

As a city councilman of the city of Oakes and the parent of an 11 year old student at Oakes Public School, I am deeply concerned with the planned removal of the traffic signal at Main Avenue and 7th Street/Highway 1 intersection.

We as a community contacted our local legislators to help us retain this traffic signal. Senator Erbele, Representative Grueneich and Representative Brandenburg heard our concerns and offered their help.

While I firmly believe our D.O.T. engineers are highly qualified and do a great job, I also believe that other important variables need to be considered before the removal of this traffic signal. I understand traffic volume, but there is more to consider.

As you know, we live in the age of distracted drivers. Music, pets, other occupants in vehicles, eating/drinking, reading, navigation systems - all of these contribute to distracted driving. Of course, the largest concern when it comes to distracted driving is the use of mobile devices. Mobile devices provide music/navigation, texting, social media - they constantly distract us throughout our day, and frequently when driving. When approaching a traffic control device, the average individual turns his or her focus to the light. Without the traffic control device, people have nothing to catch their attention and make them aware of their surroundings.

With the proximity of Highway 1 being on the east side of Oakes Public School, it creates a substantial risk for pedestrians walking. The hours of 8am-8:30am, and again from 3:00pm-3:45pm are prime times for both pedestrian and vehicle traffic at the location of the traffic control signal. Students are walking to and from school, parents are seen circling the school in search of that perfect location to pick up their children, and older students are rushing to leave school to get to jobs, home or other activities. These all also coincide with the afternoon traffic from local residents returning from their employment at Bobcat in Gwinner. With the shift change at 3pm, most Bobcat employees arrive back in Oakes between 3:30 and 3:45pm, compounding the amount of traffic and congestion at the location of the traffic signal.

One block east of Highway 1 are two daycare facilities. Every school day, children are seen crossing Highway 1, traveling to these daycares for after-school programs. In the warmer months, children and daycare staff are seen on walks along the highway, and utilize the traffic control device as a safe zone to cross on a walk or to the swimming pool or parks.

Also at the same intersection of Highway 1 and Main Avenue is the location of a busy convenience store. Young and old students, teachers, and many in the general public frequent this convenience store for food, and gas throughout the day.

Oakes is home to 3 elevators and a fertilizer plant. Fifteen miles north of Oakes is the location of another large elevator. Trucks are constantly seen traveling on Highway 1 through Oakes, at all hours of the day. There are also many large farming operations in the greater Oakes area, so on any given day, you can see a wide range of farming equipment utilizing the Highway through town. The trucks and equipment require longer stopping distances, and without the traffic control device, these large vehicles would have difficulty stopping for pedestrians and bike traffic, thus creating a hazard.

The overwhelming opinion in our community is that we want to keep this traffic signal in place, due to the extremely close proximity to our school. I believe the safety of our students is paramount.

Thank you for your time and commitment to the safety and well being of the citizens of North Dakota!

Respectfully,
Mr.Shannon Day