

Citizen's Acting on Traffic Concerns: Where is Orange City Government?

By Tom Davidson and Theresa Sears

Local residents have long been concerned with the traffic volume, speed and congestion on Chapman Avenue and Santiago Canyon Road -- not to mention the deadly crash history on Santiago Canyon Road. No one anticipated the current high level of traffic traveling at excessive speeds in our equestrian community. More and more drivers use this route to avoid toll charges. With the planned 4,000-tract-unit development in East Orange, it is certain that traffic will increase and safety further reduced.

In the near future, a plan for the expansion of Holy Sepulcher Cemetery will be presented to the City of Orange. In negotiations with representatives from Holy Sepulcher and the Diocese of Orange it was suggested that a signal at the northern end of the cemetery might be beneficial for the cemetery and serve as a viable horse crossing. Once again, the tail is wagging the dog.

The City is currently updating its general plan and traffic concerns should play a large role in any rezoning decisions. But East Orange is not included in the general plan update. Because the City is ignoring East Orange in general, it most certainly is ignoring specific traffic issues. Therefore, residents have no realistic expectations as to the fate and future of our community. The Orange City Council allowed the Irvine Company to plan Santiago Hills II and approved a development that will have unimaginable traffic impacts; the outlook for the Sully Miller property is uncertain; and now a traffic signal is being proposed on a street that has escaped city scrutiny despite its history.

The Orange Park Association Board of Directors and the Parks Planning and Development Commission are recommending that a traffic study be required for the Cemetery project. Before a determination is made about traffic signals at the cemetery we should identify and prioritize all traffic issues on Santiago Canyon Road -- from Jamboree to Cannon -- and employ engineering methods to deter speeding and aggressive driving. A systematic approach must be taken to successfully reduce motor vehicle collisions, improve safety and enhance our quality of life. It will require traffic education, police enforcement and appropriate street modifications to both arterials.

We are asking our elected officials to look beyond economics and consider our community and the safety of all who use Chapman Avenue and Santiago Canyon Road. We are requesting an independent traffic study for this stretch of road and asking the City Council to appoint a citizen's panel -- composed of East Orange residents -- to work with the city to achieve meaningful solutions for these problematic thoroughfares.

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