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## LOCAL

# Cops not the answer to problematic intersection

*Roundabout might cost \$1.5 million*

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West Lake Hills City Council members still don't know what to do about traffic congestion at the four-way stop sign intersection of Redbud Trail and Westlake Drive, but they're pretty certain the answer isn't a traffic cop.

During the Dec. 9 council meeting, graduate engineering students from the University of Texas presented their findings for how many cars were moved through the intersection during the two-week period where West Lake Hills police officers, in partnership with Sunset Valley and Travis County Sheriff's officers, directed traffic.

Students Manar Hasan, Benjamin Loeb and Priyadarshan Patil showed the council and attendees an aerial photo of the intersection with red, yellow and green lines to indicate which directions of traffic worsened, stayed the same or improved, respectively. Mostly, the lines were red.

"The only turn that experienced decreased traffic was going down Redbud turning right onto Westlake, which already had very low volumes," Hasan said, pulling up the results of a resident survey. "People thought that things got much worse for the most part. Our conclusions were the traffic officer was not an effective measure, and we wouldn't recommend continued use of the traffic officer."

Police Chief Scott Gerdes said that placing an officer at the intersection during rush hour from 4:30-6:30 p.m. also presented staffing challenges and safety hazards.

"Honestly, I think it's way too dangerous even if they have the best training," Gerdes said. "It's a dangerous intersection; fortunately, we don't have a whole lot of car crashes there,

but if you stand out there for two hours as the afternoon traffic is coming and going, there's no place to stand, no place to sit and evaluate where the lines are. You've got to keep walking ... it's just asking for an injured officer."

Though the council has batted around the idea of turning the intersection into a traffic circle to help the flow of traffic, such extensive improvements would cost approximately \$1.5 million, city staff said.

"It makes no sense to me to spend \$1.5 million on a solution that may or may not work the way we want," said Linda Anthony, who was sworn in as mayor at the end of the meeting. "It's not just money, it's environment."

Some suggested working with the Texas Department of Transportation to garner funding to widen lanes leading to the intersection, but the council tabled the item for further discussion.