

NEWS

From the Office of

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Mitzelfelt Prompts County to Address Traffic Problems Around New High School *Funds being allocated to pave dirt roads around school*

HESPERIA – First District Supervisor Brad Mitzelfelt today announced his plans to address numerous dangerous traffic problems surrounding the newly constructed Oak Hills High School.

“Unfortunately, the State of California doesn’t hold schools to the same safety standards that our County would require of any other construction project,” said Supervisor Mitzelfelt, who has expressed concern for the safety of students, motorists and residents near the school. “This resulted in traffic conditions that were less than ideal when the school opened.”

Local residents and concerned parents contacted Mitzelfelt’s office complaining about dangerous conditions shortly after students began attending the school. County staff immediately began efforts to evaluate traffic conditions and plan mitigation measures.

A 15-year-old girl was struck by a car on El Centro Road near the school on September 29, one month after the school opened.

About 11,000 cars on Rancho Road drive by the school each day. After projects to construct an interchange at Interstate 15 and an underpass at the railroad tracks are completed, the number of cars using Rancho Road is expected to double.

Traffic concerns identified by County officials include the need for traffic signals and crossing controls on Rancho Road, inadequate signage to control traffic flow, stopping and parking, a lack of turn lanes, and dirt roads leading to the school from the east and north. Those roads, Coyote Trail and El Centro Road, are not currently maintained by the County or City of Hesperia. High volumes of traffic on the roads cause excessive dust, obscuring motorists’ views of pedestrians and bicyclists. In addition, the roads are narrow and have dangerous ruts and other obstructions.

Supervisor Mitzelfelt, at Tuesday’s Board of Supervisors meeting, will propose contributing \$800,000 from County transportation funds to pave the two roads. School district officials have committed to partner with Mitzelfelt on the paving project by contributing up to \$650,000 to the project.

“I appreciate that the Hesperia Unified School District has partnered with me to solve these dangerous problems,” added Mitzelfelt. “We need to do all we can to protect the students.”

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2-2-2-2 Oak Hills High School

In advance of actually paving the roads, an emergency project to widen, grade and apply soil stabilizer to El Centro Road will soon begin. On October 20, the next Board of Supervisors meeting after funding is approved, the County will adopt El Centro Road into the County Maintained Road System. Road grading will begin the same day. A survey crew has also already been tasked with planning the paving projects.

In addition to the paving projects, County Public Works crews are also in the process of installing signage and other traffic controls around the school to increase safety.

Those improvements include:

- Restricting parking and stopping along Coyote Trail and Cataba Road to allow for the free flow of traffic and to prevent students from walking across the roads
- Working with school officials to develop a comprehensive plan for bus drop-offs and parent drop-off locations and circulation improvements around the school that will incorporate the proposed paving projects
- Adding signs on the south side of Ranchoero Road at Coyote Trail to direct pedestrians to the crosswalk at the traffic signal at Cataba Road
- Adding "No Stopping" signs on both sides of Ranchoero Road in front of the school to prevent drop-offs of students on the busy roadway
- Designating Coyote Trail for right-in and right out movements only at the intersection with Ranchoero Road, and
- Installing a stop sign at the intersection of Ranchoero and Escondido Roads

These improvements have been coordinated with the school district's architect engineer and the director of transportation.

County Public Works Department staff are holding weekly meetings with the team assigned to the project to ensure expedited progress on all safety improvements.

In addition to these improvements, an existing project to widen Ranchoero Road to two lanes in each direction with a center median is also in the planning stages. The City of Hesperia is the lead agency on this project and has hired a consultant who is designing the Ranchoero Road corridor. The County is coordinating with the City in analyzing the traffic movements and roadway configuration.

Approximately 1,600 students will attend the school this year, however that number is expected to increase to as much as 3,500 by the year 2011.