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Berrien Health Board Asks For Safer, Healthier Napier Avenue

andrewwsjm Reporting

The Berrien County Board of Health wants to see a safer and healthier Napier Avenue. Last week, it sent a letter to the Twin Cities Area Transportation Study Policy Committee asking for the road to be made into a “Complete Street,” with sidewalks, crosswalks, and other amenities when it’s repaved in 2019 and 2020. Health Department spokesperson Gillian Conrad says such features are needed for those who don’t drive.

“We have done some studies regarding the residents in that corridor, and we know that 30% of residents in that area do not own a vehicle,” Conrad told WSJM. “So, we do have a percentage of the population relying on non-motorized transport.”

Conrad says having sidewalks on Napier Avenue would be both a health and a safety benefit. TwinCATS is now taking public comment on its 2017-2020 roads plan. Included in it is the repaving of Napier in two phases. Southwest Michigan Planning Commission Associate Planner Gautam Mani says TwinCAT members are well aware of the concerns involving the road, but have concerns of their own.

“The townships have very valid concerns about the costs of maintenance, and they’re also concerned about property ownership along that corridor and how much right of way would need to be purchased, Mani told WSJM.”

Still, Mani says the installation of sidewalks on Napier Avenue could become part of the plan. The 14 members of the TwinCATS committee will vote on it June 20. Currently, the plan calls for Napier to be repaved from the St. Joseph River to just short of Colfax in 2019. In 2020, the road would be repaved from I-94 to just short of M-139. The total cost of the projects would be \$984,000, all paid for with federal funds.

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