

From: Gallon, Dawn M [<mailto:Dawn.Gallon@dot.state.fl.us>] **On Behalf Of** Hattaway, Billy
Sent: Friday, December 07, 2012 9:37 AM
To: dletourneau@bikewalklee.org
Cc: Hattaway, Billy; Hollingsworth, Lora; Nandam, L. K.; Smith, Chris; Limbaugh, Johnny; Tower, Debbie; Burch, Zachary
Subject: Michael G. Rippe Parkway/Briarcliff Road Intersection

Dear Darla:

We received your letter on behalf of BikeWalkLee requesting approval and installation of a traffic signal at the Michael G. Rippe Parkway/Briarcliff Road intersection. As you know, the Florida Department of Transportation has completed the traffic signal warrant study for this intersection and it has met a primary warrant for "wait time" that drivers experience on Briarcliff Road. The department has approved the installation of the signal. Along with the installation of the signal, marked crosswalks and pedestrian features will be included. We are ordering mast arms and poles for the traffic signal and expect delivery in about six months. Increased demand for these materials associated with recovery from Hurricane Sandy is delaying production and delivery. Lee County will start construction to install the signal next summer and we estimate it will be operational next fall.

I would like to address several of your remarks in the letter, including your perception that traffic signals provide safe conditions for all users of the roadway. Research shows that traffic signals in place without proper justification can actually reduce safety at an intersection. Traffic signals are installed to allocate time to all users (motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians) at intersections when conditions don't provide adequate gaps in traffic to allow side street users to cross or turn left onto the roadway. Unwarranted traffic signals create impatience in drivers whose resulting dangerous behavior becomes frequent red light running. Even at warranted traffic signals, far too many severe crashes occur, including fatalities, and rear-end crashes increase, in particular.

There are several communities in Lee County similar in size to the Briarcliff community with only one access to a major highway. These locations have not met warrants for a signal, and our records show no crash history indicating these intersections are experiencing safety issues. Likewise, there are countless four and six-lane divided highways throughout Florida where median openings do not have traffic signals and do not have safety issues.

Safety along any roadway is dependent on the behavior and choices made by every user. Data shows most crashes result from failure to yield and are caused by user behaviors that include running stop signs and red lights, speeding, driving under the influence, and distracted driving. Information from the Lee County sheriff's office shows the two crashes at the Michael G. Rippe Parkway/Briarcliff Road intersection occurred because Briarcliff Road motorists did not yield to traffic on the Parkway. Florida law requires that drivers and bicyclists make a full stop at stop signs. All users must be certain they can enter the roadway safely before turning onto a crossing roadway or traveling through the intersection. After a full stop, all users should look left, right, and left again to be sure there is a sufficient gap in traffic before proceeding.

Based on future traffic volumes, the original planning study indicated a likelihood a signal would eventually be warranted at Briarcliff Road. In many cases, however, it takes a long time for traffic volumes to increase to the point that a signal is warranted. The traffic study performed during the design phase for this project did not justify a signal for the intersection when it would open to traffic. Likewise, a review of turning movements at the US 41/Briarcliff Road intersection were not adequate to support installation of a signal at the Michael G. Rippe

Parkway/Briarcliff Road intersection. Consequently, we determined the signal could not be justified without doing a traffic signal warrant study. Our decisions about signals must be data driven, and our traffic engineers need to be sure certain requirements at the new intersection are met.

We began data collection and analysis at the intersection the first week in November since all travel lanes on Michael G. Rippe Parkway were open. Traffic counters (tubes) identified the eight-hour period during the day with highest traffic volumes at the intersection, and we also counted turning and through movements of traffic to and from Briarcliff Road. Additionally, we measured “wait time” drivers experienced making these traffic movements at the intersection (more than 60 seconds), and this warrant that demonstrated the need for a signal. Please keep in mind, of course, that side street traffic at a signalized intersection may wait two or three minutes for “green time” depending on time of day.

As you and I have discussed several times, the department takes safety for all users throughout the state very seriously, and we have made significant progress toward enhanced safety on our roadways during the past decade. Contrary to statements made in the press, we do not design dangerous intersections – but we do recognize the need for continued emphasis on safety, and in February 2013, our Alert Today Alive Tomorrow campaign begins. As you know, Lee County is one of ten counties in Florida where we will initially focus on expanding education and enforcement in combination with supplementing engineering treatments to increase pedestrian and bicyclist safety. We need BikeWalkLee’s support in improving safety through education, enforcement and engineering as well as in bringing attention to land development patterns that enhance walkability and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists.

We understand BikeWalkLee’s interest in a traffic signal and appreciate getting your letter. If you have additional questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me or our District Traffic Operations Engineer, L. K. Nandam. Mr. Nandam can be reached at 863-519-2490 or L.Nandam@dot.state.fl.us.

Sincerely,

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