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GOSHEN

Busy Ky. 1793 may soon get sidewalks

Opponents: Area is too dangerous

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Goshen may get a sidewalk along Ky. 1793 -- one of its busiest roads -- so students can walk safely to the North Oldham campus.

But some residents say the area is too dangerous for a sidewalk.

Oldham County received a \$202,600 grant through the Safe Routes to School program to lay 3,000 feet of sidewalk from Harmony Landing Road to Harmony Elementary, North Oldham Middle and North Oldham High schools.

But Chris States, president of the Spindletop Neighborhood Association, said he opposes the plan. His 15-year-old son, Gregory, was hit by a car while crossing Ky. 1793 four years ago and spent a week in a pediatric intensive care unit. His skull was fractured and he was in a neck brace for three months.

States said the speed limit needs to be lowered before a sidewalk is even considered.

"It's going to be a dangerous place for kids to walk," States said. "The problem really is the speed that the traffic goes through there. People routinely do 60. It's at the top of a hill, so they hit the gas to get up the hill and then just keep on flying."

But Emily Liu, assistant director for the Oldham County Planning and Zoning Commission, said it's safer to give people a sidewalk than to have them walk alongside the road.

"I don't see there's that much of a risk," Liu said. "It's common sense -- is it safer to walk on the shoulder or walk on the sidewalk away from the roadway?"

Liu said lowering the speed limit is a state decision, and as far as she knows, it has not been discussed.

She said it could be next year before sidewalk construction begins. Design and engineering studies haven't been done.

Resident Bob Bruce said there are other questions that haven't been answered -- for instance, he said, there needs to be guard rails, but none are included in the plan. He also wants to know who will maintain the sidewalk, and who would be liable if someone were injured on it.

He met with planning and zoning officials as a representative of the Spindletop Neighborhood Association and told them the neighborhood doesn't want the sidewalk.

"People are dumbfounded. Who's going to let their kids to use it?" he said.

Another part of the plan calls for adding a 300-foot sidewalk behind the middle school to connect it to the Spindletop neighborhood. Liu said that is expected to improve the walking conditions behind the middle school.

"People are already walking there. I just believe a sidewalk is safer than walking in the grass," she said.

States said that plan will simply turn the neighborhood into a drop-off point for people driving their children to school, and residents don't want any more traffic there.

Another concern among homeowners is that their neighborhood association's insurance would rise because of the sidewalks, but Stuart Ulferts, attorney for Oldham County Planning and Zoning disagreed.

"Anyone who argues that a sidewalk presents additional liability exposure to individuals whose property lies adjacent to the sidewalk is misinformed," he said.

He went on to explain that landowners are probably already adjacent to another public right of way: the street they use to access their driveways.

"Should the county close those before someone has an accident and sues the neighbors?" he asked.

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