

Traffic Calming: Is it Right for Mt. Airy?

By Mike Bechtold

The issue of traffic safety is of considerable personal interest to me. On November 20, 2020, my wife and I were headed up Colerain Ave. hill when we encountered another vehicle flying in the opposite direction. He missed the curve, crossed the center line, and hit us head on. I stayed conscious, but my wife did not. Two ladies on the sidewalk pried open her door, took her hands, and prayed over her until the EMT's arrived. We were both in the ICU for five days, rehab for a couple of months, and PT for a year. We both had surgeries for multiple broken bones, but will never be as functional as we were. And we're the third and fourth people in our own group of friends who have had head on collisions on Colerain hill in Mt. Airy. The data shows 172 accidents on that hill in 2022.

The City of Cincinnati has started a strategy known as Vision Zero that is aimed at reducing and eventually ending all traffic related deaths and severe injuries. This is a nationwide program that uses data driven analyses from all over the world to redesign streets in urban areas. The term often applied to these efforts is "traffic calming". If you have driven through our neighboring community of College Hill recently, you will have encountered a traffic calming pilot project on North Bend Rd. and Hamilton Ave. that is part of Cincinnati's effort to implement Vision Zero. The pilot plan has multiple facets with the goal of reducing speeding and improving safety for all street users. The primary driver of the Cincinnati Department of Transportation and Engineering (DOTe) Vision Zero program has been city planner Melissa McVay. Mt. Airy CURE has contacted Melissa to inquire how this program may affect Mt. Airy. She was very responsive and eager to share information with us. She gave several details about how this program will be bringing traffic safety changes to Mt. Airy in the very near future!

DOTe is currently in the process of installing five sets of "speed cushions"

on Colerain hill that should be completed by the end of 2024. A “raised crosswalk” in the central business district on Colerain is scheduled to be completed by summer of 2025. A new traffic signal and crosswalk are also slated to be installed at the intersection of Colerain and Shepherd in 2026 or perhaps sooner. In addition, City Council member and Mt. Airy resident Scotty Johnson is working with DOTE to do a report about bringing street calming measures to North Bend Rd as well as there have been numerous serious accidents primarily caused by excessive speeding.