

## Solar-powered signs curb speeders

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In the seemingly constant effort to get Marin motorists to lay off the gas pedal, county officials believe they have found a new "green" weapon - solar-powered radar signs. In their first year on county streets, the signs are getting credit for making motorists slow down when wheeling through local neighborhoods.

A report to county supervisors says the signs are curbing speeds by 3 to 6 mph. The most significant effect has been on East Strawberry Drive, where traffic has slowed by 6 mph, from 33 mph to 27 mph, in the 25-mph zone.



Solar-powered radar signs monitor the speed of passing motorists in the 300 block of East Strawberry Drive in Tiburon. While many drivers along that route are still speeding, authorities say speeds have dropped by 6 mph. (IJ photo/Frankie Frost)

The sign is posted along a narrow and curving stretch of the residential street. Despite the 25 mph painted on the street and the 25 mph sign about 75 yards before the sun radar sign, 85 percent of motorists are still exceeding the speed limit.

But thanks to the radar sign, they are only going 2 mph faster than the posted speed limit. The sign picks up cars about 75 yards away and posts the speed they are traveling on an electronic reader board. Below the board is a 25 mph sign to remind them of the legal limit.

As part of the county's pilot program, the radar signs were put up at four other locations:

- Kent Avenue in Kentfield, where speeds dropped about 5 mph.
- Loring Avenue in Mill Valley, where speeds dropped about 5 mph.
- Alameda de la Loma in Novato, where speeds dropped from 31 mph to 28 mph.
- Sir Francis Drake Boulevard in Inverness, where 2003 traffic counts showed most people traveling at 29 mph. After the sign was posted, those speeds dropped to an average of 26 mph.

Saaid Fakharzadeh, the county's assistant public works director, told supervisors that the Strawberry sign "has been very effective in reducing speed and the feedback from affected residents has been very positive."

East Strawberry Drive resident James Doody said he's seen a difference. Cars hit his stretch of road after passing the sign and they are moving slower than they used to, he said. "I think it has had an effect," he said. "You can't help but see it. And when you see it, you react."

On Monday morning, motorists slowed after getting an initial reading of the speed they were traveling. After passing the sign, which was planted just uphill from Island Drive, cars were moving at less than 25 mph.

Another longtime resident, Martin Yungle, agreed with Doody, but added that it has mostly helped slow down traffic during the day. "These things have generated a lot of community support down in my district," said Supervisor Charles McGlashan, whose Southern Marin district includes Strawberry. "The more of these we can get hold of, the better."

He said he wants to post one on southbound East Strawberry, downhill along Loring and along Flamingo Road in Tamalpais Valley, where he has been getting complaints about speeding. "I need two on Flamingo," he said.

The county established a program for neighbors to petition the public works department for the signs. Top priority will be given to those streets where speeding is prevalent. Streets near schools are also a top priority.