

Livermore Community Conversation - US 287 Safety Study and Public Safety

Wednesday, March 27, 2024

5:30 PM at Livermore Community Hall

Hosted by Larimer County, Commissioner Kefalas

Also in attendance:

- Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) – Chris Boespflug, Stephanie Gramberg and James Usher with slides from Stolfus - US 287 Safety Study
- Sheriff Feyan, Sergeant Roth, Traffic and Safety, and Lieutenant, Harkins
- State Patrol, Sergeant Chris Padilla and Trooper Cody Nickel
- Mark Peterson, County Engineer and Eric Tracy, Engineer for Special Projects
- Lesli Ellis, Community Planning, Infrastructure, and Resources Director

About 50 members of the community attended.

Commissioner Kefalas kicked off the meeting and topics. He mentioned that the next meetings will occur in Summer to focus on different topics. Tonight's session focuses on US 287 safety and traffic and public safety.

CDOT

CDOT staff presented the recently completed safety study (see slides).

Questions and Suggestions for CDOT

- Questions about the Study:
 - How many incidents were related to alcohol or speeding? *CDOT: About 6% involved vehicles going more than 65 mph. There's also an excel sheet with more detail.*
 - How long will it take to fund the improvements in the safety study? *R: They are on CDOT's 10-year list. Right now, CDOT has \$8 million. The state is looking at federal grant opportunities to stretch the funds.*
 - What are realistic expectations? *R: Smaller scale projects could happen in summer of 2025 (e.g., striping projects are low cost - sooner than later. The rest would be 3–5-year timeframe).*
 - What is the estimated timeline for the US 287 realignment? *R: That will be done by Northern Water - depending on time to deal with court challenges, likely 2025 at the earliest.*
 - How does US 287 rank compare to other roads in Colorado? *R: The overall crash rates are comparable to other roads, but US 287 has hot spot areas.*
 - Report doesn't really cover speeding. *CDOT: Sometimes they will do a deeper study of passing zones.*
- Specific Input:
 - At Cherokee Park Road Mile 369 – it is hard to see the white and yellow lines -- restriping and reflectors recessed into the pavement might help.
 - At Ted's Place, is there a way for people to get around cars - could there be a passing lane that's a bit longer by the old Fork's Lumber site?
 - Why can't we reduce the speed limit to 50 at busy intersections? *R: Have to look at the speed that majority of traffic can travel safely. Can't reduce speeds without heavy enforcement. It could lead to more head on crashes if frustrated driver's attempt unsafe passing maneuvers.*
 - With two lanes north to go right - so many close calls at particular intersections. Coming South from Laramie and turning – Could there be some bigger signs providing advance notice of intersections?
 - Bridges on 287 aren't wide enough for farming equipment.

- With 900 trucks a day or so, part of the problem seems to be there are too many trucks, and there's a lot of noise with brakes. Are there things to do to encourage trucks to use safer places and not use jake brakes? *R: Encourage freight partners to use safer routes.*
- Are there areas to limit jake brakes? Could you minimize the through traffic - cut through? Shortest route is that - truck drivers won't change. Glad for no hazmat.
- For roads to turn left that don't have a dedicated turn lane at an intersection - Make aware that people will be turning - with signage.
- Traffic Study - didn't say anything about the local quarry. Trucks use the passing lane and that might be a good opportunity for restriping. Also, there can be bad fog at that location.
- Speed limit - rest area - turn off to Abbey - could that be a safety zone with double fines? *R: CDOT can look into it and figure out implementation.*
- If overturning is 2nd largest - that's because of lack of turn lane - and people avoiding semis.
- The weather seems low to the firefighters. Can we get plows out quicker near Virginia Dale? They'll be out for multiple wrecks along the road.
- At Owl Canyon –
 - can there be rumble strips at the intersection to get folks to slow down?
 - intersection is better but see traffic from the east - people go across double lines. Could there be signage or plastic tubes?
 - with the new and old white lines, it's confusing especially when wet. Needs to be better signage for the turn.
 - it is dangerous passing around semis - cars sometimes forced off on shoulder.
 - what's the distance for the recommended passing lane for Owl Canyon? Or is it a signage issue? Have accidents at the Intersection of Owl Canyon lessened since the north bound onramp was done? There was an improvement but there's still a need for pavement and signage there.
 - The angle of the intersection at US 287 and Owl Canyon (CR 72) tightened when the County did its project and the restriping occurred on US 287. For southbound traffic on US 287 making a left turn onto Owl Canyon, they're coming around a curve at high rates of speed on a downslope with a fairly short left turn lane. Vehicles, especially trucks that are westbound on CR 72 turning northbound onto US 287 also have a sharp turn and come into the intersection too fast. They sometimes swing out into the northbound through lane or have even slid across the intersection.
 - If there were signs along US 287 about upcoming passing lanes, people might be less aggressive about passing. Participants asked about adding striping.

Input from Law Enforcement – Sheriff and State Patrol

- What percentage of accidents were speeding and impairment? *R: Law enforcement is being more proactive and have cited 400 for this area - higher than 375 last year. It's hard to figure out how fast a car was going after a crash. Only with excessive speeds, can you tell when there was speeding from tire marks.*
- What is the speed tolerance for issuing a ticket? *R: It is not true that it has to be 80. Troopers have some discretion.*
- What about Red Feather Lakes Road here and speeding? *R: It's the responsibility of careless drivers but maybe with bigger presence, there might be safer driving. Speeding is a social problem. State patrol does what they can with what they have. There are three troopers in Larimer County on a given night.*
- How does someone report reckless drivers? *R: Call 911, and if there is a deputy nearby they will try to intercept. Once a driver has many complaints, a driver's license can be revoked.*
- A rancher requested that when someone goes off the road, they be notified, as the driver is liable for the damage to the property. If officers could remind the owner, that helps avoid cows being on the road. *R: State trooper commented that they do that but can only follow up if the driver stays on the scene.*

- How can the community help law enforcement get the funding they need? *Response from Sheriff Feyan: Funding comes from the people. Property tax ballot limitations would affect Sheriff's funding. A 4% cap is not sustainable for County government. Commissioners have been great partners on budget requests. Commissioner Kefalas commented that of the General Fund budget - 53% goes to public safety and affirmed that BOCC approves the budget for the Sheriff's office. The Sheriff also has had challenges with hiring new deputies. He commented that he is looking for people with good moral character, and the temperament in the general community about law enforcement is not all positive, and that has contributed to low staffing. There may be opportunities to use technology to cover the many miles in Larimer County (e.g., red light cameras in Fort Collins reduced crashes). Camera radar vans can help, but in CO, they can't be used on roads of more than 35 mph.*
- Where does the ticket money go - Sheriff vs. General Fund? *R: Ticket fees go to the General Fund and that's good so that they don't fund positions and they do focus on life safety.*
- Could there be a line item on the mill levy? What is the process for doing that? *R: It would require a public ballot initiative.*
- How are the black cameras on the side of road being used? *R: There are about 60 safety cameras - They don't take pictures of you. They read license plates and vehicles. Then if a car gets stolen – sheriffs can enter the info into the program - then if it passes the camera, it alerts law enforcement. The data is scrubbed after 30 days. It's kept for that latent period in case of a delayed reporting of a crime.*
- Can there be a speed gun near the school in Livermore? *R: A car must have a person in the speed radar car. It can't be automated.*
- Sometimes the Sheriff will work with state patrol to saturate an area.
- Is there a way a community can offer support? *R: There is a reserve deputy program at the Sheriff's office.*
- Is there a service for behavior needing people. *R: Yes, there's a Chaplain program - there's a process and partnership with mental health.*
- Why not enforce the “move over” rule more? *R: It takes more patrol - so that's hard to accomplish. Responding law enforcement is usually actively engaged at the scene addressing the immediate needs of a crash or other emergency, so they can't do enforcement.*

The meeting wrapped up at 7 p.m.