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Bus loading zone to move at Breckenridge EMS

By Carrie McDermott • Daily News carriem@wahpetondailynews.com

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Youngsters ran up the street to a waiting vehicle while buses lined up on the north side of Beede Avenue. The bus loading zone moved beginning Monday, Jan. 9, to help alleviate the busy vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

Carrie McDermott

Beginning Monday, Jan. 9 Breckenridge Elementary-Middle School will change the bus loading and unloading zone due to recent regulations brought to the school's attention through the Safe Routes to School grant.

Administrators have sent out emails and letters to parents about the upcoming change, as well as a map of the school property and new areas that will allow or not allow parking.

Currently the buses load and unload in front of the school on Beede Avenue. Starting Monday, the bus loading zone will move to Eighth Street North, along the school's west side, and around the corner to the north along Hall Avenue. Parents picking students will need to pick up from door 2 at the front office, rather than door 3. Doors 3 and 4 will be used for students taking the bus home after school.

Up until now, parents have been using the semi-circle driveway to drop off children in the morning in front of the school, and combined with the bus zone on Beede Avenue and children being dropped off and picked up from vehicles parked along Beede Avenue, it means students are crossing traffic and having to cut between buses, then cutting across drivers in the semi-circle driveway, just to get to the school building.

Superintendent Diane Cordes said the change will be on a trial basis.

"We want to make sure it's the right solution," she said, noting that additional staff will be on hand to direct students to where they need to go after school.

"We've had issues with not only the number of students trying to cross the street where the buses are to get to mom and dad's car, but buses were also blocking the semi-circle drive. That should not be blocked, it needs to be kept clear for emergencies," she said.

In the past, the school has used volunteers to help as crossing guards, which helped but lately the school has been challenged with getting volunteers to assist.

"It raises our level of concern," she said. "Cars can get stuck in that semi-circle drive, waiting for the buses to clear, and some drivers are making bad choices including driving across the sidewalk."

School Principal Corinna Erickson said discussions about student safety around the school buses began over a year ago when construction work started on the building.

"We wanted to do something to help alleviate the crossing of the students between the buses, to prevent something from happening," Erickson said. "We're looking for different ideas and options to separate vehicle and bus traffic."

If the administration determines the change to be a safer solution, they would work with law enforcement and the city to allow parking in front of Beede Avenue, but for now it will remain a no parking zone.

Breckenridge Police Chief Kris Karlgaard said the current bus loading zone at the school, as well as the semi-circle drive, is not the best situation at the elementary-middle school. He's met with the school about their concerns, and says law enforcement will assist with their new plan.

"I've observed buses parking too close to sidewalks. It's a 20 mph school zone, but it's still too fast. Drivers won't have any reaction time, especially if they're driving westbound on Beede Avenue," he said.

He's also witnessed drivers stopping in the middle of Beede Avenue to let their children out, who then cross in front of traffic and buses to get to school.

The police department will put up temporary No Parking signs in the 500 block of Eighth Avenue and around the north to Hall Avenue, where the buses will be doing pick ups and drop-offs beginning next week.

The semi-circle driveway is considered private property, and law enforcement does not have the authority to ticket there, even though he's seen drivers leave their vehicles in that driveway, which is not allowed. There are a limited number of parking spaces along the driveway.

"We're asking for the public's assistance," he said. "I don't have the authority to change city ordinance or law. We don't have the authority to ticket for a temporary measure designed to figure out the best possible way to keep kids safe."

Karlgaard cited the law regarding parking, which states that it is illegal to park within 20 feet of a crosswalk at an intersection, which is applicable to both crosswalks at the school, and it's also illegal to park in front of a public or private driveway.

"The school has a plan and we will assist as we can," he added.

For questions or more information, contact the Breckenridge Elementary-Middle School.

More Information

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