

Speed signs warn drivers in Ripon to take their time

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Published: April 7, 2003, 07:26:00 AM PDT

RIPON -- Drivers are slowing dramatically on stretches of West Main and Second streets -- and not because of extra police enforcement.

Police Chief Richard Bull gives the credit to a pair of signs.

They are not speed-limit signs; instead they measure how fast cars are going -- and post the speeds for motorists to see.

The radar signs are permanently planted versions of the kind many police departments haul around on trailers.

In Ripon, average speeds near the signs on West Main and Second are down 5 to 10 mph, Bull said.

McRoy Wilbur Communities, a Modesto construction company, donated the signs, which cost about \$5,000 each.

Mark Wilbur, one of the owners, lives in Ripon and wanted to do something for the community, Bull said.

It seems others want to do something, too. "We've had interested parties talking to us, wanting to help put in more radar signs," Bull said.

He also has received calls from people asking if they could have radar signs on their streets. Because of the interest, he has started developing a priority list of where they would do the most good.

"Having them on the main arterial streets, at least, would be nice," the chief said.

The Main Street sign is between Wilma and Vera avenues, an area with heavy pedestrian traffic. The sign is pointed at eastbound traffic headed into town, next to Bethany Home convalescent hospital and retirement community. The speed limit switches there from 35 to 25 mph.

Nearby Maple Avenue is busy with traffic and pedestrians going to and from Ripon Christian Schools. Ripon Elementary School is a few blocks east on West Main.

Bethany Home employee Barbara Segaar said she has noticed a change in the way people drive on West Main since the sign went in about four months ago.

"It makes people who are driving more aware," Segaar said. "They see how fast they're really going, instead of how fast they think they are. When you see the sign, you automatically look at your speedometer."

The Second Street sign is between Vera and Palm avenues, pointed at westbound traffic as it approaches Bethany Home. The speed limit there is 35.

Bull said his officers have been issuing fewer tickets along West Main and Second since the signs switched on.

"That's exactly what we want," the chief said. "We want to increase safety, not write speeding tickets."



A permanent sign on Ripon's Main Street between Wilma and Vera avenues lets drivers know if they are obeying the speed limit.

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As published in the Modesto Bee, April 7, 2003

<http://www.modbee.com/reports/streetwise/story/6515919p-7459086c.html>