

**SAFER71 RELEASES COMMUNITY UPDATE #2**

*Update on success achieved in 2019 regarding road safety on SH71 West between Southwest Parkway and Blanco County Line.*

AUSTIN, TX, Dec 17, 2019 - Safer71, Inc ("Safer71") made available today Community Update #2 on SH 71 West, detailing their efforts to improve safety on SH71 West between Southwest Parkway and the Blanco County Line.

Formed in late 2018 after the death of a local resident in the area, Safer71 is a non-profit community advocacy organization seeking to achieve safe and effective mobility on SH71 West between Southwest Parkway and the Blanco County Line.

"Through the combined efforts of local residents, TxDOT, Travis County Commissioners, County and City enforcement agencies, and our State Representatives, Safer71 has been able to achieve a dramatic change in the safety of SH71 west", said Greg Short, President, Safer 71. "So far this year, 2019 has seen an 88% reduction in fatalities, a 33% reduction in injuries, and an 18% reduction in crashes between Southwest Parkway and the Blanco County line compared with 2018."

Community Update #2 provides further information on the activities of Safer71 since its last update in January, 2019. These include a number of significant achievements including the lowering of the speed limit on SH71, numerous TxDOT safety activities, and the addition of dedicated enforcement resources.

Safer71 is comprised of numerous volunteers from the neighboring communities along SH71 West who are working on a wide variety of efforts to support improving road safety in the area. These include research to support project selection and funding, education programs for new-to-state drivers and newly licensed drivers, PSA's and information sessions on road safety, and vehicle safety programs, such as Tire Check days.

To learn more about Safer71, obtain a copy of Community Update #2, or to support Safer71 via a financial contribution, please visit [www.safer71.org](http://www.safer71.org).

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December 17, 2019

## **COMMUNITY UPDATE #2 ON SH 71 WEST**

Since its formation in late 2018, Safer71 has been working diligently to improve the safety of SH 71 West between Southwest Parkway and the Blanco County line.

Safer71 has been in numerous discussions with a wide range of government and municipal agencies, as well as concerned business owners and residents in the area.

To date, Safer71 has engaged in discussions with:

- Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT)
- Commissioner Gerald Daugherty of Precinct 3 Travis County
- Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO)
- Travis County Constable's Office Precinct 3
- Justice of the Peace, Precinct 3
- Travis County Sheriff's Office
- Travis County District Attorney's Office
- Texas Department of Public Safety
- Rep. Vikki Goodwin, District 47
- City of Lakeway
- City of Bee Cave
- Representatives of HOA's in the area of SH71 West

Safer71 is greatly appreciative of the time and attention that has been provided by these agencies and their representatives to the concerns of residents and commuters along SH71 West.

This community update provides background on the conditions and history of SH 71 West, progress that Safer71 has made to date, and the engineering, enforcement, and education activities currently underway to achieve road safety along this corridor.



WWW.SAFER71.ORG  
FACEBOOK.COM/ASAFER71  
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## **Background**

For a additional background information, please see Community Update #1 at [www.safer71.org](http://www.safer71.org).

SH 71 West is a regional arterial corridor that acts as the primary connector between Mason and Llano Counties and Austin. Along the corridor are additional major cities and ETJ areas such as Horseshoe Bay, Marble Falls, Spicewood, Bee Cave, and Lakeway.

Importantly, SH 71 West is the only route east of Marble Falls to Austin. Further, it acts as the primary local traffic route in accessing amenities for residents located west of Bee Cave along SH 71. As such, the traffic volumes on this highway are extremely high relative to the population.

As a state road, SH 71 is managed entirely by TxDOT. While the road passes through the City of Bee Cave, and is part of Travis County, all aspects of engineering enhancement and construction are ultimately managed by TxDOT.

SH 71 West has many elements that make it challenging to upgrade:

- Topographically, it has many undulations and sight distance issues resulting in dangerous access points and intersections;
- There are many residential and commercial driveways and access roads that would be impacted by a major upgrade;
- There are numerous environmentally sensitive areas and parks that must be accommodated, and;
- Engineering enhancements must meet pollution and aesthetic demands of residents.

The areas adjacent to Travis County and Western Travis County have experienced rapid population growth since 2000. Average population growth in the areas of Bee Cave, Lakeway and Spicewood has been 174 percent, and Bee Cave has grown at an astounding rate of over 385 percent since 2000. This growth shows little signs of slowing down.

SH 71 West is also the primary corridor utilized by numerous quarry and rock crushing facilities. These facilities support a substantial amount of construction throughout the South and West Austin metropolitan area via SH 71 West. Trucking associated with these plants adds increased danger to the corridor as a result of increased road-wear, additional road debris, and limited acceleration/stopping capabilities at intersections and on hills.

SH 71 West has had a history of serious and fatal crashes. Safety was the impetus for the previous engineering improvements to re-grade and add the center-turn lane. However, ongoing population growth, combined with topography of the road itself, drainage and surface materials used, debris from commercial traffic, speed limits, driver habits, and other elements led to a jump in crashes, deaths, and injuries between 2016-2018.



Travis County often partners with TxDOT to provide solutions for safety measures or contribute financially to projects to accelerate their implementation. However, the primary means by which the county supports road safety on state highways, is through additional enforcement presence.

SH71 is also enforced by personnel from the Department of Public Safety (DPS). DPS resources are spread across multiple counties.

SH 71 West is within Precinct 3 of Travis County for the purpose of the Commissioners Court, Sheriff's Office (TCSO) and Travis County Constables Office (TCCO). Deputies and Constables within the precinct enforce traffic violations along the corridor and throughout the geographic boundaries of their region. In addition, TCSO maintains a commercial enforcement division which is distributed across the entire county and focus on violations from large trucks (with support from DPS).

The City of Bee Cave and the City of Lakeway are permitted to enforce traffic violations along SH 71 that occur within their city limits. With the recent increase in injuries along this corridor, efforts from the municipal police departments have been increased to reduce potential incidents.

### **Safer71 Objectives**

Ultimately Safer71 is about saving lives and providing a better sense of safety to all commuters along the area of concern on State Highway 71. This requires focusing our efforts in three key areas: engineering, enforcement, and education.

### **Activity to Date**

Safer71 has been working diligently to advocate on behalf of residents in the area. The below is a history of their activities to date:

- October 28, 2018: Dr. Michael Babineaux killed in fatal crash on SH 71, spurring the formation of Safer71.
- November 7, 2018: Initial meeting of Safer71 volunteers, resolution to form non-profit and establish a charter to improve road safety in Travis County. Greg Short appointed as President of Safer 71.
- November 13, 2018: Safer71 presents to the Travis County Commissioners Court in opposition to the proposed road enhancements associated with the Bee Creek Sports Complex.
- November 15, 2018: Safer71 meets with Lakeway Mayor and City manager to discuss mutual opportunities to improve road safety in the region.
- November 26, 2018: Safer71 meets with Bee Cave Mayor and City manager to discuss mutual opportunities to improve road safety in the region.
- November 28, 2018: Safer71 leads efforts to participate in the CAMPO public input process for their regional arterial plan and CAMPO 2045 comprehensive transportation plan.



- November 29, 2018: Safer71 meets with Commissioner Gerald Daugherty to discuss potential improvements to SH 71 West.
- December 12, 2018: Safer71 meets with CAMPO and TxDOT to learn more about the funding and selection process for road projects in Texas.
- December 12, 2018: Safer71 meets with CAMPO, TxDOT, and Commissioner Gerald Daugherty to review a list of projects identified by Safer71 for short, medium, and long-term improvements to SH 71 West.
- December 28, 2018: Safer71 meets with Representative-Elect Vikki Goodwin of District 47 to discuss mutual opportunities to improve road safety in the region.
- December 31, 2018: Safer71 provided formal response in the Phase 2 public comment period to the CAMPO Regional Arterial Plan and CAMPO2045 plan addressing the needs of SH 71 West.
- January 4, 2019: TxDOT hosts a meeting with Safer71 and Commissioner Gerald Daugherty to respond to the items presented on December 12, 2018.
- January 9, 2019: Safer71 meets with DPS and TCSO Precinct 3, to discuss enforcement and resource availability on SH 71 West.
- January 22, 2019: Safer71 meets with Travis County District Attorney's office to review laws and due process related to prosecution of vehicular accidents resulting in manslaughter or aggravated assault causing serious bodily harm in Travis County.
- January 24, 2019: Safer 71 meets with Stacy Suits, Travis County Constable Precinct 3, to discuss enforcement and resource availability on SH 71 West.
- January 30, 2019: Safer71 releases Community Update #1 detailing progress to date to area residents.
- February 1, 2019: Speed Limit reduced from RR620/SH71 to Pedernales River Bridge.
- March 1, 2019: State Rep. Vikki Goodwin introduces House Bill 2814 to the Texas Legislature requesting the introduction of highway safety corridors to help address road safety.
- March 14, 2019: Safer71 announces series of community meetings to be held in April and May.
- March 26, 2019: Safer71 presents at House Transportation Committee in conjunction with Rep. Vikki Goodwin regarding House Bill 2014.
- April 20, 2019: Safer71 meets with Spicewood residents at the Spicewood Community Center to discuss road safety issues.



- April 22, 2019: Safer71 meets with Lakeway and Rough Hollow residents at the Rough Hollow Town Center to discuss road safety issues.
- April 25, 2019: Safer71 meets with Bee Cave area residents at the Bee Cave City Hall to discuss road safety issues.
- April 28, 2019: Safer71 meets with Sweetwater area residents at the Sweetwater Clubhouse to discuss road safety issues.
- May 1, 2019: Safer71 meets with Spanish Oaks residents at the Spanish Oaks Clubhouse to discuss road safety issues.
- May 9, 2019: Rep. Vikki Goodwin sponsors the passage of HR1397 recognizing the life of Dr Michael Babineaux.
- May 14, 2019: TxDOT installs a protected left turn signal at Pace Bend and SH71 West. The flashing light warning signals at Fall Creek are also activated.
- May 19, 2019: Safer71 meets with Spicewood residents at the Spicewood Community Center to discuss road safety issues.
- May 31, 2019: Safer71 representatives attend the 2019 Texas Traffic Safety conference in San Antonio to learn more about safety grant programs and current initiatives being implemented across the state to reduce road deaths.
- June 19, 2019: Safer71 attends the CAMPO open house to discuss the Regional Arterial Study being completed.
- June 26, 2019: Safer71 attends the TxDOT Open House in Bee Cave to discuss upcoming changes to SH71 West associated with planned improvements to RR620.
- August 8, 2019: The resurfacing of SH71 West is completed with a new permeable asphalt to reduce hydroplaning.
- August 24, 2019: Safer71 attends the Travis County budget hearings in support of the request from Travis County Constable Precinct 3 in securing additional resources for a dedicated traffic enforcement unit for SH71 West and US290.
- September 5, 2019: Travis County Commissioners approve a 2 year pilot of additional resources in support of the requested traffic enforcement unit for Constable Precinct 3.
- December 1, 2019: All new deputies for the new traffic enforcement unit of Precinct 3 are sworn in and have begun patrolling SH71 and US290.



## **Engineering Progress**

Since the inception of Safer71, TxDOT has been engaging in monthly calls to receive input on area needs and provide updates on progress with safety related improvements.

To date, over 30 unique items have been addressed, with more than 15 still actively in progress.

Some of the key items TxDOT has engaged in from November 2018 – December 2019 include:

- Implementation of reduced speed limit from 60 to 55 from Bee Cave to the Pedernales River.
- Resurfacing of SH71 west with permeable asphalt to reduce hydroplaning risk.
- Repairing of certain barriers to reduce potential for vehicles leaving the highway.
- Review of traffic signal timings to reduce potential for red-light running accidents and improve traffic flow.
- Increased maintenance cleanup frequency to remove debris from SH71 West.
- Leasing and placement of additional traffic warning signs and radar speed warning signs to improve driver awareness.
- Installation of additional signal heads at Spanish Oaks and Pace Bend to improve visibility and line of sight.
- Installation of new traffic signals at Bob Wire Rd to improve safety when entering the SH71 west.
- Activation of warning lights at Fall Creek Rd.
- Acceleration of project implementation for center turn lane addition on SH71 west of the Pedernales River.

In addition to these efforts, TxDOT has also conducted road safety improvement studies on SH 71. The study identified a number of improvements which TxDOT is currently reviewing and identifying potential funding sources to implement. These would include:

- Installation of Advance Warning of End of Green System (AWEGS) on overhead mast arms in advance of at risk intersections.
- Study of signal timing, including verification of all-red clearance phases on SH 71 West for further optimization.
- Installation of radar based traffic sensors for traffic signaling to further reduce potential for red-light running based collisions.



- Installation of additional traffic signal heads and tree trimming to improve line of sight for drivers.

The current studies will not achieve a substantial redesign of SH71 West but will help with faster implementation of identified safety improvements. To achieve more comprehensive engineering upgrades (such as added lane capacity or alternate designs to major intersections), the CAMPO 2045 Plan must identify SH 71 West as meriting a future enhancement project.

For this reason, Safer71 has been encouraging residents to voice their concerns and needs related to SH 71 West during the public comment period for the CAMPO Regional Arterial Plan to increase visibility to the needs of the area.

In addition, TxDOT and Safer71 have also filed their request that SH71 West be reviewed thoroughly for future needs as part of the 2045 Planning activities.

Safer71 is also closely monitoring the proposed extension of Vail Divide to Hamilton Pool Road. The Vail Divide extension is a Travis County and local government effort and is not under the management of TxDOT. However, if completed, this road would change the flow of traffic on SH 71 West as residents living along Hamilton Pool Road use the route as an alternate access to the highway.

### **Enforcement Progress**

Commissioner Gerald Daugherty and his staff have been working closely with TCSO, TCCO Precinct 3, and DPS to increase enforcement presence in the area. Capt. Taylor and Constable Suits have assigned dedicated vehicles to the corridor. They have also been supported by Capt. Miller of Bee Cave Police, and DPS Commercial and Traffic personnel. This has now been further bolstered with the addition of 3 further deputies in the area (working on both US290 and SH71 West).

TCSO, TCCO, DPS, and municipal police have assured Safer71 that an elevated enforcement presence will continue as part of overall efforts to address safety along the corridor.

### **Education Progress**

Safer71 has held meetings with numerous local resident HOA's and community groups to increase awareness on road safety in the area. Safer71 is currently compiling a list of state-sponsored safety programs that could be offered through the local school district or community groups to provide further awareness on key issues.

Safer71 has also worked very closely with local media on a series of articles to increase awareness of the dangers associated with driving and how individuals can contribute through better driving habits.

Future funding for Safer71 education programs is expected to come from individual and business donations, and grant funds.

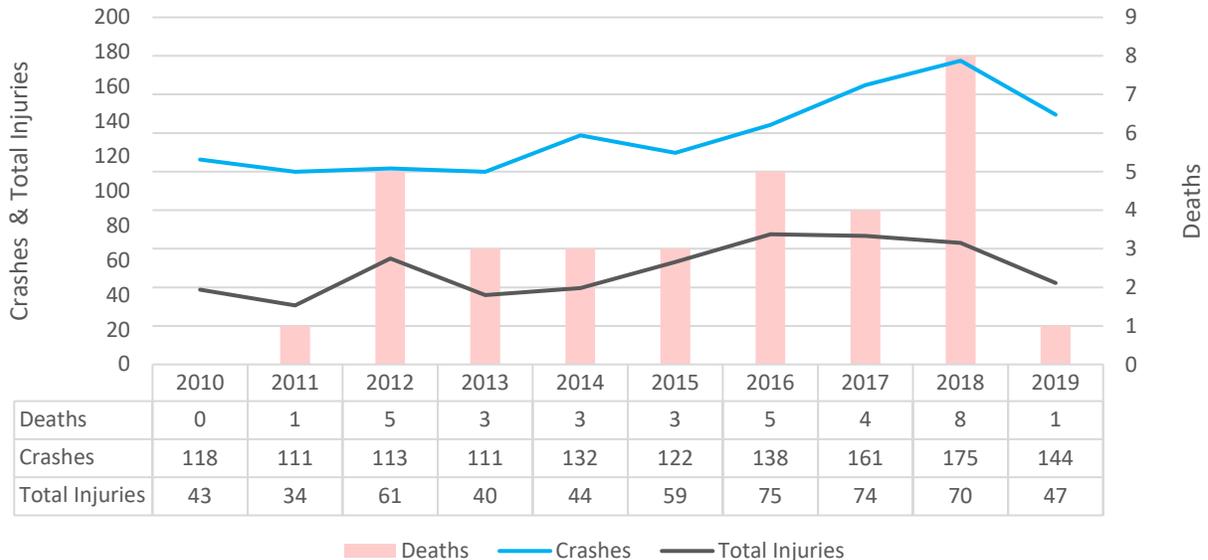


## Impact

Through the combined efforts of Safer71 and the legislative, engineering, and enforcement bodies and individuals we have been engaged with, SH71 West has seen a dramatic reduction in deaths, crashes, and injuries.

## SH71 WEST CRASHES, DEATHS AND INJURIES

SOURCE: TXDOT CRIS, SH71 WEST: SOUTHWEST PKWY - BLANCO COUNTY LINE, 2010 - 2019



To date, 2019 has seen an 88% reduction in fatalities, a 33% reduction in injuries, and a 18% reduction in crashes between Southwest Parkway and the Blanco County line compared with 2018.

## Supporting Safer71

Achieving and maintain road safety on SH71 West is a long-term commitment. As such, Safer71 is focused on establishing itself for ongoing operational viability. It is highly likely that any major engineering improvements may take more than 10 years to be approved, funded and completed.

Safer71 is comprised of volunteers from throughout the SH 71 West region. Without the help and contributions from concerned citizens it would be impossible for us to perform the necessary research, marketing, and outreach activities necessary for achieving our goals.

As a non-profit, Safer71 raises funds through individual and commercial support packages including window stickers, bumper stickers, and yard signs to both increase local awareness and fund the operations of the organization. Individuals and businesses can make financial contributions to support the efforts of Safer71 online at <https://www.safer71.org/donate>. All support is greatly appreciated.



## **Staying Up To Date**

We encourage all interested members of communities and businesses along SH 71 West to sign up for our newsletters at <https://www.safer71.org/updates>. Our mailing list is the most effective way to receive direct updates on the latest Safer71 initiatives and efforts. You can also follow us on social media at <http://facebook.com/asaf71> or [@asaf71](https://twitter.com/asaf71).

## **About Safer71**

Safer71 is a non-profit community advocacy organization seeking to achieve safe and effective mobility on SH71 West between Southwest Parkway and the Blanco County Line. Our multi-faceted approach combines engineering improvements, enforcement enhancements, and education initiatives. Learn more at <https://www.safer71.org>.

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