



Legislation Text

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TO:
Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

THROUGH:
Bruce Moe, City Manager

FROM:
Jeff Gibson, Interim Community Development Department Director]
Erik Zandvliet, T.E., City Traffic Engineer

SUBJECT:
Consider Recommendation by the Parking and Public Improvements Commission to Authorize a Grandview School Request for a Crossing Guard at Blanche Road and 27th Street and Appropriate \$15,000 for Additional Crossing Guard Contract Services (Interim Community Development Director Gibson).

- a) **APPROVE**
- b) **APPROPRIATE \$15,000 FROM THE GENERAL FUND**

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the recommendation by the Parking and Public Improvements Commission to authorize the Grandview School request for a crossing guard at Blanche Road and 27th Street and appropriate an additional \$15,000 per year for crossing guard contract services.

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

An appropriation of \$15,000 will be required per year from the General Fund should a new crossing guard be approved. However, an additional appropriation would not be required if a current crossing guard location is reassigned from another location to Blanche Road and 27th Street. That option is discussed below.

BACKGROUND:

The City currently provides 22 adult crossing guards at 21 locations throughout the City. Each crossing guard costs around \$15,000 per year.

In May, 2019, the City received a request from Grandview Principal and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) for an adult crossing guard at the intersection of Blanche Road and 27th Street adjacent to Grandview Elementary School. The school staff assert that 27th Street is a suggested route to school and parents are concerned about crossing Blanche Road. They note that the school campus will be modernized with new buildings fronting Bell Avenue in the next few years, which will increase pedestrian traffic east of the school grounds.

On July 25, 2019, the Parking and Public Improvements Commission discussed the Grandview

School request and heard public testimony from a representative from the Parent-Teacher Association. After discussion, the Commission recommended that the City Council approve a new crossing guard to be located at Blanche Road and 27th Street and appropriate an additional \$15,000 for crossing guard contact services. If additional funds are not available, the Commission recommended that an existing crossing guard located at Valley Drive and Francisco Street be reassigned to Blanche Road and 27th Street due to the significantly higher pedestrian-vehicle exposure at the requested location.

DISCUSSION:

The intersection of Blanche Road and 27th Street is located in a residential area east of Grandview School. The school has frontages on both Bell Avenue and 24th Street. Blanche Road is classified as a two-lane Major Local Street, and 27th Street is a two-lane Local roadway. Both streets have a speed limit of 25 MPH. There are no curbs, gutters sidewalks on either street, except for a sidewalk on the west side of Blanche Road. The intersection of Blanche Road and 27th Street is stopped in all directions. There are marked crosswalks on the north leg of the intersection. Street parking is allowed on both streets and pedestrians must walk in the roadway. Please see the Parking and Public Improvement Commission (PPIC) Exhibit 2-Location Map and Aerial Photo.

The traffic collision history between January 1, 2008, and December 31, 2017, was analyzed for this intersection. According to City records, there have been no reported pedestrian collisions at the intersection of Blanche Road and 27th Street during this ten year period.

Pedestrian Counts

Pedestrian volume counts were taken in May 2019 on normal school days with good weather. Traffic volumes were collected from the City's latest records. There are approximately 54 student crossings in the morning, and 40 in the afternoon, for a total of 94 crossings in a two-hour period. Only student crossings are counted toward the crossing guard warrants. Corresponding traffic volumes are 499 vehicles in the AM hour and 276 vehicles in the PM hour.

The cross-product is an indication of the relative exposure of pedestrians to vehicle traffic, and is comprised of the student pedestrian volume multiplied by the conflicting traffic volume for the AM and PM peak hours. A comparison of this location to other intersections with crossing guards is attached as PPIC Exhibit 3.

It should be noted that the north leg of Blanche Road at 27th Street is not identified as a suggested crossing on Grandview Elementary School Suggested Routes map. (PPIC Exhibit 4) However, City and school staff have recognized that parents prefer to walk along 27th Street instead of along Blanche Road between 24th Street and 27th Street. In addition, the City recently installed flashing beacons at the intersection of Blanche Road and 29th Street, one block to the north, as part of a Federal Safe Routes to School Grant. As a result, few school pedestrians walk along Blanche Road between 24th Street and 27th Street, and prefer to use Bell Avenue as a north-south route.

Field Observations

Staff conducted field observations at Blanche Road and 27th Street on typical school days. These observations confirm the traffic count data and pedestrian patterns. A large number of students use the crosswalks in the east-west direction, and typically walk along 27th Street partly in the street due to parked cars and low traffic volumes. Midblock pedestrian crossings on Blanche Road were not

observed. It was apparent that the majority of pedestrians were walking to or from their homes east of Blanche Road, rather than to vehicles parked along the road.

It was observed that motorists tend to travel slower at peak school times, due to the congestion and parked cars on the streets. This condition improves safety by lowering the potential and severity of pedestrian collisions. Minor driving infraction were noticed, including failure to fully stop at stop signs, but drivers were generally courteous to pedestrians. The intersection has adequate sight distance for motorists stopped at the stop signs. Proper right-of-way rules are currently established by the existing all-way stop controls. However, the pedestrian crossing on the west leg of the intersection was not obvious to both motorists and pedestrians, and would benefit from the installation of a painted crosswalk on the west leg.

Adult Crossing Guards

The State of California guidelines for the installation of adult crossing guards were reviewed at this intersection. These guidelines state that adult crossing guards are desirable at stop-controlled crossings on a four-lane street where the traffic volume exceeds 500 vehicles during each of any two hours in which 40 school pedestrians cross in each of any two hours during the day. However, adult crossing guards may also be considered if special problems exist which make it necessary to assist elementary school pedestrians in crossing the street, such as at an unusually complicated intersection with frequent turning movements and high vehicular speeds. The specific guidelines are in the California Manual on Traffic Control Devices Section 7D.02, as described below:

Adult crossing guards may be used to provide gaps in traffic at school crossings where an engineering study has shown that adequate gaps need to be created (see Section 7A.03), and where authorized by law.

Adult Crossing Guards may be assigned at designated school crossings to assist school pedestrians at specified hours when going to or from school. The following suggested policy for their assignment applies only to crossings.

Guidance:

An Adult Crossing Guard should be considered when:

- A. Special situations make it necessary to assist elementary school pedestrians in crossing the street.
- B. A change in the school crossing location is being made, but prevailing conditions require school crossing supervision until the change is constructed and it is not reasonable to install another form of traffic control or technique for this period.

Criteria for Adult Crossing Guards:

Support:

Adult Crossing Guards normally are assigned where official supervision of school pedestrians is desirable while they cross a public highway, and at least 40 school pedestrians for each of any two hours (not necessarily consecutive) daily use the crossing while going to or from school.

Option:

Adult crossing guards may be used under the following conditions:

1. At uncontrolled crossings where there is no alternate controlled crossing within 600 feet; and
 - a. In urban areas where the vehicular traffic volume exceeds 350 during each of any two hours (not necessarily consecutive) in which 40 or more school pedestrians cross daily while going to or from school; or
 - b. In rural areas where the vehicular traffic volume exceeds 300 during each of any two hours (not necessarily consecutive) in which 30 or more school pedestrians cross daily while going to or from school.Whenever the critical (85th percentile) approach speed exceeds 40 mph, the guidelines for rural areas should be applied.
2. At stop sign-controlled crossing:

Where the vehicular traffic volumes on undivided highways of four or more lanes exceeds 500 per hour during any period when the school pedestrians are going to or from school.
3. At traffic signal-controlled crossings:
 - a. Where the number of vehicular turning movements through the school crosswalk exceeds 300 per hour while school pedestrians are going to or from school; or
 - b. Where justified through analysis of the operations of the intersection.

As shown on the attached Adult Crossing Guard Evaluation Form (PPIC Exhibit 5), the intersection meets the minimum pedestrian warrant, but does not meet the requirements for a minimum of 4 travel lanes or the minimum traffic volume warrant. While this intersection does not completely meet all of the suggested State guidelines for adult school crossing guards, it should be noted that several existing crossing guards are assigned to locations that would otherwise not meet current warrants. The City can choose to provide crossing guards at locations that meet the general guidance advice on the basis of an engineering study or policy. There are 11 locations where crossing guards have been authorized without meeting State warrants. Alternately, the City can choose to relocate an existing crossing guard from another location that has a lower pedestrian-vehicle exposure than the proposed location. In such cases, the City has utilized a ranking method to identify the locations with the highest vehicle-pedestrian conflicts, and prioritized them when funds for additional guards are limited.

The Traffic Engineer believes that the current school pedestrian and traffic volumes can justify the assignment of an adult crossing guard at this location. However, the school already has four adult crossing guards assigned to nearby crossing locations. In reviewing the crossing guard comparison table, the adult crossing guard at the lowest ranking location at Valley Drive and Francisco Street serves far fewer school pedestrians, and this location was recently upgraded with flashing crossing beacons and in-pavement warning lights. It would be reasonable to relocate that crossing guard to the higher vehicle-pedestrian exposure location at Blanche Road and 27th Street.

The Police Department Traffic Bureau has reviewed this request and has stated their support for a crossing guard at this location. They do not recommend the relocation of an existing crossing guard unless a more comprehensive study is conducted to compare current pedestrian volumes at all crossing guard locations.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES:

ALTERNATIVE # 1:

Reassign an existing crossing guard from the location at Valley Drive and Francisco Street to Blanche Road and 27th Street.

PROS:

Additional funds will not be required to provide a crossing guard at the requested location. The existing location has a low student volume, and has recently been outfitted with new flashing beacons and high visibility crosswalk signs for enhanced pedestrian protection.

CONS:

The existing pedestrian crossing at Valley Drive and Francisco Street will no longer have an adult crossing guard during school arrival and dismissal times. Students have the option to cross Valley Drive at 2nd Street where there is an adult crossing guard.

CONCLUSION:

Due to the failure to meet the minimum number of travel lanes in the State crossing guard guidelines for stopped-controlled intersections, an adult school crossing guard is not fully warranted at the intersection of Blanche Road and 27th Street. However, based on current school pedestrian and traffic volumes, as well as to reinforce continuity of the preferred school route along 27th Street, it is recommended that the City Council approve a new crossing guard or reassignment of the existing crossing guard from Valley Drive and Francisco Street to the higher pedestrian-vehicle exposure location at Blanche Road and 27th Street.

PUBLIC OUTREACH:

The Principal and PTA of Grandview School were invited to provide written comments or to speak to the Commission on July 25, 2019, and to the City Council at this meeting. The Principal and PTA of Robinson School have also been invited to provide written comments or to speak at this meeting regarding the crossing guard at Valley Drive and Francisco Street. Public notices were posted in three public locations and posted online on the City's website www.citymb.info.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

The City has reviewed the proposed activity for compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and has determined that the activity is not a "Project" as defined under Section 15378 of the State CEQA Guidelines; therefore, pursuant to Section 15060(c)(3) of the State CEQA Guidelines the activity is not subject to CEQA.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney has reviewed this report and determined that no additional legal analysis is necessary.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. PPIC Staff Report and Exhibits - July 25, 2019
2. PPIC Draft Minutes - July 25, 2019
3. Grandview School Routes with Guards 2019
4. Sketch Crosswalks - Blanche Road at 27th Street