

# Community Partnering Promotes Pedestrian and Traffic Safety

Using unique cooperation and financing for an electronic speed sign, traffic is dramatically slowed on an arterial in front of an Oregon high school.

**S**peeding is a problem in cities and counties across America, resulting in tens of thousands of fatalities and millions of injuries every year. Those are awesome figures, but they are real. Consequently, speed control, traffic calming, and traffic safety have become a paramount issue for city managers, public safety agencies, planning departments, traffic safety engineers, and just about everybody involved in governance.

Cities and municipalities of all sizes are being called to the task of addressing this problem—with budgets already spread too thinly. However, there are ways to leverage budgets and get the job done. Here's how one community pulled together by rallying their partners throughout the city including a Kiwanis Club, the School Board and the School District, the department of public works, the High School Key Club, and a local business to promote traffic and pedestrian safety.

Tigard, OR, a suburb of 47,000 southwest of Portland, had a major speeding problem on an arterial in front of its high school where 19,000 vehicles pass each day. Durham Road at the high school serves as a major connector for Interstate 5 and numerous roads to suburbs in the North Willamette Valley.

The Tigard Police Department frequently cited drivers in the vicinity of the school for exceeding the 20-mph limit. Enforcing driving regulations around a school carries a special impor-

tance; however, as with most law enforcement, resources were limited. Traffic patrols to enforce safe driving near the school are not always possible, but the danger is always there.

A local manufacturer of electronic speed signs offered a 90-day trial, which was extended when the police department requested more time to arrange financing. These signs monitor a vehicle's speed by radar, displaying the speed by digital readout. Having heard good reports about their use in other areas, the department was eager to try the sign, both to increase protection at the high school and to free up manpower.

Results were immediate. Speeding on Durham Road dropped sharply. The

minute that sign was turned on at 8:04 a.m., traffic speeds slowed by 15 to 20 miles per hour. Police had issued 59 citations in the high school speed zone during the three months before installation of the sign. Over the next three months, police issued 20 citations in the speed zone, a drop of 66 percent.

The police department wanted the sign as a permanent fixture, but did not have a budget item to cover the cost. So, police turned to the Tigard-Tualatin School District and the community for assistance.

## Stepping up with Contributions

Tigard's municipal website, its monthly municipal newsletter, and the



*Traffic was almost immediately calmed and safety increased at Tigard High School following the installation of the electronic speed sign.*

local print media spread the word. The local Tigard Kiwanis Club, long an advocacy group for children and teenagers, stepped up with a contribution.

Students were also aware of the problem, and concerned enough to put some money into the pot compliments of the Tigard High School Key Club; with that kind of community support, the school district did not hesitate to find money in its budget to close the deal. Tigard Public Works Department provided the manpower and material for installing the sign.

Information Display Company ([www.govengr.com/infodisplay](http://www.govengr.com/infodisplay)), confident of its product, agreed to maintain the sign. These signs are designed to be maintenance free and virtually vandal proof, and this sign has operated flawlessly for 22 months. The Tigard police are pleased to report traffic speeds are still at reduced levels and so are traffic citations.

The local community has shown

strong support for the speed display sign. The very afternoon after the sign was installed, Tigard Police Chief, Bill Dickinson, started receiving calls and e-mail messages from Tigard residents praising the city for improving safety in the school zone. In fact, citizens of cities adjoining Portland wrote letters to the editors of local newspapers urging their cities to follow suit and install electronic radar speed signs in school zones.

Chief Dickinson is pleased that the police could serve as a coalescing force in the community. He says the speed sign has increased efficiency in the department by reducing manpower needed at the school. "But the speed display sign has a more enduring reaction," the chief said. "People are reminded to slow down every time they see it. In effect, the sign assists the community in policing itself."

Partnering pays off when it comes to traffic safety. Tigard's Police Department and the Tigard-Tualatin School District

are discussing ways to purchase speed signs for each of the city's nine school zones. Citizens of neighboring municipalities like West Linn and Wilsonville agree that radar speed signs contribute significantly to school zone and pedestrian traffic safety. West Linn owns five such signs and Wilsonville has four installed and plans to purchase more.

There are several grant programs available to assist your city or county in acquiring traffic safety equipment. Information on the U.S. Department of Transportation's "Safe Routes to Schools Grants" can be found at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/reauthorization/sidebyside/35safe.htm>. And, a list of representative grant sources is available at [www.informationdisplay.com/grantlinks.htm](http://www.informationdisplay.com/grantlinks.htm). GE

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