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Law officials work together to make Route 125 safer for all

LEE — State and county law officials told area police earlier this week they were more than willing to lend a helping hand to address the increasing number of accidents occurring on a stretch of Calef Highway (Route 125).

Lee Police Chief Chet Murch told the 11 law officials attending the meeting that 53 accidents occurred in 2010 on the six mile portion of the road his department is most concerned with. With four months left in 2011, Lee police have already responded to 51 accidents on Calef Highway.

"Clearly we have a problem," said Murch.

Murch told the group that isn't the factor, and that aggressive and unattentive driving has been the cause of the majority of the incidents.

"I don't think we'll reduce to the number of cars on 125," said Murch, noting the area of Calef Highway south of Route 4 from the Lee Traffic Circle sees around 19,000 motorists each day. "But maybe we can make (drivers) a little more aware."

Murch said he has spoken with representatives of the state's highway safety department to see if purchasing overhead signs are an option, but noted it all depends on the amount of money his department would be able to obtain to pay for such an expense.

"If grant money is available from public safety, we'll apply for it," he said. "Other than that, we're up for any option right now."

State Police Capt. Chris Aucoin told Murch his department had the support of state police.

"We'll try to give you what you need," said Aucoin.

Aucoin suggested the use of the state's Department of Transportation sign boards that display messages to motorists. He said Murch's department could use the Traffic Management Center, which controls the message boards, to put up any phrase they want.

Lt. Gary Wood said placement of such signs has helped bring back the attention of drivers to the roadway in other areas of the state.

"We're also willing to bring in cruisers for whatever day and time you'd like," Aucoin told Murch.

Wood suggested the use of rumble strips along the center lines of the road. The lieutenant told Murch that if he is able to decide if the installation of signs and rumble strips is financially attainable, he would provide area officials with extra patrol enforcement from the state police during morning and afternoon commuting times.

Capt. Joseph DiGregorio of the Strafford County Sheriff's Department said he could have deputies who are not overloaded with transporting duties park at the Lee USA Speedway to monitor motorists.

"By having them park on the main road people passing by may flash their lights to warn other drivers," said DiGregorio. "That might help get their attention."

Murch welcomed the presence of both the county patrolmen and state troopers.

Murch said he has been contacted by a number of area residents who have pointed out a lack of speed limit signs along Route 125. Though he mentioned that speed has not been a factor in the majority of the accidents reported, he said he will have an official count of the number of signs and look into posting more.

After nearly an hour of brainstorming, all officials agreed they are going to work together in a collaborative effort to reduce the amount of accidents occurring along Calef Highway.
