

ODOT to add crossing on Southwest 11th Street in effort to improve safety

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

Pedestrians trying to cross Southwest 11th Street in Hermiston will be assisted by a planned sidewalk and a crosswalk with flashing lights between Orchard Avenue and Highland Avenue.

The project is one of 43 in Oregon to receive funding from the Oregon Department of Transportation through the latest round of Safe Routes to School grants.

Hermiston has seen multiple pedestrian fatalities along the busy stretch of road, which is part of Highway 207. A Hermiston man was killed in a hit-and-run there in May 2020, and another Hermiston man was killed by a commercial garbage truck in the same area in 2015 while crossing the road in the middle of the block.

Teresa Penninger, transportation planning manager for ODOT's Region 5, said having no sidewalk on the side of the highway leading to Hacienda West Apartments makes things difficult for pedestrians, including children who use that route to get to West Park Elementary School one-half mile away, or Hermiston High School just beyond that point.

"It basically leaves you no choice but to walk along a very narrow shoulder, or try to cross a busy highway with no crosswalk," she said.

Penninger said the first

phase of the project will be a crosswalk with flashing lights that pedestrians can activate before crossing, located between Butter Creek Apartments and the area where a short path from Hacienda West Apartments connects to the highway. The second phase will add a sidewalk along the west side of the highway.

"It will definitely improve the safety of the pedestrian situation there," she said.

The crossing with flashing beacons is expected to be completed in 2021, and then Penninger said the sidewalk will take a little longer to design and complete. She said once it is complete, the school district will help educate parents and children in the area on proper use of the crossing.

Often, Safe Routes to School grants go to cities to assist them in completing projects, but because the street is part of Highway 207, Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan said ODOT has taken on design and construction of the project.

He said the city's application included letters of support from Mayor David Drotzmann, the Hermiston School District and the Hispanic Advisory Committee.

According to a news release from ODOT, the department awarded 43 of the 99 applications received this time, for a total of \$28.3 million in projects designed to improve safety for children walking to school and other pedestrians.

Hermiston lights up the night



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

A few small groups of people look as the lights go on on the Hermiston Christmas tree amidst the fog on Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020. The tree lighting event was livestreamed by the city of Hermiston due to COVID-19 restrictions on gatherings and events.



Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Above, Carolers perform at the city of Hermiston's Christmas tree lighting event in downtown Hermiston on Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020.

At left, Santa Claus enters Festival Street in Hermiston on Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020, for the Christmas tree lighting ceremony.

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