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RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY PART 3 SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND

Tulare County's Resource Management Agency (RMA) is responsible for ensuring that streets are properly marked for school safety in outlying rural areas of the county. Generally, signs are posted along the streets notifying motorists that a school zone is being approached. Often, signs and crosswalks are painted in the street to reinforce the fact that a school zone is present, and to provide safe access to and from school for the County's youth.

REASONS FOR INVESTIGATION

The 2010-2011 Tulare County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) investigated school street/road signage in areas adjacent to rural schools in order to determine that safe passage is available to Tulare County youth to and from schools.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED

1. Interviewed relevant witnesses
2. Visited rural school sites
3. Reviewed relevant documents

FINDINGS

1. There are over 40 rural schools in the County of Tulare, i.e., schools that are located in School Districts with three or less schools in the District. Unlike schools located in cities or smaller communities where street maintenance is taken care of by city streets or public works departments, street signage for rural schools is overseen by RMA.
2. In school zones, signs are usually painted on the street asphalt saying "SLOW SCHOOL XING". In the rural areas, 74% of schools had these signs painted on the street surface. Of those schools, 75% of the signage was degraded.
3. Crosswalks painted on the street are needed for safe passage of students to and from schools. 79% of the rural schools have crosswalks painted at the school, or at the intersection nearest to the school. Of the schools that have crosswalks, 57% of them are degraded.
4. Only 55% of the schools have a sign for pedestrian and/or school children crossing (universal symbol of a woman with a child and a crosswalk).
5. Stop signs are needed at times near schools, especially at intersections when

the children are crossing crosswalks to and from school; however 42% have no stop signs.

6. Traffic signals are not warranted at most rural schools. Traffic signals that stop traffic when no children are present are costly and unnecessarily slow traffic. There is only one rural school (Liberty Elementary) that has a traffic signal adjacent to the school.
7. There are no lighted crosswalks or lighted stop signs at any of the rural schools.
8. Speed limits are 25 miles per hour when children are present. This speed limit is mandatory in all "school zones". Not all schools have needed signage. Signs are not reflective and visibility is sometimes limited in rural areas due to adverse weather conditions. 24% of rural schools are not posted with school zone speed limit signage.
9. Schools are generally posted with a school zone sign (universal symbol of a mother walking with a child). 21% of the rural schools are not posted with the "School Zone" sign or symbol. A majority of the signs that are posted are the older style sign which is not reflective.

CONCLUSION

Signage is lacking at most of the rural schools. This includes stop signs, signs painted on the street, posted signage and crosswalks. Maintenance of existing signage is sometimes lacking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. RMA paint "SLOW SCHOOL XING" on the streets that currently don't have this signage and repaint signage that is old and faded.
2. Paint crosswalks at or near all schools. Specifically, install a crosswalk at Carl Smith Middle School at the eastern corner of the school. Repaint the crosswalks that are old and faded.
3. Install lighted crosswalks at streets where traffic is heavy or the speed of traffic is higher.
4. Post pedestrian and/or school children crossing signs at all rural schools.
5. Post reflective speed limit signs at all rural schools where they do not currently exist.
6. Post reflective school zone signs at all rural schools where they do not currently exist.
7. Install stop signs at street intersections abutting schools.

REQUIRED RESPONSES

Tulare County Board of Supervisors

Tulare County Chief Administrative Officer

Director, Tulare County Resource Management Agency

**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AGENCY
PART 4
COUNTY LEASED AND OWNED BUILDINGS**

BACKGROUND

Departments of the County of Tulare offer programs and services from buildings throughout the County that are either leased or owned by the County. These buildings are located within 12 geographical locations (cities and small communities). Most of the leased buildings are owned by private individuals, corporations, partnerships or family trusts.

REASONS FOR INVESTIGATION

The 2010-2011 Tulare County Grand Jury (Grand Jury) investigated the owned or leased buildings of the County of Tulare for the following reasons:

1. Leases often are an expensive fixed expense for any organization. This is especially true for the County of Tulare who is faced with continuing severe budget constraints.
2. The Grand Jury elected to explore the costs, uses and ownership details for the buildings leased and owned by County agencies.

PROCEDURES FOLLOWED

1. Interviewed relevant witnesses
2. Visited all County leased and owned buildings in Tulare County from a County provided list
3. Reviewed relevant lease documents
4. Researched available ownership information from the County Assessor's Office

FINDINGS

1. According to the County's list, there are 56 buildings leased and 22 owned by the County. The list as it is currently compiled is not complete. Some of the buildings are missing from the County's list. For instance, the Sheriff/Coroner building located at 1205 N. "O" Street, Tulare and facilities owned near Sequoia Field are not on the current list.
2. Some of the rents for leased buildings are extremely favorable to the County of Tulare. For example, the Strathmore, Woodlake and Traver Sheriff Auxiliary buildings located respectively at 19628 Orange Belt Drive, Strathmore; 20389 Avenue 360, Woodlake; and 4075 Merritt Drive, Traver are leased at no cost to the Sheriff's Department and/or County of Tulare because of the benefit to the