

Minutes from Phone Conversation with Travis Johnson Traffic Engineer City of Rio Rancho 10/08/2020

(30-minute telephone discussion with Kelly Heimgartner)

On 10/07/2020, I had requested a meeting with Leonard Rivera of the Traffic Section of the Engineering Division of the Department of Public Works at the City for 10/09/2020. Instead, I received a 7:30 am phone call from Travis Johnson on 10/08/2020 asking what the meeting was for which led to the following discussion:

Many residents of Mariposa are concerned about traffic safety in the neighborhood. Specifically, construction and passenger vehicles driving at excessive speeds and failing to stop at stop signs. Because of the hilly, curvy roads, there are numerous places where there is only a short line of sight to be able to see oncoming vehicles which makes the need for drivers to follow the speed limit all that more critical.

We began our discussion by discussing types of calming measures and when they can be implemented.

There are a wide variety of traffic calming measures. Travis' opinions/comments are in blue, mine (Kelly's) are in green

- Speed bumps After install many neighbors complain that they create nuisance sounds of drivers revving up right after the bumps and braking right before the next one
- Traffic Circles
- Stationary Signs that flash the speed you are going (either temporary or permanent) These are only effective for drivers who don't realize they are speeding. Those who choose to speed still will as they are not an enforcement device.
- Bulb out (a way of narrowing an approach to an intersection. They are used primarily to slow turning cars)
- Semi-diverter (completely shuts off access to one direction of traffic. This can significantly reduce the volume on a road)
- Chicane (a combination of bulb-outs or medians that force vehicles into a circuitous path)

For the City to be able to institute *any type* of traffic calming measures the first three of the following criteria must be met:

- The road must be classified as a residential street
- The traffic volume must exceed 1,000 vehicles per day *** see note below from Travis regarding a 2018 traffic study.

- 85th Percentile speed on the roadway exceeds 32 mph for a roadway posted at 25 mph (the 85th percentile speed defines the speed that 85 percent of drivers will drive at or below under free-flowing conditions)
- A special situation can occur called a Hot Spot. That is an area where more than 10% of cars are traveling at speeds greater than 10 mph over the posted limit. **Personally, my guess is that is the case on Mariposa Parkway and perhaps on Blue Grama.**
- Because of COVID-19, most studies citywide will not meet these requirements at present, partly because without schools in session there isn't a high enough volume on the roads.
- Also because of COVID-19 caused delays, while Travis is happy to do a study to see if our roads meet the criteria (though he doubts it will) our place in the queue means it would be the **Fall of 2021** before that would happen. This is because many citizens of Rio Rancho have similar concerns so there are a lot of people ahead of us in line.

● ***** Note** - Mariposa Parkway is a Minor Arterial roadway that is functioning at it's designed speed. The roadway is currently well below its designed capacity. Putting this into perspective, according to the Federal Highway Administration roadways of the same classification (Minor Arterials) generally carry up to 14,000 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT). The volume on Mariposa Parkway is counted annually by the Mid-Region Council of Governments. The most recent available count in 2018 shows that average weekday traffic is only around 2300 vehicles per day between Unser and Redondo Sierra Vista only 300 vehicles per day between Redondo Sierra Vista and Blue Gramma.

Then we turned our attention to Enforcement. Travis believes the neighborhood would be best served by having better enforcement of the existing traffic rules.

Enforcement can involve:

- STOP (Safe Traffic Operation Program) consists of the unmanned, parked SUVs operated by a contractor and the Rio Rancho Police Department to monitor the speed of vehicles on roads.
- Get many different people to use the Report Rio Rancho app to call out consistent violations in a specific area. You need to be very specific and pinpoint the section of the roadway you are referring to.
- Ask for the Traffic Unit to send officers out to ticket drivers who are speeding or blowing through stop signs. **Travis believes the best way to get compliance with traffic laws and behavior change is through the pocketbook.** The person he works closely with at RRPD is Brian Thacker. I will see if I can have a conversation with Brian the week of October 11, 2020.

I requested the addition of the following traffic signs:

- I mentioned to him that the entirety of southbound Blue Grama has speed limit signs posted at regular intervals. However, when traveling the 2 miles northbound from Overlook to Venada Rd there is no speed limit signage at all. Travis said that could easily be contributing to drivers traveling too fast until they see the first 30 mph sign just north of Venada Rd. Travis said that is an easy fix and was an oversight by the builders and his department. He should be able to have those up in 3-4 weeks.
- I also mentioned that there are several roads that when intersecting with Blue Grama have a very short line of sight. I asked if there are preset parameters that say when the sign that shows an intersecting road ahead is warranted. He said there are, it has to do with the curvature and the speed of the road. He asked that I send him the specific intersection that may be problematic and he will review them to see if signage needs to be added.



Lastly, we discussed the circumstance when trees impede vision such that a stop sign cannot be seen. The stop sign at the Blue Grama / Redondo Sierra Vista intersection (traveling southbound on Blue Grama) has long been a problem. I mentioned that residents may have differing opinions as to whether a tree should or should not be removed as most who are drawn to Mariposa are nature lovers and hate to see a tree cut down. He said his department reviews these issues and determines what should be done solely based on the merits of safety. If in this case tree removal is warranted, he would ask the HOA to remove the tree as it is their obligation to maintain that section of landscaping. He will take a look at this particular intersection.

Travis Johnson can be contacted via email at tjohnson@rrnm.gov or by phone at (505) 891-5016