



CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP CITY OF FAIR OAKS RANCH, TEXAS

AGENDA TOPIC: Noble Lark Drive at Dietz Elkhorn Road Closure
DATE: June 20, 2024
DEPARTMENT: Public Works Department
PRESENTED BY: Carole Vanzant, Assistant City Manager
Oscar Michael Garza, PE, PTOE, PTP, RSP₁, City of Fair Oaks Ranch GEC

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND:

Residents along Noble Lark Drive and Kalkallo Drive have noted an increase of traffic since the opening of Van Raub Elementary School. Motorists use the roadway as a cut-through to and from Dietz Elkhorn Road, where the school is located. In September 2023, residents invited the Mayor and staff members to a meeting to discuss concerns regarding the Noble Lark Drive access. The majority of comments, from the sixteen residents, centered around reportedly unsafe behavior of drivers during the school drop off and pick up times.

On December 18, 2023, the City temporarily closed Noble Lark Drive at Dietz Elkhorn Road with barricades to assess the impacts to traffic flow in the area. The Mayor, Council Member Rhoden, and staff met on March 22, 2024 with seven Woods of Fair Oaks Ranch subdivision residents and one from the Reserve Apartments to hear their feedback on their experience due to the temporary closure. Majority of comments centered around:

1. Concerns that the shutdown impacts emergency response time to the school.
2. Increased traffic at the four-way stop at Dietz Elkhorn and Square Gate causing longer commute time.
3. Children arriving home later by bus, reportedly by up to 30 minutes.
4. Funding of road closure.
5. The data the City will collect to determine the fate of Noble Lark.

On March 28, 2024, a similar meeting was held by Council Members Koerner and Olvera and staff with twenty-one residents from Noble Lark and Kalkallo and one resident outside this area. Majority of comments centered around:

1. The decision coming down to safety vs convenience.
2. Children, walkers, and bikers are no longer being impacted by heavy traffic after the closure.
3. No more vehicles queuing and blocking driveways or impeding solid waste pick up service.
4. Noble Lark not intended to be used as a through street.
5. Reducing to one exit being an inconvenience, but prioritizing safety of residents.

The Leon Springs Volunteer Fire Department there has been no reported known issues regarding response times or ingress/egress issues on the roadway. The Boerne Independent School District advised the City they do not have an official position on the closure.

The Noble Lark Drive Closure Analysis presentation provides a recap of the analysis conducted by the City's General Engineering Consultant (GEC). The staff recommendation is to permanently close Noble Lark Drive at Dietz Elkhorn Road. The presentation and report provides a summary of:

1. Various traffic count results along with pre- and post-travel times.
2. Key study considerations.
3. Drone footage.
4. Pros and cons of available alternatives with cost estimates for permanently closing or opening Noble Lark Drive.
5. Reasons for recommending permanent closure.

Staff seeks direction on the recommendation and alternatives. Staff will develop further plans and estimates as needed based on the direction provided. An ordinance would be required to permanently close the street.

POLICY ANALYSIS/BENEFIT(S) TO CITIZENS:

1. The health, safety, and welfare of Fair Oaks Ranch residents is the paramount objective of the City of Fair Oaks Ranch
2. The permanent closure of Noble Lark Drive redirects traffic to collector and connector routes that were designed to handle the higher volumes of traffic and restricts travel along the residential routes of Noble Lark Drive and Kalkallo Drive thereby enhancing safety for residents.
3. The study summarizes that the minimal impacts of reopening this intersection are not substantial enough to outweigh the safety benefits provided to residents.

LONGTERM FINANCIAL & BUDGETARY IMPACT:

A permanent closure will require some form of permanent barrier to enforce the restriction. The cost of this permanent barrier will depend on the design the City chooses. Options may include gated emergency access, permanent barricades such as the continuation of fencing or boulders, a hammerhead turnaround, or a partial closure involving a right turn only from Noble Lark Drive onto Dietz Elkhorn Road.

In the long-term, improvements will be required at the intersections of Dietz Elkhorn Road with Fair Oaks Parkway, Square Gate, and Old Fredericksburg Road to improve the Level of Service at each of these locations. The impact of these costs will depend on the improvement implemented.