



## AGENDA ITEM SUMMARY FORM

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**MEETING DATE:** May 18, 2021

**ITEM TITLE:** Bike & Pedestrian Safety-NC12 Speed Limit Reduction Request

**ITEM SUMMARY:**

Councilman Conners has provided the attached narrative to explain the impetus and intent of the resolution.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

**REQUESTED ACTION:**

Council consideration and possible adoption of the attached resolution.

**ATTACHMENTS**

[Draft Comprehensive Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan –](#)

<https://www.southernshores-nc.gov/draft-comprehensive-bicycle-pedestrian-plan/>

# PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

This narrative is prepared in the hope that a serious discussion within our community can be had with the goal of enhancing primarily pedestrian, but also cyclist safety along our roads. As a design professional I believe that many different ideas and perspectives contribute to make the solution to a goal/problem much better and stronger. This subject should not be one person's effort.

In recent years we've witnessed a child being seriously injured while she was riding her bike. A jogger was sideswiped by a car. A car ran off NC 12 near the cell tower while heading south and just missed some pedestrians. And tragically, a pedestrian was recently killed while trying to cross NC 12 while he was heading to the beach. As referenced in the following paragraph, there have been others as well.

The 2014 Draft Bike and Pedestrian Plan, which was **not** adopted by Southern Shores, stated that during the timeframe of 2007-2011 there were 9 cyclist-motor vehicles incidents and 1 pedestrian-motor vehicle incident. That plan later refers to 3 cyclist/pedestrian incidents with cars, but 2 were in parking lots. The *majority* of these incidences occurred along 158 but the exact locations are unclear in that plan.

I think it's worth noting though, that while the Town never adopted this plan, many of its' recommendations have been implemented by the Town, such as the extension of the walkway along South and East Dogwood Trails. There are other recommendations, such as signage types, verbiage and locations that have not yet been implemented.

I think it's past time that we as a community, elected officials, government employees, and public safety/first responders give serious thought to what we can do to increase pedestrian and cyclist safety. In the hope of initiating that discussion, I'd like to offer the following:

## **Speed limit on NC 12**

Adopt a resolution asking NCDOT to reduce the speed limit on NC 12 year-round to 35 mph.

This has been done in the past but NCDOT declined to lower the speed limit year-round. Traffic year-round has only gotten worse and a recent study/analysis by a consultant told us that traffic on NC 12 was at or near maximum capacity even during non-vacation season. A strong case by our Town should be made to NCDOT and if they balk, we should petition our State representatives on this subject. Having been declined in the past should not serve as an excuse for inaction now.

And as a reminder, the recent fatality happened well before the vacation season begins for this year.

## **Signage**

Lowering the year-round speed limit on NC 12 would also allow us to treat that section of NC 12 like Virginia Dare Trail (also NC 12). Signage informing drivers to stop for pedestrians in crosswalks could be added along NC 12 in Southern Shores. Better warnings of pedestrian crosswalks, flashing warning lights and even pedestrian oriented signage could be added. The time for a pedestrian to cross the road could also be increased since many of these crosswalks don't accommodate the large numbers of pedestrians. And as noted above, the 2014 Bicyclist and Pedestrian Plan had numerous recommendations for placement of signage to enhance cyclist and pedestrian safety.

There are no fewer than 18 crosswalks along NC 12 in Southern Shores. There have been periodic requests for additional crosswalks at other streets like Hickory Trail where significant numbers of people also cross NC 12 on their way to the beach. The 2014 Bicyclist and Pedestrian Plan recommended a crosswalk at the NC 12/Hickory Trail intersection. Some features that could be added to enhance pedestrian safety along NC 12 could include raised medians at the crosswalks and/or pedestrian refuge islands, yet again, another recommendation by the 2014 Bicyclist and Pedestrian Plan.

### **Timing of Crosswalks**

Give pedestrians enough time to cross NC 12.

### **Obstructions in Right of Ways**

Better enforcement of obstruction in the right of ways.

A road right of way is a part of the road. In addition to being a utility corridor, right of ways also serve as a 'recovery zone' in the event a vehicle needs to quickly go off pavement to avoid a hazard.

Overgrown or inappropriate vegetation in the right of ways not only obstructs driver visibility, it also can prevent a driver from even having a place to veer off pavement in a quick moment. NCDOT, as well as virtually every local government entity with a planning department has standards for encroachments within the right of ways. Sight triangles are one example. Other standards exist for hard structures and their need to be 'break-away' items or set back certain distances from the edge of pavement.

Hedges of russian olives, boulders at the edge of pavement, and post/rope demarcations, again at the edge of pavement are types of obstructions that hinder sight visibility or the recovery zone for vehicles.

### **Education and Outreach**

I think it could be very beneficial to educate our residents and visitors about cyclist and pedestrian safety. Obvious methods could be through our newsletter and Facebook page. Additionally, printed information regarding our walkways (recently prepared map), crosswalks locations, and safety measures could be disseminated through the rental agencies to benefit vacationers. There are state laws applicable to cyclists and pedestrians. I would guess that most of us do not know them.

### **Conclusion**

1. I hope is that Southern Shores pass a resolution asking the NCDOT to lower the speed limit on NC 12 to 35 mph year-round.
2. We all should review the 2014 Bicyclist and Pedestrian Plan and implement those safety related items that have already been recommended to our town, specifically, but not limited to, the recommended signage verbiage and locations.
3. Work *together* on pedestrian safety in our town. NC 12 is a State Road and their assistance and cooperation in making NC 12 a safe road is needed. The NC 12 corridor thru Southern Shores is much more than a vehicular transportation route. Large numbers of pedestrians and cyclists use the NC 12 corridor in addition to the vehicular traffic.

There are currently four members of our Town Council or Town staff that were on the committee that worked with the consultant who prepared the 2014 Bicyclist and Pedestrian Plan. Their input could be very fruitful and appreciated.