

Summary of 4th street safety concerns, efforts and results - 7/06/15

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There have been various attempts by residents to get help with traffic issues on 4th street several years prior to my involvement. I raised concerns and began to seek help in late 2011 with SLO county Public Works Department(SLO PW) and at LOCAC T&C committee meetings.

My 3 major areas of concerns:

1. Excessive and dangerous speeding along both downhill and uphill sides of 4th street @ Pismo.
2. Need for safe means for pedestrians to walk on 4th street between Pismo and Ramona (pedestrian access from Baywood area to the Romona side and Sweet Springs Preserve)
3. Continuous sand/ gravel road debris in 4th/Pismo intersection. Slow response to prevent, mitigate and/or clean up.

These concerns were raised in 2011 in LOCAC T&C committee meeting with Mr. Ryan Chapman, SLO-PW's representative present. Sometime shortly thereafter Mr. Chapman met with several neighbors in a neighborhood discussion to more fully understand concerns. Subsequently he conducted a traffic survey, temporarily provided speed trailer, advised CHP of the concern and added more 25mph speed limit signage and pedestrian warning signs for vehicle traffic along the route. His traffic survey quantified and confirmed significant traffic and at higher than the posted 25 mph speed limit. He also investigated what would be entailed to create a "path" for "3" above. (I don't recall if this was actually part of the neighborhood meeting or something I discussed with him on my own.) The various efforts took some time to implement and the status of them was reported at LOCAC T&C committee meetings as new information was available.

Regarding traffic calming(Concern #1), Mr. Chapman referred us to the speed hump alternative as the only alternative available beyond measures he had taken, as well as the county policy that needed to be met to implement it. Speed humps were our least preferred option and I was unwilling to accept that this was the only solution to traffic calming in our area. Many neighbors felt an all-way stop at 4th/Pismo would be the most logical solution. At that time this intersection was highlighted at the first public sewer information meeting by SLO PW to get drainage improvement. Another idea was that due to the proposed upcoming sewer and drainage improvement work at Pismo and 4th street, a cross cut drain at the intersection would serve a similar purpose as vehicles would need to slow to cross the "dip". Similar "dips" are throughout the Baywood Park and would seem to be a possible solution. Further improvement efforts had to be set aside until the sewer pipe and drainage work was completed by the contractor to reassess the situation.

I followed up with SLO PW in 2014 after the sewer installation work was complete to see timing of the drainage work and was informed that the drainage improvement project had been eliminated due to environmental permit complications and increased design cost of alternatives. At the June 2014 LOCAC general meeting I raised to Supervisor Gibson the frustration that things continued to drag on these

various items with no tangible results. Each area of concern seemed to be managed by different SLO PW sub group and waiting on each other; He agreed to inform SLO PW these were still a community concern and bridge the internal coordination problems.

In mid 2014, facilitated by Mr. Jeremy Ghent, SLO PW again set up speed and traffic counters and also had a county employee separately do a manual verification of speed and count. Results demonstrated that prior efforts speed had not achieved any improvement to the speeding and the traffic count had now substantially increased. We also raised the point that 4th/Pismo also has a dirt pedestrian path from 5th to 4th at Pismo with a lot of foliage at the intersection making it difficult for drivers to see them. Again, suggesting an all-way stop is appropriate with the large amount of foot traffic crossing at the intersection.

The county had a traffic engineer re-evaluate the Pismo/4th street intersection regarding an all-way stop adding this knowledge and the higher traffic volume and determined that it still did not meet county policy. And by now we knew that no further drainage work in the intersection was being contemplated so the only means to calm traffic would be by installing speed humps. The south side of 4th street is challenged by the extreme grade to apply 3 speed humps per SLO PW(the minimum number required by county policy)

There was a suggestion that installing speed humps on the north side of Pismo on 4th---the uphill side--- should achieve the same calming benefit for the 4th street through traffic. This was an acceptable solution for SLO Public Works assuming street neighbor agreement. LOCAC T&C committee remained apprised of this determination at the monthly meetings.

A neighborhood petition was circulated towards the end of 2014 to the affected residents on 4th street between (dirt street) Paso Robles and Ramona.....essentially both sides of 4th street & Pismo affected by the excessive speed and where the humps would potentially be installed. The residents on both sides of the intersection returned a "yes" on the petition significantly greater than the minimum required by the county to proceed. The signed petition was submitted to the county in February of this year.

It is also useful to be aware that 4th street to Pismo---Pismo to 3rd---3rd to El Morro is a designated Collector street as well as designated as a Bike Route for through traffic. 4th street from Pismo to El Morro is designated as a Local street and has a blind view crest on it. Pedestrian safety is further challenged on this section of 4th street because of the road edge uphill-east and downhill west slopes. It is critical that traffic be calmed for safety of local residents' driveway/road access, getting to/from their mailboxes and the numerous pedestrians and bicyclists that are seen daily along this stretch of road.

Plus, without having a drainage corrective plan other than street sweeping after-the-fact as needed, the loose sand and gravel in the road at the Pismo/4th intersection makes stopping/ turning of vehicles more difficult. Just last month the bike route sign at the intersection was hit and down out of the ground by a vehicle going too fast and trying to make the turn to Pismo. A few days later the sign was reset. Several weeks ago, in this same section of road shoulder my wife with our dog had to jump out of the way to not be hit for another similar turning-too-fast incident.

Summarizing, this has been a notorious unsafe street area that has a high number of pedestrians and bicyclists being in the proximity of Sweet Springs and the bay front. SLO PW and 4th street residents have exhausted all alternative avenues to achieve speed calming and residents finally accepted the speed hump alternative for the betterment of neighborhood safety is better than no alternative. LOCAC has been “in-the-loop” with this effort over the full time. Speed humps were never our preferred choice and we worked diligently to come up with a practical alternative and in the end speed humps are all the county has to offer to effect speed calming in this area. These safety concerns continued to be expressed at the recent Community Plan Update meetings and also similar feedback comments are recorded in the public published meeting notes.

With this last step of obtaining the endorsement of the majority of local residents, we have now met all county requirements to have speed humps installed. I would appreciate LOCAC’s endorsement to have the county proceed.

Just as an FYI, the current status of the other two areas of concern I raised in 2011 is:

- Regarding concern #2. During the summer of 2014 the county added road base red rock to the west side road shoulder on 4th between Pismo and Ramona to assist with pedestrians’ safety. They also did the same for south side of Pismo and west side of 3rd to El Morro. This appears to have solved the problem.
- Regarding concern #3. SLO PW recently added some of the asphalt curbing on east side of 4th street from Ramona to Pismo similar to other ones they have installed in other problem areas in an effort to help channel water away from the adjacent up-slope properties that cuts into the bank to reduce the sand debris. However, a major channel of water comes down from 5th street through Pismo(dirt section) carrying sand, etc. onto 4th street @ Pismo. I believe this was the initial primary intended target for the drainage improvement. Therefore I believe the intersection will likely continue to have debris issues. Even with the measly periods of light rain Los Osos experienced in the spring of this year (1/4” or less each time), significant debris was deposited onto Pismo after each event. Imagine if it had been a “normal” weather year. Pismo between 4th and 3rd is relatively flat and is not able to rapidly shed water, leaving behind gravel and sand carried by the water. While this debris issue is only tangential to the speed calming topic, it may be one that surfaces at a later date after we see how the road drainage performs with this latest attempt to improve the drainage water channeling.

Addendum: The above status regarding concern’s 2 & 3 are not relevant to the immediate speed hump discussion but may be of interest to the LOCAC board members. I would appreciate it if you would read the attachment to the audience at the Board meeting if it appears this continues to be an item for discussion versus a straight forward endorsement after the T&C meeting. These points need to be part of the discussion to demonstrate the extent our residents have gone to trying to find an alternative means at traffic calming...but in the end having safe streets is what is important. I have reached out to a couple of my neighbors who have indicated that they will try to attend both meetings to also answer questions.