Item: Planned Sidewalk on Park Road
1/28/2010

Question:

How does sidewalk along thoroughfares affect safety of the travelling public?

Answer:

Adopted Sidewalk Policy

The City Council's adopted Sidewalk Retrofit Policy states that sidewalks will be installed on both sides of all existing thoroughfares. The policy contains a set of adopted criteria that prioritize thoroughfares that lack sidewalk. Each carries a different point value. One of the criteria addresses safety, such as limited horizontal and/or vertical curves that obstruct driver and pedestrian visibility.

The factors that make sidewalks necessary on thoroughfares include:

- A need to separate pedestrians from vehicular travel lanes on streets with high volumes and high speeds of traffic.
- Areas with great potential for pedestrian travel such as commercial areas, residential areas and locations adjacent to community facilities such as schools and parks.
- The threat of injury or death while crossing a street at uncontrolled locations increases as speed and volumes increase. Four lane undivided streets like Park Road are less safe and less comfortable to cross, as pedestrians must wait for adequate gaps in the flow of traffic.
- From national studies, a pedestrian hit at 40 MPH stands an 85% chance of death. A pedestrian hit at 20 MPH stands a 15% chance of injury or death. Speeds on Park Road are posted at 35 MPH. Operating speeds are higher (85th percentile at 39.9 mph). Pedestrians must decide when to cross and to cross quickly.

The factors that make the Park Road segment a priority are:

- This section is one of the last missing gaps in a large pedestrian network along Park Road. Park Road between the Kenilworth/Scott split and Johnston Road is 7 miles long. Currently, 93% of Park Road has completed sidewalks. If the City builds all of our planned projects, including this 0.20 section, 99.8 % of Park Rd will have sidewalk on both sides.
- Average weekday traffic volumes are 27,000 vehicles per day.
- Double exposure for residents walking along the west side as they need to cross the street twice to continue on a sidewalk.
- Existing slope and drainage make it virtually impossible to walk on the west side in the location of the gap.
- Sight distance issues with a curve in the street just south of the project.
- Significant pedestrian activity in this area. There is a worn path along a portion of the project and significant pedestrian generators served, including:

  A CATS bus route and bus stops, an elementary school, a middle school, Sedgefield Park, EB Moore Park, Freedom Park, Little Sugar Creek Greenway, the YWCA, apartment/condominiums and a concentration of commercial land uses near the gap on Park Road

- Strong support in the neighborhood for this project. City staff has received emails from board members of the Sedgefield Neighborhood Association and the Dilworth Community Development Association in support of this project.
- The Colonial Village-Sedgefield NIP public meetings identified this gap as a need to complete a continuous pedestrian network.

Question:

Why build this section of Park Road now?

Answer:

Building this project now enables the City to complete the sidewalk system on Park Road in this in-town area and will make it much easier and safer for pedestrians and transit users traveling along this roadway. Delaying this project will not make this sidewalk easier to build in the future but will delay making this area safer and more walkable for pedestrians and transit users. This particular section ranked 7th of 230 thoroughfare sidewalk needs and was programmed by staff.

Question:

What are the safety implications of removing existing trees along this project as citizens said that tree removal will make traffic go faster and be more hazardous?

Answer:

- The absence of a sidewalk in this location is the primary safety issue for pedestrians as they have to walk in the road on a street that has 27,000 vehicles and speeds in excess of 35 MPH or attempt to cross the street twice to travel along the west side of Park Road. While some studies have shown that tree-lined streets can moderate travel speeds, those same studies and best practices would recommend that sidewalks be built on both sides of thoroughfares to enable pedestrians to not have to walk in the street.
- Not all trees and vegetation in the construction area will be removed. There will be 9 trees and 1 hedgerow removed. Vegetation varies in size ranging from 12 inch caliper to 36 inch caliper trees. There are only 4 large mature trees from 18 inch caliper to 36 inch caliper being impacted by the project. Replacement trees will be included in the area of the planting strip to provide a buffer for pedestrians.
- Staff anticipates that traffic patterns and travel speeds after the sidewalk is built will be consistent with what exists today. Staff doesn't anticipate or believe there will be any significant change in what adjacent homeowners will experience in terms of traffic speed or traffic. While 9 trees and one hedgerow will be lost with this project, 13 trees will remain (3 trees near the back of the curb) and the City will re-plant trees with this project to help recreate that green buffer between the Park Road and the homes.

Question:

Regarding the location of sidewalk, how much of the sidewalk will include a planting strip versus the back of curb?

Answer:

Roughly 23% of sidewalk is back of curb and 77% has a varied planting strip width. Staff worked with the residents to place some of the sidewalk at back of curb to save a total of 13

trees within the construction area. Where no significant trees would be impacted, staff included a planting strip to improve pedestrian comfort. The planting strip provides a buffer between pedestrians and automobile traffic and also provides an area for street trees to be planted.

Question:

What is the distance from the curb to back of walk verses the overall construction easement?

Answer:

The maximum distance from the curb to back of walk would be an 8-foot planting strip and 5-foot sidewalk. Some sidewalk sections are at back of curb due to constraints such as trees and slopes. This section would be a 7-foot sidewalk at back of curb, which is wider to buffer the pedestrians from the travel lane. Other areas of the project will consist of a 5-foot sidewalk with a planting strip which varies between 4 to 8-feet. A 2-foot easement for maintenance is also obtained behind the sidewalk. Any width greater than 13 feet represents construction easement and the 2-foot maintenance strip behind the sidewalk.