

UPDATE Regarding Traffic Safety at the HWY 14-Bonanza Creek Rd.-Shenandoah Trail Intersection

On October 30, 2024, Santa Fe County hosted a meeting to review and discuss the Traffic Study [https://thesanmarcosassociation.org/wp-content/uploads/NM-14-Bonanza-Creek-Rd-Safety-Study-Fianl.pdf?utm_source=The+San+Marcos+Association&utm_campaign=20c841140d-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2024_10_24_10_55&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_-20c841140d-%5BLIST_EMAIL_ID%5D] of the unsafe intersection of HWY 14 and Bonanza Creek Rd. (CR 45) and Shenandoah Trail (CR 44). County Commissioners Hank Hughes (District 5) and Camilla Bustamante (District 3) were present, along with Santa Fe County Sheriff Adan Mendoza, County Manager Greg Shaffer, a number of County staff, and representatives from NMDOT. Also present were engineers from Lee Engineering, the company that conducted the traffic study. Approximately fifteen community members attended in person, with another half dozen or so via WebEx. The meeting lasted about an hour and a half.

After staff and engineers summarized the report and its recommendations, County staff stated that they plan to install improvements noted in the report soon, hopefully by December 20, 2024. Those safety improvements include moving and improving signage that would show that an intersection is ahead; installing thermoplastic STOP lines and road markings to improve visibility, to alert drivers and to define the intersection; moving and installing lighted STOP signs on the Bonanza and Shenandoah sides of the intersection. Thermoplastic is a material that is reflective and more durable than the paint typically used for striping on roadways, and so should last longer and be safer overall. Originally, removable rumble strips were also slated to be installed, but, due to the objections of neighbors who pointed out that such strips would create noise pollution that violated the County Noise Ordinance, their installation has been halted until the matter can be studied further. You can view simulated detailed images and descriptions of these safety features below. If the images are not clear, you may find them in the report on Figures 20-22.



Figure 20: Proposed Stop Sign and Stop Line Relocation Detail



Remove and Replace
With W3-5 48" X 48"
Relocate to Maximum
12' Offset from
Outside Edge of NM
14 Travel Lane

12
Feet
Max

12
Feet
Max



Remove and Replace
With R2-1 48" X 60"
Relocate to
Maximum 12' Offset
from Outside Edge
of NM 14 Travel Lane

NM 14

BONANZA CREEK RD

SHENANDOAH TR



Figure 22: Proposed NM 14 Northbound Approach Mitigations

Community members mentioned other ideas and suggestions that were discussed and noted by County staff. These included:

- Installing lighting at this intersection – a project that may take place in the upcoming year, but would involve cooperation between the County and NMDOT;
- Adjusting the alignment of the north and south left turn lanes on HWY 14 to improve drivers' ease of seeing oncoming traffic - a project that would also involve NMDOT;
- Creating a Safety Corridor with doubled traffic fines in this area;
- Hanging flashing red lights across the CR 44 and 45 portions of the intersection that would make the intersection, and the requirement to STOP, more evident than the STOP signs currently do;
- Installing more signage on HWY 14 to alert drivers to the presence of this intersection and the need to slow down;
- Building a roundabout at this intersection because roundabouts have a calming effect on drivers;
- Building medians with more visible STOP signs in the middle of them than the current STOP signs;
- Creating a fund of some sort, from developer contributions, to be used for road safety;
- SMA reiterated that the County should conduct a traffic study to analyze the impact of the proposed bulk water station next to the Turquoise Trail Volunteer Fire Station. This facility would be located just half a mile north of the HWY 14-CR44/45 intersection. We have expressed our concerns previously about the hazards of relatively slow-moving, water-laden pickup trucks turning south onto HWY 14 where the speed limit currently is 55 mph, but where drivers routinely drive at speeds over 70 mph.

There were also critical comments and lines of questioning. Community members expressed disappointment that the traffic accident database used in this study did not include data from the past 2 years and did not include any analysis of the fatal collision in Fall, 2023 that led to the most recent concerns about this intersection. They questioned how decisions about traffic safety and road improvement are made by County staff, especially given that there have been concerns about safety along this portion of HWY 14 for years. The engineers from Lee Engineering lamented the reality that they could only access accident data from 2018-2022 – all the most recent data that have been made public. Unexpectedly, a man in the audience announced that he had been involved in that 2023 fatal accident and recounted the tragic details of what happened that evening.

Another point that was made by one of our neighbors was that analysis of the traffic accident data indicates that most of those accidents involved local drivers. This conclusion has been borne out by SMA analyses of those data as well. As most of the collisions involved local drivers, it is unlikely that those drivers did not realize there was an intersection, with STOP signs, present. So, while signage and road markings will help, modifying driver behavior is really what needs to happen. Along those lines, another member of the audience emphatically stated that more traffic enforcement was needed – something which could modify driver behavior. Sheriff Mendoza agreed and pledged to work to increase patrols in this area, though increasing them will be limited by resources and staffing.

Many people expressed concern about future growth, accompanied by increased traffic, and the future of this intersection. Commissioner Bustamante agreed and noted the benefits of planning now for the eventual future. She emphasized that an effort like this involves substantial planning on the part of staff, then engineering solution need to be implemented, and then, perhaps those efforts will change behavior, and committed to keep working within the County to make this intersection as safe as possible.

Commissioner Hughes, who organized this meeting and advocated for the traffic study within the County, thanked everyone for taking the time to attend. He reiterated his concern about the safety of this intersection and emphasized that County's job moving forward is to keep listening.

The San Marcos Association has been advocating for the County to address our community's safety concerns regarding this intersection for over a year and we were gratified to see the public turnout and the number of County staff and officials present. We have data, we have a study, we have a County commitment to keep safety at this intersection in front of mind, and we will soon experience visible improvements to the roadways. Now, we need continued input from our neighbors about how well all this is working. Please continue to send SMA your thoughts and concerns about this intersection. And we pledge to keep advocating for increased traffic safety at this intersection with County staff and leadership.