

ORDER from A7

Regardless of the city's rights, however, in Taylor Avenue residents' eyes, there have been at least two opportunities in recent years for the sidewalk to be addressed and upgraded.

The first came with the construction of the new Harrison Elementary School, which began in 2017. Directly across the street from the sidewalk in question, South Lane School District installed new sidewalks and ramps along the entire frontage of the school's property.

There were, however, no requirements for the school district to commit to construction projects not abutting its property and the opposite side of the street was not included in the upgrade.

Another chance came with the sprawling Safe Routes to School project, which started in 2019.

The nearly \$1.7 project addressed key safety concerns on five routes to Harrison Elementary and Lincoln Middle schools: East Harrison Avenue from South River Road to South Third Street; South Fourth Street from Central Pacific Railroad to Grant Avenue; Grant Avenue from South Fourth Street to South Sixth Street; Fillmore Avenue from South Fourth Street to South Sixth Street; and Taylor Avenue from South Fourth Street to South Eighth Street.

Previously, these locations had been identified as areas of concern in street analyses by city staff.

Taylor Avenue residents across from Harrison Elementary School have expressed confusion as to why their sidewalk was not included in the project.

Miller even received a project update notice from the city in August 2019 which stated that her property was "within the project area."

In a letter to Miller addressing this, City Manager Richard Meyers explained that "in order to

prepare a grant that would be eligible for funding, the application for the project had to be specifically tied to projects that improve safety of children walking to school. One of the major criteria for funding is demonstrated incidents or crashes associated with children."

Indeed, the Safe Routes to School project was in part prompted by testimony about safety issues.

Initial concerns about the safety of routes to Lincoln Middle School were raised in public testimony in October 2015 by a city police officer who advised the city to pay attention to the corner of South Fourth Street and Fillmore Avenue, a high-traffic area next to the middle school with no crosswalk.

In a subsequent public hearing in 2018 regarding the project, a resident mentioned seeing a student hit by a car at that very intersection, though the student reportedly continued walking from the incident.

But because this specific portion of Taylor Avenue by Harrison was not brought up as an area of concern during city council meetings or public comment, it was not included in the project, Meyers went on to explain.

While a route with safety signs and a crosswalk does exist to help navigate children to the school's side of the street, residents have stated that children regu-

larly use their side of the street when traveling to and from school and that the city should not wait for a child to be hurt before taking action.

Unfortunately, getting another Safe Routes to School grant for this sidewalk is not a secure option. The next chance to apply may be up to a year and a half away and the grant is increasingly competitive.

Though grants may be hard to come by, sidewalk orders aren't the only way to get citizens to take care of their sidewalks. The city can, for instance, notify a property owner of their sidewalk being out of compliance and provide solutions - a more common strategy which has been used in the past.

Currently, there is no set method for determining how to prioritize pedestrian walkways. The city's Transportation System Plan, a 2015 document, outlines needs for pedestrians and, while it identifies connectivity gaps in the city, it does not provide insight into safety concerns.

Cottage Grove city engineers told *The Sentinel* that a prioritization mechanism would go a long way in the city council and staff being able to make more informed decisions.

As luck would have it, the city has recently received a grant from Oregon Department of Transportation to create a Bike

and Pedestrian Master Plan for the entire city. The plan will help establish a prioritized list of trouble spots and provide a reference point for future construction decisions - information which may influence whether to issue sidewalk orders.

As it's a lengthy process, Stewart estimated the plan may not be ready until the end of next year.

Until its completion, then, residents on Taylor Avenue are keen on having more dialogue with the city about the reasonableness of issuing an order, finding solutions or at least being part of the bidding process.

Some residents still worry that the city's order as a response to their concerns sends the message that citizens should not appeal to their city for help or they might suffer financial consequences.

With half a year left on the clock, residents remain hopeful the coming months will yield viable solutions.



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In Honor of All Veterans

The Cottage Grove Sentinel is preparing to publish its "Honoring our Heroes" a special section devoted to all military veterans who are Cottage Grove-area residents or have a connection to this area.

If you are interested in sharing your military story in the annual Veterans Day publication, or in updating information that we have published previously, please complete the form below and submit it to the Cottage Grove Sentinel. Service photographs are also welcome.

Submit forms and photos (preferably) by e-mail to gmanly@cgsentinel.com; or by mail to Cottage Grove Sentinel, Attn: Gary Manly, PO Box 35, Cottage Grove, OR 97424; or drop forms off at the Cottage Grove Sentinel, 1498 E. Main Street, STE 104, Cottage Grove. Please be sure that all materials are carefully labeled with your name and phone number.

ALL FORMS AND PHOTOGRAPHS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY OCTOBER 21, 2021.

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Has your veterans information been published previously in the Cottage Grove Sentinel Veterans Publication? YES
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Do we have your military photo(s) on file? YES NO

(Note: If you have submitted photos in the past, we will still have them on file.)