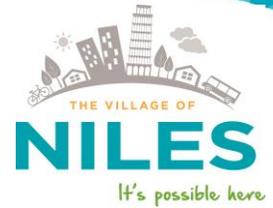


NILES NEWS



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VILLAGE PROVIDES UPDATE ON STATUS OF KEY PEDESTRIAN SAFETY INTERSECTIONS

Since July of this year, the Village, local residents, and state legislators have reached out to leadership at the Illinois Department of Transportation to encourage the installation of "traffic control signals" at Waukegan/Cleveland and Caldwell/Cleveland. On November 20, 2020, the Village received formal notice from IDOT that a traffic engineering study had been completed and, per the guidelines followed by IDOT, a new traffic signal at either intersection is not warranted and will not be allowed.

Due to this decision by IDOT to not allow a traffic signal, the Village's engineering staff continued moving forward with pursuing a previously identified alternate option already approved by IDOT: a refuge island design with rectangular rapid flashing beacons at both Waukegan/Cleveland and Caldwell/Cleveland. The proposed project will be presented to the Village's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Advisory Group for support.

According to a response from IDOT, "the Illinois Department of Transportation adheres to the specific guidelines and warrants as published in the Federal Highway Administration's Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). The MUTCD is the national standard for the application of traffic control devices. The existing traffic volumes, recent crash history and existing conditions were examined and compared with the applicable traffic signal warrants defined in the MUTCD. The results of the study found none of the warrants are met for the installation of a new traffic signal at either intersection."

IDOT noted that traffic signals are often interpreted as a "remedy for all intersection concerns," but in reality they can adversely affect the safety and efficiency of vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic, if improperly placed or unjustified. Potential disadvantages of unjustified traffic signals include: Excessive disobedience of the signal indications; excessive delay; increased use of less adequate routes as road users attempt to avoid the traffic control signals; and significant increase in the frequency of collisions, especially rear-end collisions.

As Waukegan Road (IL Route 43) and Caldwell Avenue (US 14) are State roads, the Village must follow IDOT's direction regarding traffic signals for these locations. IDOT did, however, encourage the Village's consideration of supplemental measures, such as the proposed refuge island and flashing beacons.

"While IDOT's response might seem discouraging to the public at first glance, we are reassured that the decision is made based on rigid standards, and trust that a misplaced signal could lead to other unforeseen safety issues," said Village Manager Steve Vinezeano. "With better clarity on what is permissible, the Village can now narrow its focus on the improved crosswalk with the refuge island and flashing beacons, and we're looking forward to pressing on with that project."

The next step for the Village's proposed refuge island and rectangular rapid flashing beacon solution will be to present a concept design to the Village's Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Advisory Group for support. The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Advisory Group is an ad hoc committee which has been formed to advise the Village Board on the implementation of the 2014 Village of Niles Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. The group also advises on programs and policies within the Village's road jurisdiction and provides guidance for the development of regional bicycle and pedestrian connections.

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