

Dear Stevenson City Councilors,

I am writing so that this statement will be read into the Council meeting minutes as public comment regarding removal of the stop signs east and west on 1st Street and Russell Avenue in downtown Stevenson. I will briefly address issues from the last meeting.

The unannounced Council vote for stop sign removal may have been “legal” as described by the City legal counsellor. It was wrong in regard to the outcomes of several previous public meetings and subsequent decisions against stop sign removal. Sadly, at the next meeting, the Council heard Sheriff Brown tell them point blank that their requested increase in downtown traffic violation ticketing could not be accomplished. Only 2 deputies could be in town at any one time due to budget cuts. Therefore, truck traffic (many avoiding weigh stations) and local speeders cannot be consistently patrolled. He did not support removal of the stop signs. The head of the EMS (ambulance crew) also could not support removal. The Stevenson District 2 Fire Chief also could not support it. The driving school owner sent the Council a letter saying he could not support stop sign removal due unresolved speed and safety issues. 1st Street property owners said they did not support stop sign removal. There are several new businesses on 1st Street since the previous vote against removal of the stop signs. There is a new art gallery and restaurant at that intersection. The train situation has changed. The Port is booming. The US Postal Office is there. I have owned commercial/residential property on 2nd Street for 14 years and I still do not support removal.

My workplace is on 1st Street and I get to see the traffic situation daily. The resurfacing of 2nd Street has added to 1st Street traffic giving us a look at what we will see in the future. The sheriff's office has recently made appearances on 1st Street that have significantly slowed traffic for the last few days. Can that be sustained? Not according to Sheriff Brown. Band-Aids won't suffice in the long term. Traffic at that intersection will only increase due to foot traffic from cruise ships, wind sport enthusiasts and general tourism. If speeding cannot be controlled now with the stop sign in place, removal will only make it worse.

Thankfully, Council member Amy Weissfeld has held the high ground fighting against removal of the stop signs for years. Yet, 3 newly elected Council members voted for stop sign removal. A long term Council member changed his vote to opt for removal as well. They decided that they know best. Really?! Based on a totally unscientific “survey” that 99% of Stevenson residents did not even vote on? At least 90% of the people I discuss this issue with are against stop sign removal. A decision of this much importance deserves a public referendum. The Council should host a new public forum to discuss stop sign removal, downtown traffic and the future of Stevenson before taking unilateral action.

I kindly suggest that the Council review their decision and seek a long term solution to semi-truck traffic that does not belong on the Washington side. They damage roads, cause safety issues and negatively affect quality of life for all who live along our rural highway while the state loses revenue. HWY 14 (2nd Street) belongs to WASDOT. Resolving bad things happening there is WASDOT responsibility. Hold them responsible. The road resurfacing issue provides an unequalled opportunity for a long term resolution.

Trucks and speeding vehicles are the well documented problem on 2nd Street (and, now 1st street due to the new East bound “truck route” signs). The Sheriff told the Council that enforcement cannot be increased. East bound truck traffic cannot legally be forced off HWY 14 onto 1st street with a few signs. Crosswalks cannot be made safer by offering buckets of yellow flags for pedestrians. Voting for removal of the stop signs lacks logic and is short sighted when considering stopping time for semi-trucks vs passenger vehicles and available National Scenic Byway and Area semi-truck restrictions. A quick Google search provided the pertinent information and websites below. Please take the time to explore this.

<https://www.hg.org/article.asp?id=28265>. http://local.aaca.org/siraaca/truck_safety.htm.
http://www.ehow.com/facts_5796132_stopping-distance-tractor-trailers_.html.
<http://www.allenandallen.com/blog/the-rule-of-seconds.html>. <http://www.truckingtruth.com/cdl-training-program/page19>. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ruR8TTrksbU>.
http://safety.transportation.org/htmlguides/hvy_trks/description_of_strat.htm.
http://www.albemarle.org/upload/images/Forms_Center/Departments/Community_Development/Forms/Comp_Plan_2013/Comp_Plan_Round_3/R.10.15_Rural_Traffic_Calming.pdf.

Here is some information on areas that also have “National Scenic Byway and Area” status and have followed legal guidelines to reduce truck traffic having no deliveries in the area. These articles show how municipalities with “National Scenic Byway and Area” status can control their own destiny. We already have that. I suggest we own it!

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/LocalPrograms/ScenicByways/ColumbiaGorge.htm>. <http://wtop.com/sprawl-crawl/2015/07/no-trucks-allowed-enforcement-stepped-up-on-area-parkways/>.
<http://tailofthedragon.com/tail-of-the-dragon-info/trucks-on-the-dragon/>.

Stevenson City Council members, please use the National Scenic Byway and Safety Corridor information provided to inform your decisions. The only long term solution to truck vs public safety concerns in Stevenson is to stop non-tariff paying semi-trucks travelling on HWY 14 without pick-ups or deliveries from Washougal through Lyle. They cause inordinate safety, road maintenance, traffic and emergency response issues all along HWY 14 and should be stopped! Removal of the stop signs on 1st Street will not improve the situation. The route already has Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Byway and Gorge status. The Stevenson City Council should contact the Gorge Commission and local city councils along the HWY 14 Columbia River Gorge Scenic Corridor and enlist them to help solve the bigger problem.

Thank you for your consideration,

Brian McNamara

Stevenson, WA