

Speed limit hike put on hold

SAN RAFAEL

City and county postpone escalation along Point San Pedro Road

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City and county officials are putting the brakes on plans to increase the speed limit on Point San Pedro Road in San Rafael.

After residents expressed concern that an increase from 35 to 40 mph might make things worse on a road already riddled with speeding, officials decided to hold off as they study potential traffic speed awareness and control measures that could accompany the new speed limit.

“So what (community members) asked us to do is look at other things that might be implemented along with the increased enforcement to reduce speed,” said Dean Allison, San Rafael’s director of public works. “We’re looking at several things.”

The original plan was to raise the speed beginning Jan. 1, so speed could begin to be enforced using radar. The city’s most current traffic survey expired in 2011, and speed cannot be enforced with radar without an updated



A truck lumbers past a speed limit sign Thursday on Point San Pedro Road in San Rafael. Plans to raise the speed limit to 40mph have been opposed.

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survey, officials have said.

The survey dictates that limits be based on the speed of the 85th percentile of those who travel the road. That percentile — said to be the average safe driver — shows that the speed should not be posted at 35 mph on Point San Pedro Road, according to Leslie Blomquist, San Rafael’s associate civil engineer.

The city has asked that the county keep the speed limit on its stretch of Point San Pedro Road consistent with San Rafael’s, and the county is obliging.

City and county officials are now focused on looking into traffic calming measures that could compel drivers to slow down. The options include electronic feedback signs, which display how fast drivers are traveling.

The speed signs are usually effective in slowing people down, Allison said. Officials are also looking into adding signs near schools that display times of the day when students are heading in and out of the classroom. Residents during neighborhood meetings have said they aren't sure what speed they should be traveling when passing schools. Allison said the public works department is looking into ways to keep drivers better informed.

bring more visibility to pedestrians crossing the street also are being considered, among other measures.

The goal is to bring the community into the process of increasing safety on Point San Pedro Road, Allison said. Community concerns about road safety have been exacerbated by the death of Aura Celeste Machado, the 17-year-old jogger who was when she stepped into the road to avoid a fallen tree.

“We heard loud and clear that the community wants to be a part of the decision,” he said. “They want to understand and generate options and present them to the community and we’ll make a decision together and involve the community in the decision.”

Danielle Diego, a teacher at Point San Pedro Elementary, said she’s seen at least 10 car accidents within past years occur directly outside the school campus along Point San Pedro Road. She’d like to see a speed bump or stop light installed at the street to deter speeding, she said. And she’d like to see traffic calming measures put in place without an increased speed limit, but if the increase is inevitable, she’d like additional measures as well, she said.

“People are afraid of escalation. If you raise the speed limit, people are going to go 50 instead of 45. That’s the concern about raising the speed limit,” Diego said.



A crosswalk sign and a speed limit sign line Point San Pedro Road in east San Rafael. Officials say raising the speed limit to 40mph will allow them to enforce the limit with radar equipment.

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