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Creswell's speed radar signs: What they do, why they're here, how they work



Chronicle Archives
Lane County Sheriff's Office Sergeant Scott Denham installs a speed radar sign.

Speed radar signs were installed in Creswell in July and are being used to gather data about traffic flow in town. As the speeds increase the sign will flash faster, alerting the passersby to slow down.

The first two areas in town to host the radar signs were on the 400 block of North 1st Street and on the 200 block of Oregon Avenue in July.

The signs were moved last week on Sept. 5 to new locations within the school zones as police prep for back-to-school congestion, Lane County Sheriff's Office Sergeant Scott Denham said.

Denham said the sheriff's contract requires an in-person response for all calls for service within the city limits. With an increasing call load, a fastly growing community that is still without

24-hour police coverage, deputies are left with little time to provide quality traffic

enforcement and prevention patrols, he said.

Traffic issues are a concern. From May 2017 to May 2018, Creswell deputies issued 81 traffic citations for speed alone.

The lack of available law enforcement and an increase in vehicle traffic has citizens worried that it is not always safe to walk, bike, or travel along many streets in Creswell due to a lack of attention to speed zones by local and visiting drivers.

As such, these signs were purchased with grant monies through the Oregon Department of Public Safety Standards and Training (DPSST), Denham said. The cost of the two signs was just over \$6,800.

The radar speed signs are based on the scientific theory of feedback loop, which states that if the people are provided with information about their action in real time and given an opportunity to change those actions, there will be positive behavior reinforcement, according to Radarsign.

It works by collecting data on vehicle speeds approaching the sign, including whether they slow prior to the sign, what times and days vehicles go faster and violate the speed limit, and so on, Denham said.

"The data can be downloaded and plugged into a program that provides chart data," Denham said. "I can then use that to set up focused patrols when we know the traffic is faster." The StreetSmart Traffic Data Reporting software generates more than 30 charts and graphs to help report, organize and analyze traffic data gathered from the radar speed signs, according to Radarsign.

Denham said he cannot give any specific data results yet as the first download is not complete, but every 90 days Denham will submit a report to DPSST with a summary about the effectiveness in curbing behavior.

The signs are portable and come with two batteries, so they can be moved around. Sergeant Denham said they operate with a wi-fi signal and can be controlled with a smartphone, with a connection range of up to 300 feet from the sign.

These signs can be mounted to existing sign poles in traffic areas such as school zones, high traffic areas entering the city, and high traffic safety zones in residential areas.

In addition, "The signs can be set with multiple timers so that they will track school zone speeds while the yellow lights are flashing," Denham said.

Data from the radar signs will also be incorporated in the City's Transportation System Plan and the upcoming Safe Routes to School Plan that City Planner Maddie Phillips is working on, he said.

"We do ask the community that if they see the lights going dim, let us know," Denham said. "That means the batteries are low and need recharging. I can't always keep up with them as in high traffic areas, they tend to deplete faster."

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