



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact: Town of Oak Ridge  
Ashley Royal, Deputy Clerk/Public Information Officer  
(336) 644-7009

### **Towns of Oak Ridge and Stokesdale Address Safety on Haw River Road**

Following the tragic death of 14-year-old Aliyah Thornhill in a crash on Haw River Road on October 31, 2022, leaders in Oak Ridge and Stokesdale have now received NCDOT's expedited accident report and analysis of road conditions and traffic. They are grateful for NCDOT's efforts, and for the concern and sympathy the agency has shown for Aliyah's family. Both towns, together with residents across Guilford County, share these concerns, and are now prepared to move forward with safety improvements.

#### Accident Investigation

NCDOT's investigation noted wet and foggy weather conditions on the night of the accident but concluded that speed was not a contributing factor. Although 11-year-old Noah Chambers also died tragically in 2019 on Haw River Road, NCDOT stated that the circumstances of the two accidents were very different. They also noted that historic data for the area did not reveal any unusual accident patterns on the road.

#### Results of NCDOT Analysis

NCDOT's speed and traffic analyses revealed that higher speeds are most prevalent in the largely non-residential areas west of Linville Road. As they continue east, drivers typically slow an average 45 mph as they approach the more residential areas of the road. Since the 45-mph speed limit is already below the NCDOT's recommended speed of 50 mph for this road – which is 3.65 miles long and spans two counties – the agency does not believe a lower speed limit is warranted.

#### Towns Take Steps to Increase Safety

Understanding that residents of Oak Ridge and Stokesdale remain interested in increasing safety on Haw River Road, NCDOT recommended other strategies to slow traffic. In

response, The Oak Ridge Town Council approved the placement of a permanent digital radar sign on Haw River Road at their February 2 meeting. “The radar sign will be placed east of Linville Road to help slow drivers as they approach the more residential portions of the road,” explained Oak Ridge Mayor Ann Schneider, adding that the project could serve as a pilot for adding similar signs on key roads. Oak Ridge has also alerted the Guilford County Sheriff’s Department of speeding problems on Haw River Road.

On the eastern portion, near Highway 68, Haw River Road crosses several residential streets within the town of Stokesdale, where local leaders have approved the placement of NCDOT-provided pedestrian warning signs. “We hope that adding these signs will help alert drivers to pedestrians and cyclists in the area,” said Stokesdale Mayor Mike Crawford. Unfortunately, lighted pedestrian crosswalks are not possible in this area without sidewalks and full compliance with ADA guidelines.

Both Oak Ridge and Stokesdale will also investigate pedestrian safety awareness programs for residents, with input from NCDOT and Guilford County, together with other strategies for improving safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles.

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