

Neighborhood Traffic Calming – Sunset Heights
June 9, 2015 @ 6PM
Community Activities Center, Westover Park

Introductions

In attendance were 12 neighborhood residents representing various streets, 3 staff members from the Public Works Department, Officer Westfall with the Police Department, and Len Van Wyk who is the southwest area member of the Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission. A Sign-in sheet for the individuals present is attached at the bottom of this summary.

How We Got Here

Public Works and Police Department staff provided background on the interactions between neighborhood residents and city staff, which included the following concerns and related follow-up actions:

- Speeding and cut-through traffic on S Dogwood Dr and other neighborhood streets
 - HPD has increased enforcement on neighborhood streets in recent months and has used its speed display to encourage slower speeds
 - The speed display will be installed again soon after this meeting. Enforcement will be increased as well, with lower speed tolerances being applied for both warnings and summonses.
 - Traffic signal timings and coordination are regularly updated to improve vehicle flow on S High St, which helps make it an attractive route and reduces the desire for neighborhood cut-through trips
 - Residents on various streets have participated in the Team Up to Slow Down program, which includes distribution of yard signs, bumper stickers, and pledge cards to encourage drivers to travel safely on neighborhood streets. More information on the program is available at: <http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/team-up-to-slow-down>
- Drivers passing stopped school buses on S Dogwood Dr
 - The initial complaint was received close to the end of the 2014-2015 school year. HPD will start up enforcement again when school starts in Fall 2015.
 - HPD cited drivers using video from the school bus camera

Discussion

Residents related their thoughts and concerns about traffic in the neighborhood, including hot spots for certain issues. The general topics discussed are summarized here:

- Mr. LaPira thanked HPD for their response and said it was notable, but said there is a limit to what the police can do. He said that the school bus passing and speeding issues are indicative of bigger problems, including how wide streets such as S Dogwood Dr and Chestnut Dr are and a lack of 4-way stops to discourage through traffic. The street does not feel like a slow neighborhood street, so the inclination is to drive fast. These characteristics create an invitation for cut-through traffic. He said that stop sign roll-through is common, as are zigzags to avoid stop signs.
- The bus passing issue seems worse this year with the new bus driver. The old driver would stop the bus sideways to prevent cars from passing. Can the other drivers do this?
 - Ofc. Westfall said he can ask about the legality and possibility of this
- Chestnut Dr/St Willow St

- Speeding and cut-through traffic are issues. Route seems popular for JMU students to access the rear entrance to Memorial Hall.
- Residents have seen drivers passing other drivers in areas without parked cars
- Speeds are high on S Willow St from Chestnut Dr to W Market St. Can chicanes/bulb outs be used? City staff said that such physical improvements could be considered as part of the neighborhood's traffic calming plan after enrollment in the program.
- S Dogwood Dr
 - Speeding and cut-through traffic are issues.
 - Residents have seen drivers passing other drivers between W Market St and Maryland Ave.
 - Would sidewalks make the street safer? City staff said that pedestrian travel would be safer, but sidewalks should not be expected to influence vehicle speeds.
 - Can a shared use path be put on S Dogwood Dr and the street width reduced? The group said this would be difficult and may require the street to be converted to one-way.
 - There is also "drag race" activity occurring at 2am-3am.
- JMU is a problem for neighborhood traffic issues, but there is also a lot of thru traffic traveling from W Market St to S High St
- S Willow St, Chestnut Dr, and Grace St intersection: people seem to misunderstand who has to stop
- Drivers make fast turns onto westbound Maryland Ave from S Dogwood Dr and Chestnut Dr
- Are there ways to make the existing stop signs more visible?
 - Stop bars (white street markings at the stop sign) could be added to do this. Public Works will make note of the locations without them and determine the availability of materials and funding.
- Toppin Blvd speeding
 - Some seem to think the street is a cut-through because the dead end sign is hard to see behind tree limbs
 - Public Works will evaluate the sign location and whether vegetation needs to be trimmed to improve its visibility
- Do GPS units and mapping websites lead people through the neighborhood? This could be contributing to cut-through traffic.
 - Residents have spotted vehicles turning around at the end of Maryland Ave and South Ave. Are there drawn as through streets anywhere? Public Works will look into this and request revisions to mapping companies if that is the case.

Next Steps

Public Works staff explained the process for joining the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. Residents would first need to submit a request to City Council for a formal traffic study. If approved, the traffic study would be completed and results would be reviewed to determine the neighborhood's eligibility for the program. Eligibility is determined by whether the locations studied exceed the minimum traffic volume requirements, 85th percentile speed threshold, and whether streets in the neighborhood have documented cut-through traffic. If the neighborhood is eligible for the program, then a petition with the signatures of 75% of the households in the neighborhood would need to be submitted to City Council to request enrollment. The neighborhood area would be developed after the traffic study is completed so that it reflects the core areas where traffic problems are present. The petition process ensures that there is majority neighborhood buy-in for traffic calming improvements

and is also a good way to reach out to people to request their participation in the process. Though physical measures such as speed humps can only be installed through enrollment in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program, solutions to issues that only require painting and signage can be considered now. Public Works and the Police Department will take the actions noted in this summary. More information on the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program is available at: <http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/neighborhood-traffic-calming-program>.

Residents completed the form to request a neighborhood-wide traffic study and worked with city staff to select 13 specific study locations. The study area is bounded by South Ave, Elmwood Dr, W Market St, and S High St. Residents requested that this study be completed in September 2015 after JMU has returned to regular session to catch the time when traffic is at its peak. The request form will be submitted soon for City Council review.

Traffic study results would be shared with the neighborhood representatives once they're ready. A follow-up meeting with the group would then be scheduled to discuss actions taken over the summer, the results of the study, definition of the neighborhood petition area, and next steps.



NEIGHBORHOOD TRAFFIC CALMING PROGRAM MEETING SIGN-IN SHEET

NEIGHBORHOOD NAME: Sunset Heights

DATE: 6/9/2015

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