

# Speeders slow down in front of Tigard High School



JAIME VALDEZ/The Times

**SNAIL'S PACE** — Traffic moves very slowly on Durham Road in front of Tigard High School Thursday morning — almost at the 20-mph speed limit — after a sign showing drivers how fast they were going was turned on.

A high-tech speed-check unit reminds drivers how fast they are really going

By **BARBARA SHERMAN**  
Of the Times

**TIGARD** — Traffic has been moving a lot slower in front of Tigard High School for the past week, much to the relief of police and school officials.

The city, in partnership with the Information Display Company of Portland, installed a speed-check unit in front of the school that shows motorists driving east on Durham Road the speed at which their vehicles are traveling.

The bright fluorescent-green sign, located just east of 92<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, picks up the speed of approaching vehicles by utilizing a "k"-band radar unit integrated into the sign. Vehicles' speed is displayed in red or amber numbers using LED technology.

As police and school officials gathered at the site Thursday around 10 a.m., when the sign was

turned on, they observed an immediate slowdown in traffic.

"It's already having an impact," said Jim Wolf, police public information officer. "They were going about 42 miles per hour, and now they're averaging 20, 22, 19 mph. The impact was immediate."

Much of Durham Road is posted at 35 mph, but the area around THS is posted for 20 mph when students are present.

"We're doing this on a trial basis and hoping to find grant money to make it a permanent fixture," said Police Chief Bill Dickinson, who expects that the sign will be there at least 60 to 90 days. "It would be ideal at all the schools."

"Here, you have both parents and students driving. At other schools, parents hurry in to drop off or pick up their children. If you need these anywhere, it's at schools."

The signs cost less than \$4,000, according to Gary ODell, president of Information Display. The company manufactures radar and electronic-speed

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displays and has been marketing the signs for about six years, primarily for placement in front of schools. And ODell expects demand to increase.

Solar-powered versions of the signs also are available for \$2,000 more, but the sign in front of THS is wired into a battery and will be turned off at night to save power.

"They are more attractive to vandals at night but aren't as noticeable when they are turned off," ODell said. "However, it's very vandal-resistant. If it is struck by an object, it is meant to absorb shock rather than resist it."

According to ODell, the fluorescent-green color is for the exclusive use of pedestrian, school and bicycle signs, while others are fluorescent yellow.

Barbara Proctor, THS associate principal, said she welcomed

the sign as a way to make the school safer.

"I'm excited," she said. "They chose our location for this pilot project to control the speed of motorists and for the safety of our students. Thanks for choosing us."

Glen Scruggs, the THS school resource officer, also is glad to see the sign in place.

"I spend a lot of time out here just being visible," he said. "I pull a lot of people over. People say that they didn't realize it was a school zone."

Proctor added, "This will educate them. It's tall. It's very visible. I think the community will appreciate it, and there will be fewer tickets."

Wilkinson said that THS is the perfect location to test the unit

"Just look at the volume of traffic going by," he said. "This is a major thoroughfare between

Highway 99W and Interstate 5. It's a bypass. It's too bad it goes by a school."

Wolf added, "The speed-check unit serves to educate motorists of their present speed and the need for reducing their speed in a school zone. Statistics suggest that added distractions to motorists such as cell phones, sound systems and even passen-

gers can affect the speed of vehicles.

"The speed-display sign brings immediate attention to the speed of the vehicle so drivers can adjust accordingly and proceed safely."

Wolf reminds all drivers that traffic fines are doubled in all school speed zones in Tigard.

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