

DRAFT MINUTES
Advisory Traffic and Safety Board
October 11, 2005

2005-0655 Hunters Creek Subdivision Traffic Study Request

Mr. Shumejko read from the Traffic Study Summary. On April 4, 2005, the City of Rochester Hills' Engineering Department received a traffic survey request (see attached correspondence) from Ms. Jill Laubach of the Hunters Creek Homeowners' Association regarding speeding concerns and cut through traffic within the subdivision.

The study included reviewing intersection sight clearance distances, placing speed and volume counters at several locations agreed upon with the Homeowners' Association (HOA), and obtaining traffic crash data. The speed and volume data was collected from Tuesday, September 6 through Thursday, September 8, 2005 along Plum Ridge Drive (in front of house #672), along Antoinette (in front of house # 400), and along Rose Brier Drive (in front of the houses at #272 and #117). Regarding the safe intersection sight distance clearances, based upon our field review, the following intersections proved to have inadequate sight distance:

- Old Ridge Court at Rose Brier Drive
- Middlebury Lane at Plum Ridge Drive
- Pepper Tree Lane at Rose Brier Drive
- Worthington Court at Pepper Tree Lane

The 85th percentile speeds that were collected from the traffic counters showed that Plum Ridge had a 85th percentile speed of 28 mph, Antoinette was also 28 mph, as well as Rose Brier Drive in front of house number 272. On Rose Brier Drive in front of house number 117, the 85th percentile speed was 30 mph. He stated that the values that were obtained range within or below the typical 85th percentile speed range of 30 to 32 mph for a typical residential sub within Rochester Hills, thus indicating no unusual speeding problems. Concerning the volume counts; Plum Ridge had 293 vehicles per day, with the largest one-hour volume of 34 vehicles per hour. Antoinette had 295 vehicles per day, with the largest one-hour volume count at 34 vehicles. Rose Brier Drive in front of house 272 had 241 vehicles per day, with the largest one-hour vehicle count of 31 vehicles, and Rose Brier Drive in front of house number 117 had 750 vehicles per day, with 82 vehicles per hour as the largest one-hour vehicle count.

Mr. Shumejko said these traffic volumes do not indicate a cut through problem. Typical trip generations for residential homes within Oakland County average between 12 and 15 per household, and previous vehicle trip studies performed within Rochester Hills have been as high as 17 trips per home per day.

Mr. Shumejko stated that traffic crash data was obtained from the Traffic Improvement Association from the period of January 1, 2002 through December 31, 2004. There were no crashes identified at any of these locations.

Based upon the study, Staff recommends approving TCO SS-132, which is to replace the existing Yield signs at Old Ridge Court at Rose Brier Drive, Middlebury Lane, at the south intersection with Pepper Tree Lane, and at Pepper Tree Lane and Rose Brier, with stop signs. The other intersection that had limited sight distance at Worthington Court is correctable by the removal of several shrubs. Additionally, landscaping at house number 134 Rose Brier Drive at the intersection of Rose Brier and Pepper Tree Lane is obstructing the line of sight for both northbound Rose Brier Drive and southbound Pepper Tree Lane. The City will notify the property owners to remove these sight obstructions.

Additionally in reviewing the previous TCO for Hunters Creek, it was discovered that TCO YS-517 was incorrectly described. Staff recommends approving YS 94 for Old Tree Court to yield for Antoinette. On the attached TCO he believed it had Old Ridge Court yielding to Antoinette, and there was no reference for Old Tree Court in the original TCO.

Finally, the HOA was notified that if interested, the Oakland County Sheriff's Department could place speed trailers followed by selective enforcement along Rose Brier Drive, as Oakland County staff resources permit. Staff recommends placing the speed trailers followed by selective enforcement during the hours of 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. Staff is also forwarding information to the Association regarding speed humps and the City's Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program for their review.

Chairperson Colling asked if there were any questions from the Board before he opened the meeting for Public Discussion.

Mr. Zendel said he was confused by the map enclosed with the packet, whereupon Mr. Shumejko gave out copies of a corrected map. Mr. Zendel asked for clarification for the location of YS 94.1. He was told the Yield sign was there, but the paper work required correction.

Chairperson Colling opening the meeting to public comment, saying he would allow anyone to speak on any issue before the Board. He advised those who wished to speak to fill out a card and give it to the recording secretary.

Mr. Moore asked if any of the recommended signs had been installed yet, and was told they had not. Mr. Matich said they would probably not be installed until after they had been approved by City Council. Chairperson Colling said normally after the approval by the Advisory Traffic and Safety Board they can be installed, and there is a 90-day period before the order expires. Mr. Shumejko said that issue came up a couple of times at City Council, and unless a TCO that had to be issued right away, they questioned why some signs were being installed before they had seen the matter.

Chairperson Colling asked if the traffic volumes were below the City average, and Mr. Shumejko responded they were. He asked if the volume at the house at 117 Rose Brier was about at the City average, and was told that was correct. Mr. Shumejko said the subdivision itself didn't really lend itself to cut through traffic, with Firewood and Rain Tree being main roads.

Dave Simpson
367 Antoinette Drive
Rochester Hills, MI 48309

Mr. Simpson said he was the president of the Hunters Creek Subdivision Association. He thanked the Board for inviting them to the meeting this evening, and commended Paul Shumejko for the professional relationship that had been established with their association. He said he had found the traffic study and other information given to them very educational. Their Association had drafted a response to the traffic study, which he handed out to the Board members, telling them the entire subdivision was in agreement with the document.

Mr. Simpson said he supported all the recommendations suggested in the traffic study, including replacing the specified yield signs with stop signs, removing the shrubs for better visibility, and utilizing enforcement via a traffic trailer and police presence. He wondered why all the yield signs in the neighborhood could not be replaced with stop signs. He explained he grew up in a town where stop signs were the norm. He had lived in Hunters Creek Subdivision for 12 years, and because they do not have sidewalks or streetlights there is a safety concern for pedestrians and children. The street is the only place to walk your dog or ride your bike. They believed that stop signs would provide a stronger message to motorists to stop and take a second look before proceeding. Vehicles parked on the side of the road create sight concerns. He stated that if there are budget constraints for the City, the HOA was willing to take on the expense over a period of time. They would like to know what the cost would be to install stop signs throughout the neighborhood.

Paul Shumejko had told them that traffic studies show that stop signs don't necessarily deter traffic from speeding, but Mr. Simpson felt these were studies done in places such as Warren and on straight-aways. He said their neighborhood was very hilly, with winding curves. If there were studies done on stop signs in Rochester Hills specifically, he would like to be provided with that information.

He introduced Bert Kozlowski, a member of their Board of Directors, and Jill Laubach, the "traffic safety coordinator" for their subdivision.

He said their subdivision had one very hilly, curvy street, called Antoinette. He said it had a slope with a 40 to 45 degree angle turn, and children had almost been run down on that corner. He said they were asking the City to allow them to install "slow" signs at that location. He specified they not be "Curve" signs or "Children At Play" signs, but a

“Slow” sign, to bring to the attention of drivers that it is a sharp corner and they need to slow down.

He would like anything that could be done to increase the police presence in the neighborhood. There are retirees in the subdivision that notice the police cruise through two or three times during the daylight hours, but after that they don't see them. He said he walks every night and he never sees a police cruiser coming through the neighborhood. He asked the Board to respond if they had any feedback on the association's additional recommendations, and also requested a written response from Paul Shumejko.

Chairperson Colling asked if anyone else wished to address the Board, and hearing none he closed the Public Hearing. He said he had taken a couple of points down while Mr. Simpson was speaking, and would address them before he opened the matter up to the Board. At the time Hunters Creek was built, which he believed was in the '80s, the requirements for building new homes and platting didn't require sidewalks; in fact that was one of the selling points for Rochester Hills. About four or five years ago the Planning Commission changed that, and now requires newly platted subdivisions to have sidewalks. Chairperson Colling told them that they always have the option as a homeowners' association to ask for a special assessment district (SAD) to have sidewalks put in throughout the subdivision. He thought that was a much better alternative than anything that had been suggested tonight, because it separates the pedestrians and the kids from the cars.

As to stop sign studies in Rochester Hills, they have been done on Springwood Lane and also Grandview. He explained they borrowed an innocuous-looking van from the City of Troy that had a time-lapse photography camera in it. Chairperson Colling said an unwarranted stop sign is run approximately 80 to 90 percent of the time, and we've got pictures of people blowing through them at 45 mph that he would like to show them. From his standpoint, from an engineering view, which he realized was not emotional; an unwarranted stop sign is more dangerous than no stop sign. He explained that if the signage in the subdivision does not warrant a stop sign, you are inviting noncompliance by putting one in. For that reason they would rather not address the problem in that way. As far as a written response, he said he would leave it up to Paul Shumejko to review the minutes of the meeting and the comments from Board members and provide any response they'd like. He told the HOA that in looking at the daily volumes, hourly volumes, and 85th percentile speeds, they actually live in a good neighborhood. He pointed out that because of the round about at Firewood and Rain Tree this particular subdivision, has been studied many times, and been before the Board many times. Because of the low traffic volumes and lack of cut through traffic, 90 % of the people that are doing the things they have complaints about are their neighbors. He suggested since they have the backing of the homeowners' association, to get a committee of active homeowners together and start walking the neighborhood and meeting people. By talking to people they could make them aware of the problem and how the association felt about it. That would do far more than anything else to control the issues they had. He added that teenage drivers are a problem anywhere, and the best thing to do is get a license plate

number and try to identify the driver, and then notify the Oakland County Sheriffs Department.

Mr. Simpson responded that it was not just teenaged drivers he was concerned with. He said it was the soccer moms, the senior citizens, and just the slope of the neighborhood.

Chairperson Colling stressed they were not saying they didn't have a problem, but the Board had found through various studies and other neighborhood programs from cities all over the country, education is the what will help you the most. With the newer cars you can be doing 50 mph and not realize it. The second thing is that everyone slows down when they get near their own house, and wishes everybody else would do the same. He said you have to make them realize that you're driving by "my house." He then opened the meeting for comment by the other Board members.

Mr. Duistermars stated that when he first joined the Advisory Traffic and Safety Board he was the believer that stop signs can be used for controlling speed. The other Board members were always saying no, that is not the case, but he wanted it to be proven. They did a study at Braeburn and West Maryknoll, and he saw that the data is not lying. There were folks blowing through that stop sign at 40 miles per hour. He was then more concerned about kids in the neighborhood getting killed because the stop sign gave parents a false sense of security that it is safe out in front of their house. They think everyone will slow down and stop at the sign. The best traffic safety program begins with the parents, and they are ultimately responsible to keep kids safe. He stressed that stop signs are not to control speed.

Mr. Zendel asked Mr. Shumejko if there were any traffic calming measures or recommendations to deal with the HOA's concern about the curve. He confirmed that the normal signing was a curve symbol with a speed limit attached to it. Mr. Matich said the advisory speed is based on the sharpness of the curve. Chairperson Colling said he wasn't sure that a "Slow" sign would do more than confuse people.

Mr. Shumejko said one of the traffic counters had been set up in the vicinity of the area they were discussing (in front of the house at 400 Antoinette), and at that location the 85th percentile speed was 28 mph. Based upon the data there is not a speed problem.

Mr. Matich said the Michigan Manual states that at a prima facie residential speed limit of 25 mph you don't sign curves. If you look at the subdivision map in the packet, there are six other curves that are sharper than the one in question. If they did one curve, for liability reasons they would have to investigate all the curves in the subdivision. Any signs would have to be posted in both directions, and you get to the point that there is a lot of signage for a neighborhood, and you don't find the benefits of deterring what you are trying to control. When controlling speeds, if there are no problems with run outs, people aren't overshooting the street and going into someone's yard or driveway because they couldn't make the curve, then they normally would not sign it in a residential subdivision.

Mr. Simpson said they were correct about other sharp curves in the neighborhood, but the one in question was on a very steep slope. They were asking for recommendations for ways to get drivers to slow down on this particular curve because it is quite steep. Mr. Matich said that when there is too much signage, residents feel they are losing the amenity of a residential subdivision street. You are striping the roads and putting up signs, and starting to make it look like a major road.

Chairperson Colling said the real issue, although it is one of speed, is not a matter of control. There are no accidents; there are no run outs, or people missing stop signs. If you want to get a driver's attention and wake him up, a "Slow Curve" sign is not going to do it because the speed limit is 25. To get the attention of drivers he suggested some type of visual discontinuity or a rumble strip. At the present time the City cannot afford to install these in subdivisions. He asked Mr. Shumejko and Mr. Matich to take a look and determine what would be most appropriate in this area. Chairperson Colling said in his opinion it would be a rumble strip or a speed hump, and their cost would be in the neighborhood of \$1,500 to \$3,000 each. Mr. Simpson they had been provided with information as to the costs and it was even more significant, from \$3,000 to \$4,500. Mr. Shumejko said that would be the cost with signage incorporated into it.

Chairperson Colling stated that the problem was to get the drivers' attention in order to change their behavior. If 90% of the drivers are from the subdivision, they already know the curve is there, so putting in a "Slow Curve" sign will not be effective. He reconfirmed with Mr. Shumejko that the 85th percentile speed in that area was 28 mph. Mr. Shumejko said when installing speed humps, the data shows that it will reduce speeds to 27 to 29 miles an hour, and they are already at that. Even with speed humps installed there would not be much of a speed reduction.

Chairperson Colling said the problem was that they were trying to put a speed measure in place to affect only one or two percent of the drivers. He was not sure there was anything mechanical, physical, or signage that would stop one or two percent of the drivers. 85 percent of the people recognize the situation and are driving at a safe speed. He felt that the 28 mph had more to do with the slope of the road. There already is a good compliance rate, and he was not sure there was anything that would get them a three mph speed reduction and 100 percent compliance.

Jill Laubach
435 Antoinette Drive
Rochester Hills, MI 48309-1117

Ms. Laubach said she heard what they were saying and she appreciated their time in looking into this, but she was concerned with safety for children and families and this tight curve with an incline. She said if you were to drive this curve you would see that you couldn't drive it at 28 mph. If 28 mph is the average speed, there are people going under the speed limit and people going way over 28. From the map you can't see it, but there are issues with visibility, the narrowness of the road, and cars and families walking on the road. She said we have come to the Board to hear their recommendations, and we

have heard a lot of what we can't do. What can we do besides the option that costs \$4,000 for a speed bump?

Chairperson Colling said he understood what she was asking, but the fact of the matter was that there was not a single sign that would help the situation. He thought selective enforcement might help to a degree, but 85 percent of all drivers are either at or below the speed. Most of problems are from residents of the subdivision. He said it goes back to education, and getting the homeowner's association to be more active. Another thing to consider if they didn't want to pay for a speed hump or rumble strip, was to spend their money on a sidewalk around the curve, making a pedestrian walkway. He stressed that getting pedestrians out of the street was the safest thing to do, and would be money well spent. He felt they were asking the Board to come up with a "silver bullet", but unfortunately there wasn't one. If they were dealing with speeds of 40 mph there were things that could be done, but their 85th percentile speed of 28 mph was slower than the average of most subdivisions in the City. He emphasized a "Slow Curve" sign would not change driver behavior.

Ms. Laubach said the HOA was currently implementing a two to three year campaign for traffic awareness. There would be newsletters going out, and they had asked Mr. Shumejko for literature to distribute. They had sent out a survey and asked for and received overwhelming support from the neighborhood. They felt they were doing their part, and would appreciate anything the Board could do for them.

Chairperson Colling asked members of the Board if they had ideas to what would work for this curve.

Mr. Hunter said an option not necessarily recommended by the City was the yellow sign with a flag on top that said, "Slow Children At Play." Ms. Laubach responded they had one. Mr. Hunter asked if the sign was helping, and Ms. Laubach replied that the situation was scary for parents, and there were a lot of young children in the neighborhood.

Mr. Duistermars warned that some of the things that the committee was suggesting could make matters worse for safety. They would give parents a false sense of security. Putting in unwarranted stop signs would make it more dangerous.

Chairperson Colling reminded everyone that they had a traffic control order (TCO) before the Board to change to some of the yield signs to stop signs. These were in locations that made sense because they met warrants. He stressed that the problem they were dealing with was driver behavior, not problems with the roadway. He stated that there were two ways to affect driver behavior, education and enforcement. Because of the times we are living in, with no one wanting to pay higher taxes, we're all getting squeezed with the price of gas and other expenses. We don't have the money to add more sheriff deputies to patrol every neighborhood to the point of changing driver behavior. Selective enforcement could be put in place for a minimal length of time, and may affect behavior to a degree, but the real key is education. Identify the cars you see

on a daily basis. Get out as a team, walk the neighborhood house to house, and talk to everyone. It is someone from the neighborhood who is taking those corners at 45 mph.

Chairperson Colling said he would be willing to approve a "Slow Curve" sign, but he stressed it would not change driver behavior. Mr. Matich interjected that there was no such sign in the Michigan Manual of Traffic Control Devices. There is a curve sign, and if drivers are taking a curve at too high a speed they can put the appropriate speed underneath it. They discussed whether there were any other signs that could be used that would comply with traffic warrants.

Mr. Brown asked if it would be appropriate to use a sign that shows the curve with a number denoting a speed of 20. Chairperson Colling advised him that the only time you could post a speed advisory lower than the prima facie speed limit is when there is a geometric or engineering problem with the road. Chairperson Colling offered that since these conditions did not exist, they would be in violation of the warrants by putting the sign up.

Mr. Moore said that he had driven the curve tonight to check it out. He sat and observed for around ten minutes, and saw very few cars go by. There are no sidewalks, but he would not advise placing stop sign where drivers won't stop. He thought the subdivision had a great homeowner's association, with a good rapport with the residents. He said that was the best way to get the word out, better than a sign in someone's yard that would soon be ignored, and that someone would have to mow and trim around. He felt the sign would be ineffective, and sidewalks would be the best way to safeguard the children. Chairperson Colling agreed, and said the safest thing the HOA could possibly do if felt this strongly about the issue was have the neighbors that live on the curve band together, from approximately lot 447 to 389 on the inside of the curve, or 448 to 414 on the outside of the curve. They could put in a sidewalk in that area to get the kids out of the radius of the curve and off the street.

Mr. Moore emphasized that this would not just be good for kids, but for adults walking dogs and everyone else. Chairperson Colling told them he understood the situation more than they knew, and he didn't want anyone to get injured. He said unfortunately we live in a city that does not have a number of sidewalks in place, and we are not likely to get them unless the homeowners put them in. He stressed that the safest place for children to be is on a sidewalk, not the roadway. He said if you want money well spent, that is the place to spend it. He addressed the Board, saying the only sign he could put in would be a curve sign that gives a speed limit of 25 mph., which is the prima facie curve speed. He said he was going against his better judgment in offering it as he felt it would not work. He said they would do a traffic study and count at the same location, and he did not think it would change the speed or driver behavior.

Mr. Simpson said he agreed with what had been said, and that the sign would have no value. He thought at the resident of the lot where a sign was installed would complain about having it in their front yard. He saw their neighborhood compliance was above average for the City. Although there were kids out riding their bikes, because of his

education and experience as a retired Detroit Police Lieutenant he had no objection to anything the Board had said.

Chairperson Colling recommended the residents go back to the HOA with what had been said tonight, do some education within the subdivision, and get to know their neighbors up and down the street. He asked how many homes were in the sub, and Mr. Simpson responded 280, with 20 percent active in the homeowners' association. Chairperson Colling said that 80 percent was a large untapped resource, and left a lot of people to talk to. He suggested throwing a Halloween block party, or doing something else to get people together to listen in a friendly manner.

Mr. Zendel asked as a point of order whether they needed to make two different motions, or if it could be done all in one. Chairperson Colling offered that it could be done as one motion, by recommending to approve the TCOs.

Motion by Zendel to approve Stop Sign 132 and Yield Sign YS 94.
Seconded by Brown.

Ayes: Zendel, Moore, Hunter, Colling, Brown, Blackstone
Nays: None

Chairperson Colling stated that the motion to approve changing the Yield Signs to Stop Signs as indicated by Staff had carried unanimously. He told the representatives from the homeowners' association to feel to come back anytime, and advised Staff that if the HOA came back, they knew the signs they were looking for. If the signs were to be put in, they would ask as a Board that another traffic study be done to show what happens to the speeds on the curve.