

**By PATRICK HALL**

*The Wilson Post*

To try and alleviate traffic in the morning at the new Lebanon High School, Wilson County Schools officials are expected to make a request to the Lebanon Planning Commission that would allow parent drop-off traffic to exit onto Hickory Ridge Road.

“We have a little congestion problem on South Hartmann Drive in the morning and my request is to allow parents to exit through the back exit,” said Wilson County Director of Schools Mike Davis.

Davis said a rear exit onto Hickory Ridge Road could be used for parents to exit, turn left onto Hickory Ridge, and allow traffic to flow easier on campus. He said the exit onto Hickory Ridge would be used as a “trial solution” from Oct. 15 through Jan. 1, 2013.

Lebanon Commissioner of Public Works Jeff Baines said that exit was initially approved for emergency use only and noted the major issue is reducing traffic jams on South Hartmann for safety reasons.

“We’re talking about the safety of people backed up on Hartmann Drive,” Baines said.

Davis said the Hickory Ridge exit would be opened to parents dropping students off in the morning only from 7:20 to 7:45 a.m. Baines noted the proposal would only allow parents to exit onto Hickory Ridge Road and turn left, going away from South Hartmann.

The Hickory Ridge exit presently is locked at all times and is only used for emergency vehicles.

“I don’t want that back gate open all day,” Davis said. “We just have a lot more drop-off traffic at Lebanon than at any other high school.”

Davis also said the school system would like to modify Blue Devil Boulevard, off South Hartmann, providing two full entering and two full exiting lanes.

Baines said that would require only some restriping work and altering the timing of the traffic signal at Blue Devil Boulevard and Hartmann. He said adding two lanes to the entering traffic would make a huge difference in getting congestion off Hartmann Drive.

With the requested modification to Blue Devil Boulevard, Davis said traffic would flow easier onto the campus and not back up as much on South Hartmann Drive. After the school’s traffic was under major scrutiny during the first few weeks of school, officials had several traffic studies done and the city requested something be done to solve the problem.

“We’ve had traffic studies done and had traffic engineers look at it,” Davis said.

Lebanon Police Chief Scott Bowen, who has voiced concerns about using the Hickory Ridge exit in the past, said he still has concerns about the use of that exit. In the first weeks of school, the back gate was opened one afternoon and Bowen criticized school officials for using the back exit.

“I still have concerns about it,” Bowen said. “This doesn’t help traffic getting into the school, and I don’t know how many cars it’ll put on (Hickory Ridge).”

Davis said a crossing guard would have to be stationed at the back exit to direct traffic and make sure no one enters through that gate.

## **Schools ask for temporary exit onto Hickory Ridge Road from LHS**

Thursday, October 4, 2012

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The Planning Commission will hold a special called meeting at 4 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 9, to discuss the matter, and Baines said traffic engineers will relay detailed findings of traffic studies to the panel. He also said he distributed more than 100 memorandums to residents on Hickory Ridge Road and surrounding neighborhoods about the school system's request.

"I would hope people can attend the meeting and listen to the proposal and the findings with an open mind and if they have concerns, to voice those concerns," Baines said. "But we've got a school there now, and we've got to do what is best for the safety of everyone involved."

Planners will meet in the Town Meeting Hall of the Lebanon Administration Building located at 200 N. Castle Heights Ave. in Lebanon.

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