

# Slower Cars Amongst Speed Radars

*Lafayette launches the Slow Down, Lafayette program to improve traffic safety*

Jenna Kessler, Tatum McElhattan, and Neve Murphy | Business and Community Outreach Team Member and Staff Writers

A driver cruises down Pleasant Hill Road, pushing the speed limit. However, seeing the speed radar sign flash red, they ease off the gas as they pass by Acalanes High School and Springhill Elementary School.

The City of Lafayette initiated its *Slow Down, Lafayette* program on Aug. 1 with the goal of addressing the recurring speed limit violations and reducing the number of collisions in the city through speed radar signs, education, and police enforcement.

The concern that many Lafayette residents have for speeding, especially near school sites, promoted the need to create a program to address the issue.

“[The program] grows out of the fact that there are a lot of general anecdotal comments I get and just my observations driving around that people are going too fast and are not observing the speed limits,” Lafayette Mayor Carl Anduri said.

Statistics that the Lafayette Police Department (LPD) obtained through speed radar signs support these observations. According to the LPD’s sign on Pleasant Hill Rd near Acalanes, of 97,303 people who drove past the speed ra-

dar between May 14 and May 21, only 17,995, approximately 18.49 percent, drove at or under the speed limit.

The city implemented the *Slow Down, Lafayette* program based on the guidelines which the global organization Vision Zero Network established in the 1990s. The Vision Zero strategy aims to prevent and prepare for traffic collisions.

“The core principles of Vision Zero [include that] human lives must be prioritized over [traffic] mobility,” Vision Zero Network Program Associate Kate Fefelova said. “Traffic crashes are preventable. Solutions already exist, but we’re not using them ... All humans make mistakes, and the roadway system should be designed in anticipation of these mistakes. Even if mistakes happen, they should not lead to death.”

The first part of the program adheres to Vision Zero’s ideas and uses multiple types of speed radars to collect data on the locations of speeding hotspots in Lafayette.

“We are trying to get information on speed in different parts of the community,” Anduri said. “We have got several kinds of equipment that measure the speed of cars and the volume of traffic. [One kind of traffic measuring equipment] are these black boxes that people don’t see out there, but the police department puts them out there and leaves them there for about a week to measure the traffic flow.”

Then, the LPD uses this data to determine which locations need more or different speed radars. The department also uses the data to help them effectively enforce the speed limit and guide drivers to drive at the proper speed.

“We track speed and traffic volumes to iden-

tify new hot spots of safety issues. No personal data is captured. This helps us more efficiently deploy our equipment and enforcement officers to reduce the greatest number of speeders in town,” Lafayette Reserve Police Officer and Code Enforcement Officer Andy Comly said.

As police enforcement increases along routes to Acalanes, many students will experience a heightened awareness of their speed in frequent-speeding areas including Pleasant Hill Road and Deer Hill Road. In addition to the dangers that speeding poses around schools, the costly traffic citations may serve as motivation for commuters to follow the posted limits.

“[Tickets] cause your insurance rates to go up, [and] it puts points on your driver’s license. Nothing good comes [from] getting a ticket and speeding,” Campus Supervisor Andy McDonald said.

Aiming to make speeders more aware of their actions, the program introduces devices to provide real-time feedback.

“We place portable speed display signs along roads to help drivers realize they need to slow down. These signs are similar to the permanent ones in front of Acalanes High School. We move our signs around town as needed,” Comly said.

The last element of *Slow Down, Lafayette* is education. The city aims to spread awareness among Lafayette residents about how speeding affects the probability and severity of collisions to encourage safer driving through social media and other community outreach.

“If you look at the charts that show the likelihood of severe injury at 20 miles an hour or 25 miles an hour compared to 35 miles an hour, it’s eye-opening to see how much greater the danger is at the higher speeds. What we are trying to do is make people aware of the role that speed plays in accidents,” Anduri said.

Through this collaborative effort, the city hopes to effectively address the recurring speeding issue and make Lafayette’s streets safer for all.

“It is undeniable that driving can be incredibly dangerous, if done recklessly, and in cases of accidents, can have a deleterious - and sometimes deadly - impact on the lives and livelihoods of the driver, the drivers around them, and nearby pedestrians. Ensuring responsible driving and traffic safety is entirely necessary for the safety and wellbeing of everybody,” junior Julia Kinion said.



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