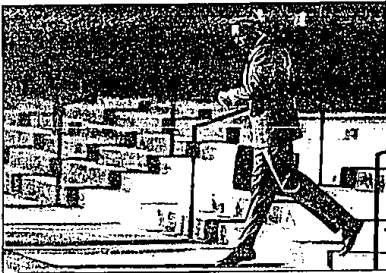


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Cops hope speeders SMARTen up

By LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Speeders in Farmington better get smart or else.

The Farmington Public Safety Department is buying a Speed Monitoring Awareness Radar Trailer. The Farmington City Council approved the purchase.

The device, known simply as SMART, flashes the speed at which drivers are traveling.

The idea is to get drivers to slow down, especially in residential areas. The Farmington Public School District is picking up one third (\$2,766) of the \$8,795 price tag.

The trailer will be used along busy residential streets and school routes.

"It will get used," said public safety director Gary Goss, who rattled off a number of sites scheduled. "My biggest fear is people will get used to it and start ignoring it."

"Then we will be there at the end of the street in an unmarked car . . ."

Traffic experts believe that a majority of people who go over the speed limit do so be-

cause they're simply not paying attention. The device is designed to remind them.

The need for a monitoring trailer became apparent in a traffic study done last summer along Gill Road. The public safety department and the traffic and safety board conducted the study.

They found 82 percent of the vehicles were traveling over the speed limit.

That dropped to 43 percent with the device in place. Also, the trailer seemed to have a residual effect on slowing down drivers, according to Goss, keeping speeds low even after the machine is removed.

Farmington Hills police have had three SMART devices since May. So far, so good, according to officer Larry Luttrell.

"The program has been well-received and it has slowed down vehicles in the neighborhood," Luttrell said.

Luttrell said the devices have been in place three days at a time on certain streets. Traffic studies are conducted two weeks afterward, which show motorists have decreased their speeds.

Surveys and complaints from residents

have dictated where the devices have been placed.

"What they find is it's usually the residents and neighbors who are speeding," Luttrell said. "They say, 'We're the ones complaining about this and here we are speeding.'"

The Traffic Improvement Association of Oakland County likes SMART. In fact, the organization is putting together a group rate for the trailers made by Kustom Signals in Lyons, Kan.

The city may save anywhere from \$500 to \$1,000, depending on the number of agencies who go in on the deal.

Kustom Signals is the only company known to make the trailers, which are 8 feet by 0 feet and are solar-powered. The two-digit display flashes 12-inch fluorescent yellow numerals. The proper speed limit is posted above the display.

Goss said the plan will be to set the trailer up during the day and bring it down after dark to recharge it. That way it can stay in one place for up to a week.

"Some areas will need it more than others," Goss said.

Gill from page 1A

built on the east side of Gill. The school is on the other side of the street, so the kids will have to cross the road anyway."

Farmington Hills city engineer Skip Otwell said the sidewalk is being built on the east side of the road, the west side is in a flood plain, the city has the right of way, and there are more homes on the east side, and therefore more people who would benefit from the sidewalk.

Bev Hausman, supervisor of purchasing and transportation for the schools, said the request has nothing to do with the new bus routes going into effect this fall,

but is part of a continuing process between the schools and city.

"We make the request to the city for sidewalks all the time," she said. "One of the requests came because bushes or shrubs were blocking the way so that there was no safe path to the school."

But Blake said she only knew of one school-age child on a route, "and her mother won't let her walk to school," she said. "This has always had a country atmosphere and now they're changing it."

Tom Biasell, the city's director of public services said the city will not make a straight path and

remove anything in its way, but will try to protect the trees and other landscaping already established.

"There are some beautiful walnut trees along there that we won't touch," Biasell said. "We are going to try and blend in the sidewalk. That is one reason why we won't maintain it, because it won't be a straight line."

Biasell said he and city engineers will have a meeting with those affected and explain and work with them to make the project acceptable. That meeting should be near the middle of September with the goal of completing the sidewalk before winter, he said.

Cable from page 1A

rates were comparatively low.

Bjorklund acknowledges, the burden falls on those who can perhaps least afford to pay for cable. Many seniors subscribe to basic broadcast service.

"We'd like to maintain it," Bjorklund said. "We thought it was good public relations."

Premium channels and pay-per-view events are not covered in the new regulations.

The FCC mandate has other implications.

For example, Southwest Oakland County Cable Commission can apply to the FCC to become a regulatory agency. SWOCCC would be able to review and, if necessary, challenge increases in broadcast basic rates.

The commission has to be approved and certified by the FCC. SWOCCC intends to file, according to board member William Hartsock.

"I think people are certainly sensitive to the cost they pay for cable," Hartsock said. "In terms of what product is being delivered, there is very little dissension in terms of customers or residents coming before the commission."

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