

San Antonio Express-News

Community group and parishioners celebrate changes at controversial intersection in Helotes

By Vincent T. Davis - Oct. 22, 2020

After several accidents, the intersection at FM 1560 and Riggs Road on the far Northwest Side became known to Helotes residents as a “death curve.”

The elevated road had a poorly designed curb and a cement wall that created a blind spot, causing several car accidents, area residents said.

Catherine McCoy, a parishioner at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Helotes and a member of **Communities Organized for Public Service (COPS)**, said it seemed clear it was just a matter of time before crosses and memorial wreaths would be erected to mark someone’s untimely death.

It took more than a year of lobbying by church and COPS members to convince the Texas Department of Transportation to fix it.

On Wednesday afternoon, several community members and parishioners celebrated the changes.

The group fought for upgrades at the intersection that included the removal of the concrete wall and installation of a new state-of-the-art open steel guard rail. Recently, parishioners and residents removed overgrown foliage and vegetation to further improve the safety of the intersection.

McCoy said the changes came about thanks to help from elected officials and the ongoing campaign by COPS and the residents.



Catherine McCoy (center) addresses the media at the intersection of FM 1560 and Riggs Road in Helotes on Wednesday, Oct. 21, 2020. Area residents worked together with the help of **COPS/Metro Alliance** to get the Texas Department of Transportation to remove a cement barrier that blocked some drivers’ line of sight and replace it with an open Photo: Kin Man Hui

“That’s where we are as a community when we stand together,” McCoy said. “When there is a will, there is a way.”

Steve Mendoza, also a parishioner and COPS member, said the alliance group became involved after parishioners asked for help to correct the situation.

The group set up a meeting in June 2019 at Our Lady of Guadalupe, where more than 200 angry-but-polite residents voiced their concerns to TxDOT engineers. Residents worried about southbound traffic on Riggs Road, where the elementary school and church are located, that flowed onto a busy FM 1560 aided by a single stop.

McCoy said after the meeting, the group kept talking to TxDOT through emails, conference calls and face-to-face meetings about line-of-sight distance issues at the intersection.

For its part, highway officials in the San Antonio district office said they encourage community engagement, especially when it comes to safety and improved mobility.

“The recent collaboration with the City of Helotes and COPS/Metro is just one example of our continued effort to promote open dialogue with all stakeholders, including community groups and the general public,” a TxDOT spokeswoman said.

Construction at the site began in June and was completed in August.

At a news conference Wednesday, McCoy thanked state Sen. Pete Flores, R-Pleasanton; state Rep. Philip Cortez, D-San Antonio; and County Commissioner Justin Rodriguez.

And she thanked TxDOT and regional director Mario Jorge for accelerating the corrective measures.

“They did the right thing for the community,” McCoy said. “It’s done and that’s all that matters.”

Ninfa Molina said now she will be able to drive from Our Lady of Guadalupe on Riggs Road without any problem. Molina said she can pull up to the stop sign, look to her left, see traffic and proceed safely home.

She said the changes were the result of unity and communication.

“That’s what it’s all about,” Molina said. “To unite, join forces and say it’s not working, let’s see what is the best solution to this problem.”