

Accident spurs crosswalk signal

Kinard parents fear for students' safety

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A recent accident outside Fossil Ridge High School and Kinard Junior High School has parents of students concerned for their children's safety.

On Monday, a Fossil Ridge student sustained minor injuries when a vehicle collided with her bicycle at the corner of Rock Creek Drive and Ziegler Road. Although speed was not a factor in the accident, parents and school officials worry

that it might be next time.

The new school building, which opened to students in August, sits near the intersection of Ziegler and Kechter roads, both of which have speed limits of 40 mph for traffic passing the school. Although a beacon was recently put at the crosswalk across Ziegler Road, there is no light to stop traffic to allow students to cross, and there is no 20-mph school zone around the school. However, there is a button-activated pedestrian

crossing signal and a school zone for Zach Elementary School, which is across Kechter Road from Fossil Ridge.

This is why Todd and Christine Galbate are uneasy about letting their 12-year-old daughter walk to her classes at Kinard, despite the fact they live within walking distance. The Galbates also have a 6-year-old daughter at Zach.

"We don't let our daughters walk to school because there is construction, and

it's 40 mph between the subdivision and Fossil Ridge," Todd Galbate said. "The roads are really wide with the bike lanes and turn lanes. It's quite a run for a kid or to start a bike up from zero and pedal across the street."

Kathy Schmidtke, who has a 15-year-old daughter at Fossil Ridge, said she drives other students home so they don't have to cross the street.

"There's no crosswalk for See CROSSWALK/Page B7



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BOTH WAYS: Hunter Hoburg, left, and Tim Burton, both seventh-graders at Kinard Junior High School, look for oncoming traffic as they cross Ziegler Road at Rock Creek Drive after school. A traffic signal is being installed at the intersection.

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the kids," Schmidtke said. "It's like dodgeball for them to get across the street."

Schmidtke said she was surprised that Monday's accident was the first of its kind at the school.

"I'm surprised it was this long before an accident happened," she said. "Thank God there were only minor injuries."

A traffic signal is being installed at the corner of Rock Creek Drive and Ziegler Road and should be complete in a few weeks, said Erik Bracke, traffic engineer with the city of Fort Collins.

But parents such as Galbate and

Schmidtke say this move comes late.

"This is six months too late," Schmidtke said. "It should have been done when school started."

Although Galbate said he thought the signal should have been installed before the school opened, he said it is a step in the right direction.

He added he would like to see a similar crossing put on the south side of the school to allow students to cross Kechter.

"It (an accident) is going to happen there too," he said. "It's just as busy with nowhere to cross."

Bracke said the decision to put a signal at that intersection, which

was made in the fall, was not made earlier because the intersection did not meet the traffic requirements.

"We knew it would eventually have to be signalized," he said. "But not this soon. We were completely unaware of the junior high school."

As far as a school zone outside the school, Bracke said that is only done for elementary schools.

"High school and junior high school students have the wherewithal to walk along the sidewalk," he said.

Mark Hartshorne, principal at Fossil Ridge, said he shares the parents' worries about their chil-

dren being able to get to school safely.

"This is an area of great concern for me," Hartshorne said. "I'm very concerned about the amount of traffic on Ziegler."

Hartshorne said he hopes the signal will make it safer for students to get to school, but he said faculty and staff also urge the students to take their safety into their own hands.

"We dialogue about this quite a bit," he said. "We urge everyone to exercise caution and safety and hope that all drivers, bicyclers and walkers exercise caution and discretion. It's important that we all do that."