7:00 in the morning, 7:30 in the morning, but their principal had this program that if you had a complaint or maybe you got a ticket that you were getting basically marks off your privileges for parking. So, I kind of played around with that and ran this through the Internet, looked at maybe what other places are doing and that it could be a solution for the residents we're hearing from specifically, Keystone area on Vale Park Rd. That's where I added speeding, rolling through the stop signs. We know that's one that we hear, especially in Vale Park Road and beyond that and throughout the city, distracted behavior. So, I wanted to throw this out to you guys to just look over and see what your feelings are about it. Is it something worth pursuing? Then the next conversation would be with the Police Department and with the high school. Because there's a few people that I think



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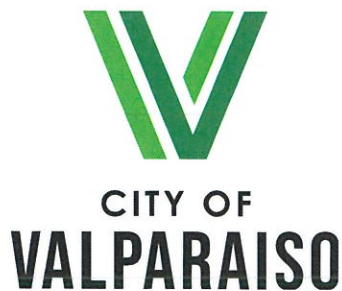
this would impact to see if there's interest in trying something that was. It's still promoting safe driving. Almost positively, but it also negatively, I don't know. Look through this, we can talk more than in the July meeting, but it's something. If we do want to move forward with it, with school, when they go back to school, when the parking permits start getting issued, that's when it would need to be done. But I'm just looking for maybe your first, your initial reactions and thoughts. Maggie asks Ellen, have you talked to the administration at the school, Ellen replies at this point I have not, I wanted to go to this group first before going there. Brian states that he would certainly like to forward it to our school resource officer who serves mainly at the high school because we're obviously dealing with drivers. Ellen responds with "yes and that's where I needed some help. Thinking through the next steps here. So, would you be able to send it to the SRO, and ask to send feedback?

Brian responds with, "Yes, I will reach out to him because I know you had mentioned some aspects of traffic control with this. You know, I know we do have officers and the Sheriff's Department officers who work off duty, that direct the traffic and are at the high school every single morning and immediately after school and those are officers off duty traffic enforcement per say more or less just getting kids in and out of the parking lot during those you know busy times. Ellen states that if a list of questions can be compiled then she can also reach out to the school board and see steps and thoughts at their end. Maggie states that she likes the concept of it but asks Ellen if she knows of other communities doing it to where she could give examples. Max says he was also curious as to what viewpoints would be from the legal side as well. Ellen states that she appreciates the thoughts and feedback because she wants to be well rounded, she loves the idea of promoting safe driving early because it's so important since we hear about complaints from all around the city. Max asks Ellen to email the information over in a pdf format and we will table this until the July meeting.



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- c. Presentation on Urban SDK at Council Meeting - Ellen starts off asking Max if he would be willing to do a presentation about the Urban SDK program at an upcoming council meeting. Max responds with his hesitancy is because this is the city's 1st year using it and we have had a success with it so far and it has been helpful but I would prefer to hold off on presenting it before the council closer to like the end of the year where we have had more time using it and also that should be when we decide if we will be resigning a contract for another year with them, then with deciding to go forward with them for another year or deciding to not move forward, I would hate to present it to the council saying we are happy with it then decide we aren't moving forward with it. So can I check back in with you back in October because that's when we should get pricing and see where we are at. Joe states that Urban SDK are constantly updating and developing, we are about 9 days out from a new release which I would love to see what those are and see what is being added before anything gets presented. Ellen asks if there is a better brief description for when she speaks about it to other people. Max responds with the description that was presented at BOW was good, so she could just use that.
- d. Pedestrian Signal Downtown – Delayed signal – Ellen starts with speaking about the downtown area specifically they are good about giving you the walk sign as the light turn green then will give you time to walk across. She continues that she is not sure if that is the standard. Bob states that usually it gives you the walking sign before it turns green to give the pedestrian a head start crossing the street. Max asks if Ellen has spoken with Drew in the last couple of months, because we've done a little bit of research as far as when its warranted because some communities have implemented them and found out that they're not effective and of course other areas where they are. I did reach out to INDOT and the INDOT LaPorte District is the only district that has them in place of the whole state and they're only in two locations. One of them is in East Chicago, right next to the high school. Another is in Mishawaka I



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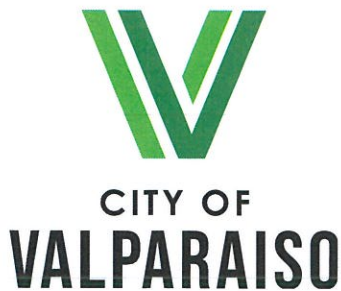
don't remember the location, but I can send that to you. I'm hesitant now as far as. If this, like Valparaiso, is the only place in the state that's doing this, then drivers won't understand what's going on.

Ellen asks Max what delays he is speaking about because the ones she sees are like 3 second delays.

Max responds with, yeah so, it's normally about a three second delay and then what I'm concerned about is if we do this. And especially like the no right on red. If people don't have the green light and yet turn anyways, even though the production has a lock signal, it's going to cause more conflicts. I will say too, I was in Grand Rapids last week for a day. I drove through at least three different traffic signals that have it, but there weren't any pedestrians in place in two locations and then in the third there was a pedestrian. So, for the two locations that nothing was going on, there's just vehicles sitting there for three more seconds, which, like, isn't that long, but it's still just like, wait, what are we waiting for? There's no one here.

Ellen continues Well, that's what I'm looking for in our downtown area. They're also not consistent. I feel with their timing is off and it seems like some change when others wait longer. So, I don't know if there's also a way to work with whoever our vendor is to make sure they're consistent across all cross paths if that makes sense.

Max responds with, I can also send you, so I'll send you the two locations that are implemented in the state. I don't believe any like local municipalities have them in place, but I can reach out to see like Chesterton can only controls like 2 traffic signals in in their city in in their town. I know Crown Point has more, Hammond has more. I can reach out to those 3 communities because I know my engineers. However, like in addition to the 2 the INDOT has, I can send you the warrant checklist that other states have used, but one of them was that the number of pedestrians and it's like if you have a four way stop, it's like 200 person per hour like threshold or something, right? Two hundred people is a fairly high threshold, but either

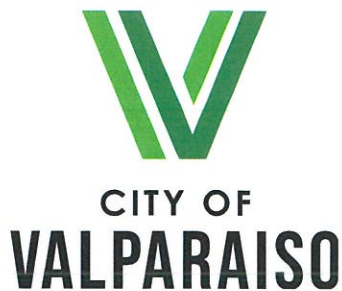


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way I can send you that to kind of just see. It is just the thing that it's generally in larger cities and more dense built networks and what not.

Maggie states how she has seen a big improvement here since we flipped the switch on making them always automatic, I mean that made a huge difference and she's not sure if that was last year or the year before.

- e. Traffic on Valparaiso St. – Between Glendale & Evans – Joe shared the information that was collected by the Traffic Enforcement Officer as well as pulled data from Urban SDK, since the month of April 2025, it is a 25-mph zone. In the 95% the speeds range from 30-32 mph but 37 mph being on the high end and 29 mph being on the low end, within that there were 26 violations and 3 citations presented, traffic volume was 100 vehicles per hour, 3100 per day and during peak times up to 300 vehicles per hour. Ellen asks what is considered peak times. Joe responds with 10am-4pm, within those hours there were 26 speeding violators, with one being the highest clocked speed of 51 mph. Ellen asks what that ticket would be considered, like reckless driving. Max answers well it could have been a police officer responding to a call. Ellen speaks on a separate person that has reached out to her about the difficulty of turning onto Valparaiso St. due to cars being parked on the narrow street, is this a concern you see other places. Brian answers, not off the top of his head when it comes to complaints about cars being parked illegally. When community members call and report it, we send an officer out and ticket that vehicle. Ellen said she will send the contact information for the resident to you so we can reach out.
- f. Goodrich Rd. – Max informs the group about the new connector connection of Goodrich Rd & Ransom Rd and about a study that is being done to see whether an all way stop, or a 2-way stop would be better at the intersection there. Ellen asks if once Goodrich is done being built to connect to Vale Park if another study will be done at that end to see whether a 2 way or all way stops



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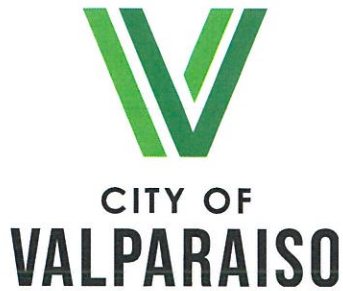
will be warranted. Max answers that they may look into that later since it's only a 3-legged spot.

2. Updates on Projects/Initiatives

- a. SS4A Grant – FHWA update – Bob gave an update which was he spoke with the Federal highway last week and our award is going forward which is great news. Bob must redraft the agreement since they removed the DEI initiative & climate change initiative from the original. They said that we can also start advertising for a consultant to do this work because they said the turnaround for the agreement has been quick about two weeks. So, his goal hopefully is to get the agreement completed and drafted to them by the end of the week. Ellen asked if Bob could remind the group about the top three things we applied for in that. Bob answers it's a safety action plan that the city will be doing for the entire city for the selected consultant to look through all the speed data, the volume of traffic and other factors, then a demonstration will be presented.

b. Public Comment –

- i. Sue Neff, I live at 426 N CR 250 W, north of Family Express and all the mailboxes are on the east side of the road and the residents live on the west side of the road, right now the speed limit is 40 mph on that road. A lot has changed on that road within the last 35 years. With all the change and addition to homes over the years I feel like I take my life in my hands just to cross the street to get the mail because people speed. She was hoping to get the speed limit reduced from 40 to 35 or even 30 mph. Joe responds to using our Urban SDK program to look at volumes and speed data, but as of today we only have the 1st 10th of the road included in the data but the rest of the road will coming with the update of the program, from what he can see now the average speeds are 40-46 during peak hours with the highest being 75 mph. Ellen asks what it looks like to change the speed limit. Max answers that they haven't gone



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- through it up, we would have to see what existing issues we have. Have LTAP investigate it and then get back to the team. Max asks Sue since 250 is county and city roads, have you also spoken with county about changing the speed on their side as well. Sue replies with she has not, but she knows them and plans too as well.
- ii. James asks about the proposal for VHS student drivers, are you looking to the students with violation to lose their driving privileges or just lose the students' parking space. Ellen responds with she was looking that they would lose their driving privileges all together to where they would have to bus or carpool. She thinks that would get the message across and hold a lot of weight with highschoolers.

Next meeting July 21st, 2025, at 10:00am