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# Homewood approves first phase plan for 183rd Street

BY ERIC CRUMP  
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Homewood residents filled the village hall board room Tuesday, March 22, to weigh in on the proposed first phase of improvements to 183rd Street.

The Board of Trustees approved the plan for a first phase of safety improvements to the major thoroughfare.

Comments from residents and board members indicate there was strong consensus for taking action on 183rd Street, but views diverged on the scope and details of the plan.

The four elements of the plan include:

- Doing a pilot project to test what's called a traffic diet by reducing the four-lane road to two lanes with a center turn lane from Riegel Road to Morgan Street.
- Consulting with residents on Gottschalk Avenue about two options for addressing the intersection of that street with 183rd.
- Adding lane delineators to prevent improper turns from Park Avenue onto eastbound 183rd.
- Doing phase 1 engineering on a possible traffic light at Center Avenue and 183rd.

One concern expressed by a number of residents was the size of the traffic diet pilot project and what they say is the limited scope of a study commissioned last year, which examined traffic and crash data from Halsted Street to Park Avenue.

Residents asked why the village isn't addressing problems the whole length of the street, from Halsted to Kedzie Avenue. Public Works Director John Schaefer assured residents that these are first steps, chosen because they can be accomplished in the short term, but the village plans to continue pursuing safety measures along the street.

He said the eastern portion of 183rd was studied first because it has higher residential density and homes generally are closer to the street, making traffic problems more immediate. If the traffic diet approach is successful there, it could be applied farther west, he said.

Schaefer also said the scope of the pilot was limited so the village can make sure it has evidence supporting the approach before it invests money in a permanent realignment there and elsewhere.

### Traffic diet plan

The two-week test is expected to start about May 1.

The village will place barrels to convert the street from four lanes of vehicular traffic to one lane each way, with a turn lane between them and bike lanes

on both sides of the street.

Schaefer said the village would conduct traffic counts before and during the pilot on 183rd Street, Ridge Road and 187th Street to assess the effect of the reduced lanes on all three streets. One concern village officials have is that restricting the traffic flow on 183rd Street might result in increased traffic on those two parallel streets.

Village officials will also be looking for feedback from residents along the test stretch to see if they experience more or less difficulty getting out of their driveways.

These lane restrictions are intended to slow traffic. Residents report drivers speeding in excess of the posted 30 mph speed limit. The diet test is also expected to show whether the mitigation results in traffic backups.

### Center Avenue stoplight

The intersection of Center and 183rd has long been a problem spot, in part because Center does not line up on each side of 183rd. A fatal crash there in 2020 helped spark residents' demand for new safety measures.

Schaefer said that questions remain about how to implement a traffic light at the intersection. There already is a traffic light one block east at Aberdeen Street by James Hart School. The two lights would have to be coordinated to avoid traffic snarls, he said.

### Gottschalk Avenue options

A hill and a residential fence contribute to visibility problems at Gottschalk and 183rd Street. There was a fatal pedestrian crash at the intersection in 2015.

The village is proposing two options, to either make Gottschalk one-way northbound from 183rd Street to Olive Road, or make it a dead end so vehicles cannot enter or exit 183rd from Gottschalk.

Schaefer said the village will consult with residents to see which option they prefer. One resident at the meeting said she thought making the street a dead end was the best choice.

### Park Avenue delineators

Left turns from Park Avenue onto eastbound 183rd are already prohibited, but drivers often make that risky turn anyway, Schaefer said.

The plan calls for lane delineators along the center line of 183rd to prevent those eastbound turns.

Vehicles will still be able to turn right from Park onto 183rd westbound, and vehicles traveling either direction on 183rd will be able to turn onto Park.