TO DETER DRUNK DRIVERS

City Eyes New Program

City officials are putting the final touches on a proposed program which they hope will help solve the drunk driving problem in Lafayette.

They will seek approval today from the City Council to apply for a Louisiana Highway Safety Commission grant to fund the program.

Drunk driving will be a major topic of discussion at the Council’s 5:15 p.m. meeting, since its agenda also indicates a vote will be taken on a controversial proposal which would force lounges to close from 2 a.m. to 6 a.m. and prohibit the sale of liquor at other businesses during those hours.

It tabled action on that suggested ordinance last week.

Al Thierry, the city’s director of Community Affairs, said the proposed drunk driving program would be similar to the old LATAP program, in which a special law enforcement task force patrolled the streets on the lookout for drunk drivers. A rehabilitation program for drunk drivers was also part of that program.

“There are monies available for this type of program,” Thierry said. “We’re putting together a proposal predicated on the results of the Intergovernmental Task Force on Drunk Driving.”

That task force made its recommendations last Wednesday night. It suggested several new laws, including a parishwide 2 a.m. closing law, as well as a program to help rehabilitate drunk drivers.

Thierry said the program city officials are working on is not a copy of the task force recommendations. It does, however, incorporate some of the task force propositions.

So far, lack of funding has kept a lid on the city’s project.

“We’re looking in the neighborhood of $100,000 for first year funding,” he said.

Thierry stressed that city officials must determine if such a program can be funded by the city after the three-year state funding runs out.

He expects a final report about the new program to be ready in about a week or two.