

Roadside from 1A

She continued, "What we wanted to do with the pedestrian crossing signs is to call attention to the drivers that it was more likely that someone would be crossing there because one of the sidewalks is closed on the bridge."

The sign is located at Barrett Creek Lane, the first intersection south of the highway. While the sign does notify drivers that pedestrians may be crossing, it does not clearly communicate to the pedestrians themselves where they should cross.

"You have to travel a number of yards north just to find a place to cross," Stewart said. "Most people just cross at the bridge. I haven't been hit yet, but I can't explain to you how many times I've almost been hit."

But crossing at the bridge can be dangerous because of the limited sight distance drivers have, according to Beers Seydel.

"Part of the reason they chose to put the signs where they did at Barrett Creek Lane was specifically because it had the best sight distance. It was one of the legal crossings, but we definitely wanted to give people as much sight as possible," she said.

But even with the best line of sight, getting across the highway in a timely manner can be difficult.

"I'm extremely athletic and I'm telling you, I have a hard time crossing in time," Stewart

said. Beers Seydel is aware of the problems facing pedestrians right now due to the construction, stating ODOT is monitoring the situation closely.

"We're continuing to look at it," she said. "It takes a long time to work through and get decisions on things."

Some of the safety decisions that ODOT could implement include more signs, flashing signs and additional flagging. But a full investigation on what is exactly needed could take up to a month to complete.

"This is why we're going to continue to monitor the area," Beers Seydel said. "We don't want to see people in harm's way, but it also becomes a partnership with our community of people recognizing that right now, because the sidewalk is closed, there may be more people crossing."

However, not everyone who travels Highway 101 is a part of the local community. From sightseers traveling up the coast in their RVs to semi trucks barreling down the highway to deliver goods, the dangers of the area can often go unseen. Because of this, Beers Seydel



JARED ANDERSON/SIUSLAW NEWS

Vehicles entering Siuslaw River Bridge from the south have a limited field of view. Pedestrians face a number of obstacles — some due to ODOT construction and some due to vehicle speeds, the slope of Highway 101 and the lack of lights and crosswalks.

urges caution.

"Please be very, very careful," she said. "And we would tell our folks who travel through this area that there may be pedestrians and watch for the signs."

But the issues facing the south side of the bridge are not limited to construction, according to Stewart. While the sidewalks will eventually be open, the speed limit will remain the same.

"When you're leaving out of town, heading south, the minute you leave the 40 mph bridge, 45 mph is the first sign that anybody sees. So automat-

ically you have people who feel like they can get on their gas pedal really hard and race up the hill," he said. "Basically, the speed should be reduced."

Because of the speeds, Stewart notices a lot of drivers going over the white lines, putting pedestrians who are staying out of the road in danger. In some portions of the road, particularly when exiting the bridge, space can be tight.

"People drive by me and my kids near the bridge and flip us off and act like we're way out of place, but we're walking in the dirt and they're way over

the line racing up the highway," Stewart said.

He believes the best way to avoid this would be to reduce the speed limit. To do that, Beers Seydel suggests the community get involved.

"The first step is always people coming forward and saying they see a need. One of the

places they can go with that is the Lane Area Commission on Transportation. That sort of commission is where people typically go to and say, 'We see a problem.' The commission looks at the local issues and takes them up to the state, and that's how ODOT looks at various ways we may fund a project."

Beers Seydel suggested that if anyone has concerns about the long-term safety of the south corridor, they can contact the Lane Area Commission on Transportation to make permanent changes.

In the meantime, Beers Seydel and Stewart hope that the community will look out for each other until more permanent solutions can be found.

"My biggest thing is if people could just please read the signs and respect the lines, it would save a lot of lives," Stewart said.

Editors note: Siuslaw News has had several community members ask if there has been a fund set up to help the family of Heather Sanford, the 28-year-old mother of four who was struck and killed just south of the bridge. For those wanting to contribute, visit www.gofundme.com/heather-sanford-memorial-fund.

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