

Gordon Certain

From: North Buckhead Civic Association [northbuckhead@yahoo.com]
Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2010 9:50 PM
To: gccertain@comcast.net
Subject: North Buckhead Update #9: Bikes stolen; Wieuca sidewalks and radar from NBCA board meeting

North Buckhead Civic Association

This is North Buckhead Update #9 for 2010.

Tuesday, January 26, 2010

Dear Gordon. Sue & Jessica Certain,

This e-mail includes items that may be of interest to you.

- 1 - Two bikes taken on Glengary Drive
- 2 - Summary: Status Update about Wieuca Road Sidewalks
- 3 - Summary: Radar device installed on Wieuca Road at Pinecrest
- 4 - Details: Status Update about Wieuca Road Sidewalks
- 5 - Details: Radar device installed on Wieuca Road at Pinecrest

1 - Two bikes taken on Glengary Drive

I received this e-mail from Jennifer England yesterday.

Gordon, my 4yr old and her friend left their bikes at the bottom of our driveway last Monday, 1/18/10. One bike was a pink, Barbie bike with a helmet on it and I'm not sure what the other one was, both had the training wheels still on them. Either way, I know people drive up and down the streets the night before garbage day looking for "bargains" but our trash was not out and the bikes were clearly in our driveway. If anyone took them because they thought they were trash please just bring them back to 4494 Glengary - no questions. I know this is probably a long shot but I figured worth a try.

*Thanks,
Jennifer England*

2 - Summary: Status Update about Wieuca Road Sidewalks

A status report about Wieuca Road Sidewalks was provided at the NBCA Board Meeting last night. The long full report is item 4, below. This is the short version:

Summary: The city needs to buy strips of property along Wieuca Road before it can complete the sidewalks being built for the new school. Thirteen properties are involved. If eminent domain procedures are needed, the process could take up to a year. Otherwise it will take less time. Action items were identified which require prompt feedback by the city.

3 - Summary: Radar device installed on Wieuca Road at Pinecrest

A status report about a radar device installed by NBCA on Wieuca Road at Pinecrest was provided at the NBCA Board Meeting last night. The long full report is item 5, below. This is the short version:

Summary: A radar device has been bought by NBCA with financial help from the Buckhead Coalition. The device has been temporarily installed to monitor the speeds of northbound Wieuca Road traffic between Wieuca Trace and Pinecrest Road. A significant amount of useful data has been obtained. The presence of the device seems to be slowing traffic.

4 - Details: Status Update about Wieuca Road Sidewalks

As reported in our e-mail Update #6, we recently received news that there were issues with the right-of-way needed for new sidewalks on Wieuca Road. In response we invited the Department of Public Works to send a representative to explain these problems and their impact on the sidewalk construction schedule. Madelyn Grant briefed NBCA board members and about a dozen attendees.

Madelyn explained that there was inadequate width owned by the city for the new sidewalks from the new school campus at 4141 Wieuca Road north to Mountain Way. This stretch involves thirteen different properties. She said that the initial engineering plans prepared for the new sidewalks included what were thought to be standard Fulton County right-of-way widths. As part of the construction process, DPW hired a surveyor to map out the exact dimensions of the right-of-way. Madelyn said the surveyor's results indicated to the city several weeks ago that there was a problem. Asked if there had been any prior indication of a problem, she said that at the special meeting on the sidewalks in November one resident had indicated that they thought their property extended into the proposed construction area. That was part of the reason the surveyor was employed.

Asked if Fulton County property tax valuations would be used to set the purchase prices, she said that no, the purchase prices would be based on fair market value. She explained that an appraiser employed by the city had made fair market valuations of the strip of land involved. Individual negotiations would be made by DPW with each of the affected homeowners. She said the acquisition process could delay the sidewalks for up to a year. (This was a big surprise to me, since up until then indications were that the delay might be a few months.) Asked if eminent domain might be used in case negotiations were unsuccessful, she said yes, that it was possible. That possibility was the reason she had said the process could take up to a year - the actual duration of the process would depend on the ability of the city and landowners to achieve a mutually agreeable price and other conditions.

Given that it might take a year to complete the sidewalks and knowing that a number of children close enough to walk to school live on or near Loridans Drive, I asked if there was an interim plan to enable children to cross Wieuca Road at Loridans to use the existing sidewalks on the west side of Wieuca. I suggested one way to enable a safe crossing would be with a traffic signal on Wieuca at Loridans. Madelyn said that she wasn't aware of any such plan and that a traffic signal would be very expensive (\$50,000 to \$100,000).

Two homeowners in the impacted area said that their shrubbery had been cut back and asked Madelyn if the city should have done that since it was not yet their property. She said that the city should have done no damage to these properties.

In the ensuing discussion, the following items emerged as requiring resolution:

1. (DPW) Accommodations are needed for students living on or near Loridans to walk to the new school. Possibilities include the traffic signal mentioned above, all-way stop signs at the Wieuca-Loridans intersection, a crossing guard, etc. Madelyn said that this was not her area of responsibility and she would refer it to others at DPW.
2. (DPW) None of the crosswalk striping required by the sidewalk plan has been installed. There is no right-of-way issue with the crosswalks and they significantly improve the safety of student pedestrians. The crosswalks should be installed immediately.
3. (DPW) Improvements are still needed on the west side of Wieuca at the Little Nancy Creek bridge to allow pedestrians to walk safely.
4. (DWM) Some sidewalk segments on the west side of Wieuca were removed because of water main leaks. Those segments have not been repaired.
5. (DPW) The school zone signs have more restricted hours than expected by the neighborhood. State law (according to attendee Bennett Wiggins) permit the school zone speed limits to be in effect

from one hour before school opening to one hour after school closing.

6. (APD) When will the GDOT radar permit be granted for Wieuca Road for radar enforcement of the 30 MPH limit? Can APD increase non-radar enforcement efforts along Wieuca now, before the GDOT permit is issued?

7. (APD) Is a radar permit needed in a school zone or can APD do radar enforcement today?

I asked that Madelyn send a status report to me within a week about the items involving DPW. She also agreed to have a DPW representative attend our February board meeting to explain the status of any open items.

According to NBCA Bylaws, "All meetings of the Board shall be open to all members, but members other than the Board shall not participate in any discussion or deliberation. However, at the discretion of the Board, members shall be given the opportunity to present their views." These bylaw provisions were applied in a very relaxed manner during the sidewalk presentation and participants included members and non-members. Many insights and useful comments resulted.

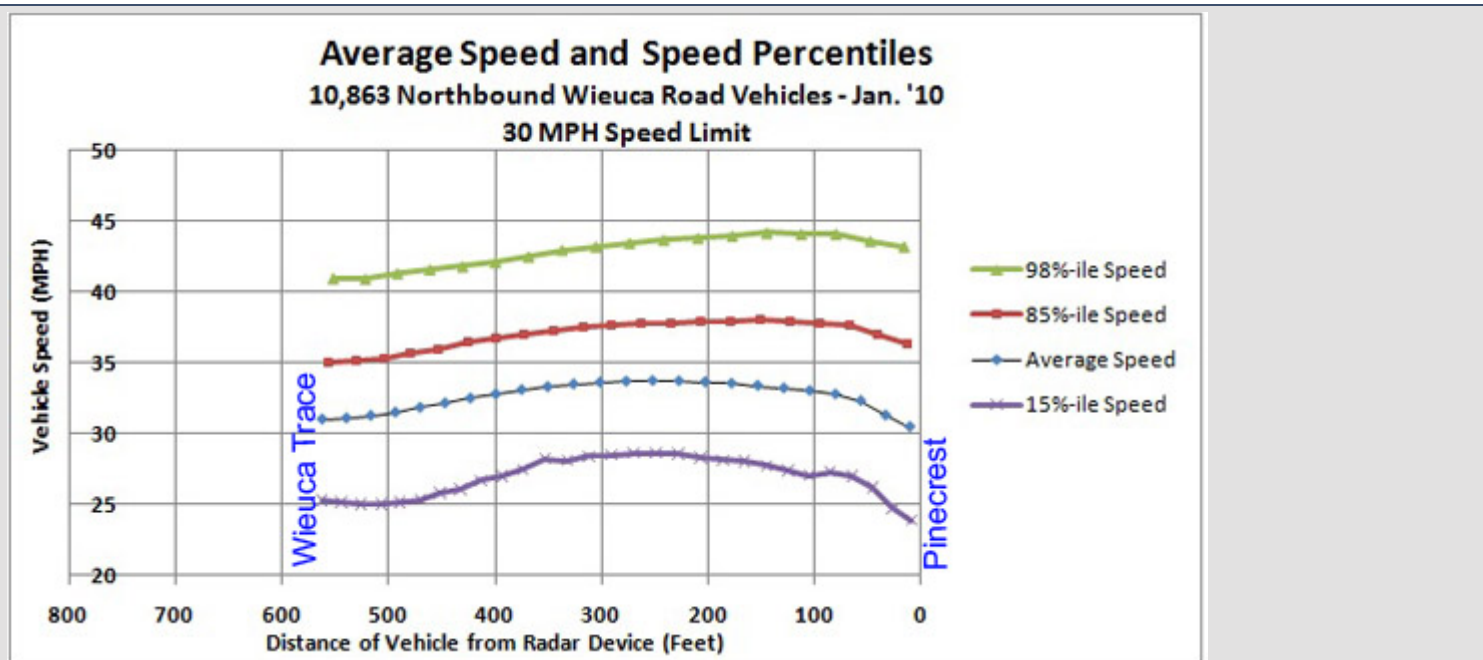
Later, about an hour into the meeting, when the board was discussing the radar device that NBCA has installed on Wieuca for northbound traffic at Pinecrest, a long series of audience questions occurred. At that point, I asked that further audience comments be held since we had covered only a fraction of the meeting's agenda and there was much to go. It should be noted that during the last four to six months, audience participation at our board meetings, while often welcome, has resulted in extremely long board meetings, frequently with much of the agenda not covered at all. The NBCA board is considering changes to formalize a public comment period so the meetings are conducted in a more overall productive manner.

5 - Details: Radar device installed on Wieuca Road at Pinecrest

Last year the Buckhead Coalition, a community organization representing area businesses, announced a grant program for portable radar devices to be used in neighborhoods. In December, NBCA ordered a device and it was installed. Our device displays the speed of approaching vehicles and includes optional equipment that stores the speed and time of day in a database which can be analyzed later. Readings are taken every half second while cars are moving toward it and the device has an extremely long range (more than 500 feet). From this data we can extract a wealth of information about neighborhood traffic. The device is battery operated and is programmable to operate during certain hours or all the time, to flash in various ways if the speed limit is exceeded, and so forth.

During the initial six days of operation, the device captured 336,000 speed recordings, representing northbound traffic during that period. During that period, 30,000 to 50,000 vehicles may have passed the device. We'll never know how many, however, since the radar can't pick out individual cars. The fact that vehicles often form long "trains" behind slower drivers complicates separating individual cars. An entire train will be captured every half a second in the database as the single reading for that time period, so we really can't be sure how many cars went by. And that doesn't particularly matter. What does matter is that the distributions of speeds can be accurately tracked. From the data we have seen so far, it appears that Wieuca traffic is possibly moving slightly more slowly than it has in the past, at least in the area monitored by our radar (the very steep downhill run from Wieuca Trace to Pinecrest). We can also see that vehicles tend to slow down as they reach the radar device and get feedback that they are over the speed limit - additional research is needed to separate the influence of the radar from effects the layout of the road may have. We selected this location for the radar device at Pinecrest because new sidewalks have been installed just north of there at the bend in Wieuca at Little Nancy Creek. Those sidewalks were placed on the pavement in that area, narrowing the street and making it more appropriate to slow down in that area, especially considering that the sidewalks are ultimately intended for use by school children.

The following graph indicates that vehicles do slow down as they approach the radar after their downhill acceleration. There is a wide distribution of actual speeds, as shown below. The X-axis is shown in feet from the radar device, with about 560 feet representing vehicles coming around the bend at Wieuca Trace and becoming visible to the radar. The last radar reading shows the cars as they near Pinecrest Road.



NBCA has made a significant investment in this device and really appreciates the much larger investment that the Buckhead Coalition has provided. We hope to acquire additional radar devices - the neighborhood could easily use three or four. Until we have more, we will periodically move this one around the neighborhood to locations that particularly need it.

Your Membership Information

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FOR NBCA MEMBERS ONLY -

[North Buckhead weekly crime reports from APD](#) (Do not bookmark -- link changes monthly.)

Gordon Certain, President
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If you would like to send in your dues to join NBCA or to renew, mail a \$35 check (\$75 for businesses) to NBCA, PO BOX 420391, ATLANTA, GA 30342. We will certainly appreciate optional additional contributions for our legal fund, park maintenance for our small park on Wieuca at Phipps Blvd, and/or for other neighborhood improvements.

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