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La Grange, IL - Illinois Department of Transportation officials have pledged to take a hard look at traffic on 47th Street and Ogden Avenue after the death of a Countryside woman.

State Rep. James Durkin, R-82nd District, of Western Springs, Rep. Michael Zalewski, D-21st District, of Chicago, La Grange Village President Elizabeth Asperger and Village Manager Robert Pilipiszyn met with IDOT Director Gary Hannig June 16. The discussion was held following the death of Cari Cook, 31, who was killed crossing 47th Street with her two young children May 19.

One child was injured in the accident.

Residents attending a community meeting held June 2 called for safety improvements to be made to state-controlled road.

"I'm pleased the (IDOT) director has indicated he will expedite review of these requests about lowering the speed along these highways and enhancing pedestrian crossings at some of these problem areas," Durkin said. "But the most important thing we stressed with him is lowering the speed on 47th Street and Ogden Avenue because of these terrible tragedies that have occurred."

Because 47th Street is an unmarked state road, the village has no authority to change speed limits or make unauthorized improvements. As a result, it was recommended at the June 2 community meeting the state hand over jurisdiction to the village.

Durkin said officials have taken a wait-and -see attitude before making the request.

"We want to be able to give IDOT a chance to prove themselves first," Durkin said. "That is our last resort. Director Hannig I think is receptive to our request. He understands the concerns we have, and it's not like he is looking at it strictly from the Federal Highway Administration standards and all the other rules from IDOT. He's looking at the big picture. Something will be

done.”

Durkin said he and Zalewski also were meeting with Vulcan Materials officials later today to urge them to settle a lawsuit with the state as a result of the closing of a portion of Joliet Road that spans the Vulcan quarry from Hodgkins to McCook.

“We want to strongly encourage them to settle the lawsuit,” Durkin said, adding he believes the closing of Joliet Road 10 years ago has contributed to the heavy traffic congestion on 47th Street and the area at large.

The road was closed after it appeared the roadbed was at risk of sliding off of the narrow land bridge that spanned the quarry. While the shifting of the roadbed was widely believed to be caused by blasting, Vulcan officials at the time said major fissures in the land bridge were created thousands of year ago, long before quarry operations ever started.

Municipal officials throughout the area decried the closing because of the increased traffic it would cause.

Asperger said she thought the June 16 meeting went well and appreciated the state representatives’ involvement.

“We believe we have identified some short- and long-term opportunities to improve not only the 47th Street corridor, but Ogden Avenue and La Grange Road as well,” Asperger said.

La Grange resident Jackie Clifton said a newly-formed citizen group will monitor the progress of officials in rectifying safety issues on 47th Street.

As for the meeting with IDOT, Clifton was pleased but guarded.

“I think everyone is quite pleased to know they are making an effort to move forward,” she said. “However, we’re not really sure what the outcome was.”

She added the group planned to meet following the Monday, June 22, Village Board meeting “to hash over what they hear.”

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