



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY & ADVISORY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

TO: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen

FROM: Brad Reed, Transportation Planner

DATE: July 16, 2010

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from Thursday July 8, 2010 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Thursday July 8, 2010 at 9:00AM in Room 205 at the City Municipal Building, 345 S. Main St.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Chair), Drew Williams (Public Works), Thanh Dang (Public Works), Brad Reed (Public Works), Officer Greg Deeds (Police), Lee Eshelman (JMU), Len Van Wyk (citizen), Calvin Ferrell (citizen)

Guests Present included: Allen Stevens (Sheetz), Bob Lunger (Attorney for Sheetz), Frank Tamberrino (Chamber of Commerce)

Citizens are always provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move the agenda item to the beginning of the meeting when citizens attend Commission meetings to avoid detaining citizens for the entire meeting. However, any citizen is welcome to stay for the entire meeting.

Welcome

Old Business

1. Sheetz & Chamber of Commerce entrances on Vine St

Mr. Reed went over the history of this issue, explaining that the original request for safety improvements at the Sheetz entrance on Vine Street came from the Chamber of Commerce in 2006. Left turns into and out of the Sheetz property were cited as concerns due to poor visibility and heavy traffic. Mr. Reed went on to present 6 accident reports from the last year that were directly related to left turn safety issues at this location, relaying that some of the drivers

involved in the accidents specifically cited sight distance as being a strong contributor to the incident. Mr. Reed then presented a video recorded on May 13th between about 1 PM and 6 PM, explaining that he noted 35 incidents in the video that could be considered safety hazards, some of which were near accidents. The four most significant of these incidents were played for the commission and explained.

Mr. Blessing shared a personal observation that “everything that is shown on that video happens frequently”. Mr. Reed and Mr. Williams explained the suggestions by Public Works to physically restrict left turn movements using either a turning island at the Sheetz entrance to allow right turns in and out only or delineators on the double yellow lines of Vine Street. The turning island was cited as being the original and preferred option.

Mr. Tamberrino shared that the current Chamber administration understands that this is a continuing safety problem and explained that he would like to look into moving the Chamber entrance to the North to prevent safety issues related to left turns into and out of the Chamber’s parking lot.

Mr. Lunger spoke his appreciation for the dialogue on this matter and explained that Sheetz would like to explore other mitigating efforts that do not involve permanently restricting left turn access at their entrance. Mr. Lunger went on to present videographer recordings of the Sheetz entrance, collected from 8-8:15 AM and 5-5:15 PM, which he used to demonstrate that there didn’t appear to be any problems turning out of the Sheetz entrance. Mr Lunger and Mr. Stevens shared the following alternatives for mitigating the issue: convex mirror for left turns out of Sheetz to see NB traffic on Vine Street, signage and striping for internal circulation in Sheetz that encourages use of traffic signal instead of the entrance in questions, and time-of-day restrictions on left turns using signage on Vine Street and on Sheetz property.

Mr. Blessing asked why Sheetz would have a problem with installing a turning island. Mr. Lunger responded by explaining that the Sheetz store manager does not see a problem here and that Sheetz would prefer to retain full access whenever possible.

Mr. Reed countered that the records show 6 accidents in a one year period and that the video shows numerous safety issues within a single evening. He also explained that there are other access options for left turns, including the signalized, safe entrance.

Mr. Williams explained that the problem occurs all day long, not just at specific times of day, making a timed left turn restriction ineffective. Mr. Stevens mentioned that one of their locations in Front Royal is in the vicinity of a time-of-day restricted left turn sign.

Mr. Reed asked what Sheetz would be losing by making this change, to which no response was given.

Mr. Tamberrino expressed that the Chamber of Commerce has a good relationship with city staff and would like to compromise with an interim solution to restrict left turns without

physical barriers. He explained that the Chamber visitors do not have the same sight distance problem that the Sheetz visitors have and that convenient access to I-81 is important for their guests. Mr. Tamberrino went on to share that he has witnessed 3 accidents, all during evening rush hour, caused by driver impatience.

Mr. Blessing expressed concern that drivers will not pay attention to signs, especially if there is too much information on them. He went on to explain that there are no good, compact time periods to choose because the problem occurs most of the day. No left turn signage without times were suggested as a temporary solution.

Mr. Lunger agreed that the signage proposed would be a good temporary solution and requested that the city study its effectiveness and if the right in-right out only would result in drivers performing different unsafe maneuvers. Mr. Williams explained that the barrier design would need to be created such that motorists would be unable to turn left around the island.

More discussion was held about what Sheetz would be losing by this restricted access. Mr. Stevens explained that, given that Sheetz is a convenience store, any restriction of access is undesirable.

Mr. Blessing suggested that a sign be placed on Country Club Rd that directs traffic straight through the traffic signal, as much of the traffic turning left into Sheetz on Vine Street originates from right turners from Country Club Rd.

The Commission recommends that city staff draft options to resolve the issue, each of which will be tried on a temporary basis and analyzed by staff, to which acknowledgment from Sheetz and the Chamber of Commerce is requested. If there are no concerns, the final solution will be taken to City Council.

Mr. Blessing requested that Sheetz supply city staff with information on peak customer times.

2. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program - Old Town update

Ms. Dang informed the Commission that a survey has been distributed to the neighborhood via paper copies and a website. A neighborhood meeting is planned for late August. Mr. Williams mentioned that a couple of signage improvements have already been made, including the addition of speed limit signs on Franklin Street.

3. Request for additional street lighting on College Ave

Mr. Williams had no changes on this topic.

4. Request for crosswalk on east side of E Market St and Mason St intersection

Mr. Reed had no changes on this topic and reminded the Commission that it is being researched in tandem with the Old Town NTCP study.

5. Request for recommendation of the 2010 Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan

Mr. Williams requested that an endorsement letter for the plan be sent to Public Works.

New Business

6. Proposal for Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee

This topic was tabled until the next Commission meeting.

Other Business/ Announcements

7. Team Up to Slow Down Program

Mr. Williams shared the new signs for the program, to be placed in the yards of participating residents. Those wishing to display the signs do not need to be enrolled in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. Signs will be provided for a maximum period of three weeks at no cost to the participant. An additional display period can be requested after a short period following the previous lending period.

8. Chicago Ave Corridor Study

Mr. Williams explained that Public Works has contracted McCormick Taylor to complete a corridor study of Chicago Ave with project boundaries extending from Gay Street to Mt. Clinton Pike, including Mt. Clinton Pike from the West city limit to Virginia Av and Park Rd and Parkwood Dr. Roundabouts are being considered in this project at the intersections of Mt Clinton Pike, Chicago Ave, & Park Rd, Chicago Ave & Waterman, and Park Rd & Parkwood Dr. Mr. Williams explained that the project will also address the stormwater issues in this area as well as the bicycle community's requests for improvements

9. University Blvd & Driver Dr crosswalk

Ofc. Deeds requested that city staff look into the installation of a crosswalk at this location to enhance safety for pedestrians traveling to and from the arboretum. He explained that he has received requests for the crosswalk during patrols in this area and that the pedestrians are typically coming from the Stone Gate and Sunchase student housing developments.

Mr. Reed informed the Commission that Public Works has been searching for engineering warrants that can be used to determine the need for a crosswalk.

The Commission recommended that city staff look into this request.

Adjourn