

Students fed up with Cooper Street

By Felix Sanchez
Managing Editor
Second in a series

While administrators banter about making Cooper Street safer, students still face the daily task of crossing it. And some students are vociferous

when asked if something needs to be done.

"The damned thing needs to be closed or something, before somebody gets killed. I cross that thing every day and there hasn't been one time I wasn't scared chickenshit," one student who

identified herself as an art major said.

Not all students, faculty and staff are this emotional, but most contacted this week and last at the crosswalk lights, aren't happy with the situation.

"I read about the problems in building a walkway, but I think something needs to be resolved immediately," said Eloise Knight, full-time audio visual supervisor.

Mae Knaur, journalism sophomore, says patrolling Cooper to a greater extent would help.

"The traffic there goes too fast. I think they should patrol it more often and give tickets. They don't go 35 miles-per-hour there," she said.

She added problems lie not only in crossing Cooper but in driving on it.

"I almost got hit in my car going down Cooper. It's just as dangerous driving."

Most students agreed any safety renovations should be permanent. However, temporary measures are more than welcome, according to the majority.

Sophomore psychology major Joanne Cruz, for one, favors crosswalks over the street. Other students agreed with the walkway proposal, citing low costs as well as esthetic reasons.

Dudley Wetsel, vice president for business affairs, has said walkways across Cooper would probably be less expensive than depressing the street or building a tunnel underneath.

Meanwhile, Student Congress is trying to resolve the Cooper Street affair, or at least start the ball rolling.

SC recently sent a resolution to committee which calls for lowering Cooper speed limits from 30 to 15 m.p.h.

Recently, Wetsel and UTA safety officer George Bennett sent Arlington City Mgr. Ross Calhoun a similar proposal.

Wetsel and Bennett want the limit lowered to 20.

Penny Willrich, SC president, said

the resolution is meant to initiate action.

"Nothing done by Student Congress is a token move. It may not lower the limit to 15 m.p.h. but it might get 20 m.p.h.

"At least we made the recommendation."

She added she had not heard of Wetsel's and Bennett's proposal until she read it in the Shorthorn.

She added it is coincidence both recommendations were made so close together.

"The speed limit on campus is 15 mph but the hinge on it (the resolution) is that Cooper is a city street and a state highway," she said. "But it is running through campus.

"I don't care whether it is lowered or whatever. As long as something is done. Make the street safer for pedestrians."

The resolution also recommends changing the waiting time for pedestrians at the crosswalks.

Again, Wetsel and Bennett have made the same suggestion to the city.

Another person interested in resolving the Cooper Street situation is handicapped adviser Jim Hayes.

Hayes says his office has not been consulted for input on what provisions for the handicapped should be taken.

He said anything done to Cooper must be one of three things: depress it and build a walkway over, building a walkway over the present street or close Cooper down completely.

"What we are talking about here are blind people and those in electric wheelchairs trying to cross this street," he said.

He added the deterioration of Cooper doesn't help the situation. He said chugholes pose danger to those confined to wheelchairs.

"Quadriplegics could be tipped over. Doesn't it make sense to put a major

highway right down the middle of a major university?" he said sarcastically.

Should anything be done to Cooper, Hayes says his office would ask UTA to follow Article 678 of the Vernon Statutes which regulates construction to conform to the needs of handicapped wanting to use those facilities.

One of the provisions of the article says walkways should rise only one foot for every 12 feet in length or slope.

It also provides for installation of non-slip surfaces onto the walkway itself.

Wetsel has said there are some peo-

ple who contend walkways built to accommodate the handicapped would extend from Cooper to the Library.

However, he pointed out this would probably not be true. Hayes added that specifications set out by the article are minimal standards.

"We would prefer to have a better slope than that," Hayes said. "As soon as preliminary plans have been finalized for any kind of action on Cooper Street, we will, under the supervision of Wayne Duke (Dean of Student Life), send a memo to Everette Strahan (physical plant director) asking we be consulted to provide for handicapped provisions."

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