



# Illinois Department of Transportation

Division of Highways/Region One / District One  
201 West Center Court/Schaumburg, Illinois 60196-1096

November 16, 2010

Ms. Phoebe Raymond  
Board President  
Sunset School District 29  
525 Sunset Ridge Road  
Northfield, IL 60093

Dear Ms. Raymond:

Thank you for your letter dated June 24, 2010 regarding school zones along Willow Road in Northfield. In response to your request, the Department's Bureau of Traffic performed a field inspection of the existing conditions along Willow Road through Northfield in early July 2010. We would like to begin with their review of existing conditions along Willow Road, which can be summarized as follows:

- There are two school crossings of Willow Road within Northfield at the signalized intersections of Sunset Ridge and Wagner Roads. Both intersections have pedestrian crossings on the south and east legs with pedestrian push buttons.
- A red light running camera was installed at the Wagner Rd intersection in 2009.
- The existing sidewalks along Willow Road are offset from the roadway and separated by a grass parkway.
- The schools along Willow Road have a fence barrier separating children from Willow Road.
- The pavement markings along Willow Road are in compliance with current standards and are in excellent condition.

During the field inspection, it was observed and noted that several signs related to the school crossings had not been upgraded to meet current policy. As a result, new signage along Willow Road was installed during the month of July to meet the current signing policy at both of the school crossings. The system of advance warning and school crossing signs are now fully in compliance with current standards, as shown on the attached exhibits.

Your letter specifically requested that a reduced school speed zone of 20mph be provided along Willow Rd. School speed zones are intended to be placed at locations where school crossings are not protected by devices such as stop signs or traffic signals. In locations where pedestrians must cross a roadway without assistance, school speed zones are provided at a distance of 200 feet

on either side of a crosswalk. School speed zones are enforceable between the hours of 7 a.m. and 4 p.m., only when school children are present.

On the basis of the existing conditions along Willow Road, including the stop light controlled crossings, fenced off school properties, and offset of the sidewalk away from Willow Road, a 20 mph zone is not warranted. As noted above, 20 mph zones are considered where the types of safety features in Northfield are not present. With a signalized crossing at both school crossings on Willow Road, vehicles are required to come to a complete stop. These existing features, combined with the Village's use of police officers as crossing guards, have undoubtedly contributed to the excellent safety record with respect to school children crossing at these two locations.

The Village also noted that a 20 mph school zone speed limit would serve as a deterrent to speeding motorists. Enforcement may still serve as a deterrent even if this portion of Willow Road does not carry the school speed limit designation. Local police may choose to have a lower tolerance for violations within this area, which could influence motorist behavior.

The State highway system in the six county metropolitan Chicago area includes 660 school crossings spread over 2,800 miles. Applying policies in a uniform manner is very important as it promotes appropriate and uniform behavior on the part of motorists, pedestrians and bicyclists.

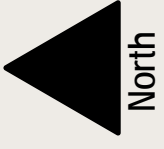
We will revisit the school speed zone issue as we begin to develop and evaluate potential solutions, and we will also identify other potential safety enhancements. We thank you for your continued participation in the planning process.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact me or Peter Harmet, Bureau Chief of Programming, at (847) 705-4393.

Very truly yours,

  
Diane M. O'Keefe, P.E.  
Deputy Director of Highways,  
Region One Engineer

cc: Mr. Fred Gougler, President, Northfield  
Mr. Bill Lustig, Chief of Police, Northfield



Sunset Ridge School

Sunset Ridge Road

St James the Less Episcopal Church

NO TURN ON RED  
ON SCHOOL DATES  
WHEN PROHIBITED BY  
A/C PRESENT



NO TURN ON RED  
ON SCHOOL DATES  
WHEN PROHIBITED BY  
A/C PRESENT

Fence



Willow Road

Whittier Lane



Lutheran Church of the Ascension



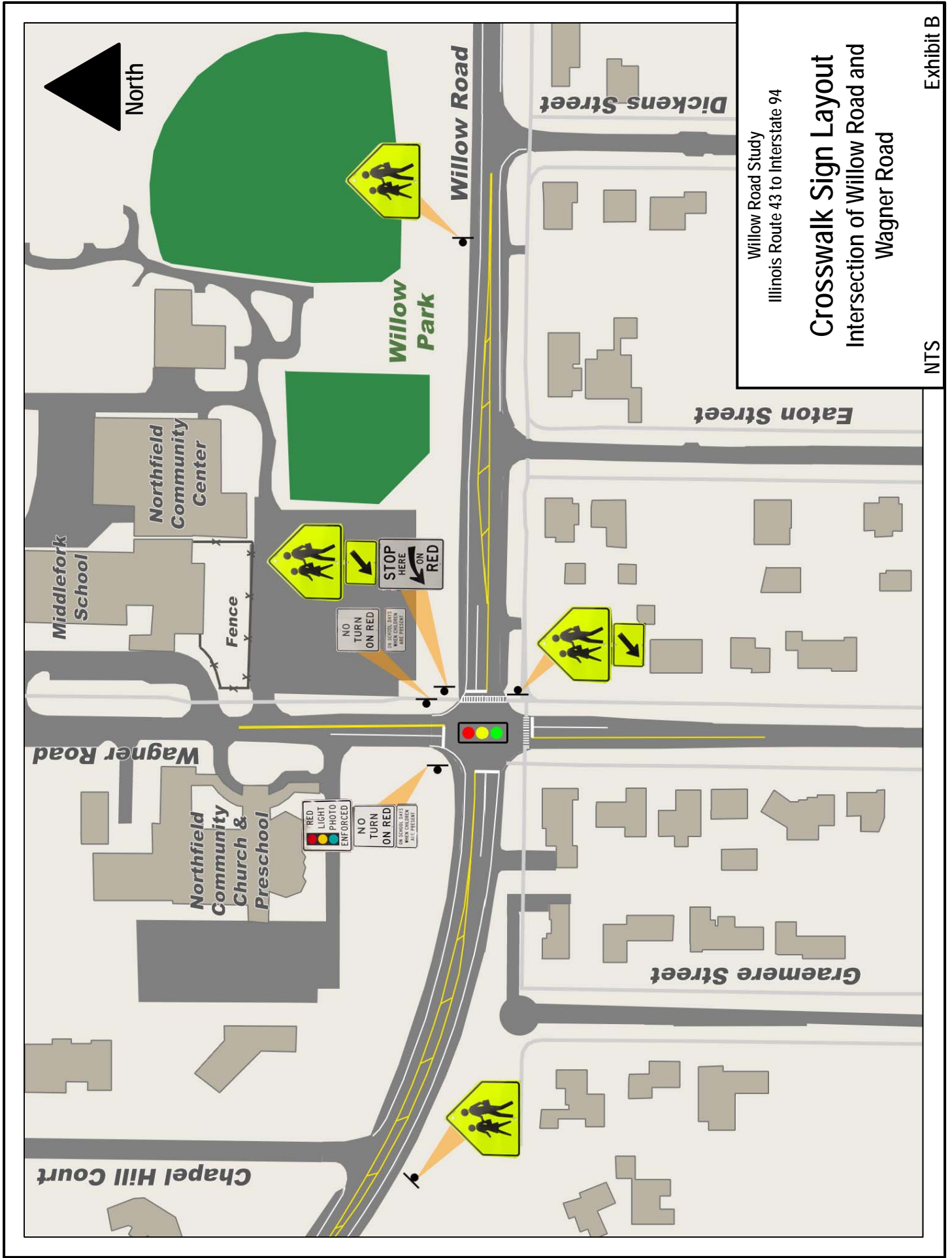
Willow Road Study  
Illinois Route 43 to Interstate 94

# Crosswalk Sign Layout

Intersection of Willow Road and  
Sunset Ridge Road

NTS

Exhibit A



Willow Road Study  
 Illinois Route 43 to Interstate 94

## Crosswalk Sign Layout

Intersection of Willow Road and  
 Wagner Road

NTS

Exhibit B



## SUNSET RIDGE SCHOOL DISTRICT 29

525 Sunset Ridge Road • Northfield, Illinois • 60093  
847 881 9400 • Fax: 847 446 6388 • [www.sunsetridge29.net](http://www.sunsetridge29.net)

*Cultivating a learning community that engages the hearts and minds of students, one child at a time*

June 24, 2010

Marie Glynn, P.E.  
Project Manager & Phase I Consultant  
Illinois Department of Transportation  
Bureau of Programming - District One  
201 West Center Court  
Schaumburg, Illinois 60196-1096

Dear Ms. Glynn,

Thank you for taking time on May 19 to visit Northfield and meet with local crossing guards, officers and school officials about our ongoing safety concerns along Willow Road. As you know, children's safety is our primary concern as IDOT begins to explore options for the widening of Willow Road.

We are deeply concerned about the lack of school zones on Willow Road. These fears were realized on April 14, when two IDOT workers surveying the road were struck and nearly killed by a driver distracted by his cell phone. The accident occurred at 2:30 pm, just as Middlefork Elementary School, which serves 201 elementary-age children, was letting out a half-mile down the road.

The 1.12-mile stretch of Willow Road that runs through Northfield houses three schools, as well as parks, churches and a community center. Local children attend school, play with their friends and ride their bikes along the route, and many must cross the road multiple times a day to get to school and other organized activities.

School zones create an important deterrent for irresponsible drivers, as they carry increased penalties for traffic violations. They force drivers to be more alert at intersections and require them to reduce their speed and hang up their cell phones. This would be an important first step for securing our children's safety.

Because the April 14 accident occurred in a work zone, the involved driver faced severe consequences. Had the accident occurred in front of the school, however, where there is currently no school zone, the penalties would have been milder, even if a child were struck.

BUREAU OF PROGRAMMING  
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Page 2

We believe IDOT can enhance children's safety by installing school zones on Willow Road, adjacent to Middlefork Elementary School, Sunset Ridge School and Northfield Community Nursery School, before Northfield School District 29 opens the coming school year on August 25, 2010.

With your cooperation on this important matter, we can work together to make the 2010-2011 school year the safest yet for our children.

Warm Regards,

Phoebe Raymond  
Board of Education President  
School District 29

Bill Lustig  
Chief of Police  
Northfield Police Department

Fred Gougler  
President  
Village of Northfield