

Esteemed Councilmembers,

My name is Guadalupe Barajas. I am a 17 year-old student at Fresno's School of Unlimited Learning ("SOUL"). I am currently enrolled in SOUL's street law class, where we are learning how to advocate for change in our community. Our class project involves advocating for the construction of a four-way stop at the intersection of Calaveras and N streets, the intersection nearest our school. We believe a four-way stop will make the intersection safer not only for students, but also for drivers, nearby businesses, and other pedestrians.

Putting up a stop sign will provide for the safety of people who walk, bike, skate, or drive near or at the intersection. These community members should be able to engage in these activities without fear of getting hit by a car. The case of Johanna Quinn demonstrates the danger faced by SOUL students at this intersection. Johanna was nearly hit by a car while crossing the intersection on the side that currently has no stop sign. She took precautions by looking both ways and making sure no cars were coming before she crossed. However, without warning, a car raced up to the intersection and nearly hit her. A stop sign would have given the driver an incentive to stop, or at least slow down, at which point he would have noticed that someone was crossing the intersection. Luckily, the driver was able to stop in time before tragedy struck. Johanna's story is representative of the experience many SOUL students have had while crossing the intersection.

We understand that installing a four-way stop is easier said than done and will cost money. We offer to work with the City to find ways to reduce that cost. For example, SOUL students can help with different stages of the process as a way of building jobs skills and helping the City at the same time. The point is, we do not simply want to ask for a four-way stop, we want to help make it happen.

One of the reasons why a four-way stop has not been installed for all these years is because the amount of traffic that passes through is not high enough. We were happy to learn recently that this is no longer the case and that the City has determined that a four-way stop is in order. Some may still feel there is not enough traffic to merit a four-way stop at Calaveras and N streets. As Johanna's story and the collective experience of the school indicate, no matter the number of cars that pass through, the intersection is dangerous and a four-way stop will help address that danger. From my personal experience, I can tell you that the lack of a four-way stop at the intersection poses a danger to people who live in the neighborhood and those that walk to the nearby park. Bottom line, neither students nor the community should have to fear crossing the street to get to class nor should they have to sprint across for fear that a car will zip by at any moment.

We really hope that the council takes into consideration our thoughts on the need for this four-way stop. We really believe that by doing this, you will make the school and community safer.