



Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee
of the Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission
City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

TO: Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee Members

FROM: Jakob zumFelde, Public Works Planner

DATE: June 12, 2020

RE: Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee Meeting Summary for Monday, May 18, 2020

The Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee met on Monday, May 18, 2020 at 6:00pm using a GoToMeeting. The meeting was not held in person due to the state of emergency related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Subcommittee members attended by calling in using a phone or joining by audio/video on a computer. Information allowing members of the public to join by phone or computer was provided in the agenda, posted on the City website in the week prior to the meeting. During the meeting, members of the public were provided the opportunity to comment on the items discussed.

Attendees

Subcommittee members: Marci Frederick, Jenny Toth, Jessica Pyle, Ben Craig

Other attendees: Carl Kauffman, Lee Eshelman, Kyle Lawrence

Staff: Tom Hartman (Public Works), Erin Yancey (Public Works), Jakob zumFelde (Public Works)

Welcome

Mr. zumFelde opened the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves, so that all members knew who was on the call.

Business

1. Follow up items

- 2020 SMART SCALE applications

Ms. Yancey described the project being proposed to improve Port Republic Rd, including a new signal at Bradley Dr, restriction of left turns at the intersection with Hunters Rd, and a median between Bradley Dr and Devon Ln. Ms. Yancey said that this project is in addition to the other six SMART SCALE applications which were described in information provided when the March meeting was canceled.

- Wolfe St sidewalk improvements

Ms. Yancey explained the project planned for improving safety on the Wolfe St sidewalk adjacent to the Restless Moons Brewing parking lot. This effort is in response to concerns raised by the Subcommittee about the existing drop off from the sidewalk to the parking lot. The project will widen the sidewalk and add a handrail to address this concern. Public Works staff are prepared to complete the improvement, but are waiting on funding to be available, so the timeline for implementation is uncertain.

2. Chicago Ave & Waterman Drive Crosswalk

Mr. zumFelde provided a bit of background regarding the improvements proposed for this crosswalk, and then showed a diagram of the proposal and explained the benefits. The two primary changes are the addition of an island to reduce the crossing distance for people walking and biking, and a realignment of the path on the north side of Waterman Dr. Ms. Frederick said that the realignment addresses the concerns that she had about pedestrians having to look over their shoulder to look for vehicles making the turn onto Waterman Dr. Mr. Hartman indicated that with paving just having been completed at this intersection, maintenance funds can be used to complete this improvement in the near future.

3. Bike/Ped Efforts related to Covid-19

Mr. zumFelde showed a few slides regarding a proposed effort to improve Federal Street for people walking and biking. He noted that the 2014 Downtown Streetscape Plan proposed converting Federal Street to a one-way street and having a shared use path between Wolfe St and Newman Ave. He said the first block of this conversion will be completed soon. Additional improvements are not yet funded, but staff think that there is an opportunity to use cheaper, temporary, methods to improve Federal Street for people walking and biking during the pandemic. The changes proposed include closing Federal Street between Newman St and Water St so that it may only be used by bicycles and pedestrians, converting the block between Water St and Market St to one-way (southbound) and marking a 10' shared use path on the pavement, closing the turn lane on Water St that leads to Federal St, and adding a contra-flow bike lane on Federal St between Elizabeth St and Wolfe St.

Mr. Lawrence asked how the shared use path between Market and Elizabeth will be marked to indicate that bicycles are allowed, given that bicycles are not to be ridden on sidewalks downtown. Ms. Yancey and Mr. Hartman said that staff will need to determine appropriate signs to install to indicate this. Mr. Lawrence asked how temporary or permanent the improvements to the other blocks will be. Mr. Hartman indicated that the contra-flow bike lane would be permanent and that the other efforts would be re-evaluated at the end of the summer to determine whether it is valuable to keep them in place or whether they need to be removed.

Mr. zumFelde said that a second effort that Public Works is planning in response to Covid-19 is to install signs by the pedestrian push buttons on Main Street downtown to indicate that pushing the button is not necessary to get the signal. While this sort of surface is not a primary way that the virus is spread, staff are proposing this to reduce any possibility of such spread and to ensure people walking downtown are not concerned about exposure to the virus in this way. Mr. Craig asked about the language on the sign, and Mr. zumFelde said that the language proposed is exactly what is used in another city and very similar to that used by many cities. Mr. Lawrence asked why the signs would be placed next to the push buttons instead of over the push buttons. Mr. Hartman said that the buttons do serve additional purposes for people with sight impairments, so it was important to leave the button available for use by these people.

4. N. Liberty & Rock St Intersection

Ms. Yancey explained that there have been discussions with the developer of property along N. Liberty between Rock St and Gay St about reconfiguring that block. There is no guarantee that this will occur, as it requires buy-in from the developer, but an initial concept has been created. Ms. Yancey showed the initial concept, which converts the street to one-way (southbound) with parking on both sides and a bike lane. Improvements for pedestrians would be made at the intersection of Noll, Liberty and Rock Street. Ms. Toth indicated support for the proposal. Mr. Lawrence said that the pedestrian improvements would be beneficial. He asked whether the bike lanes could be protected. Ms. Yancey said that the shift for vehicles entering the vehicle lane from the north side of the W. Gay St/N. Liberty St intersection would be too dramatic if the bike lane had a buffer adjacent to it. Mr. zumFelde and Ms. Yancey also pointed out that the Fire Department requires a 20' space between parking cars for their emergency equipment, and this requirement limits many of the more creative reconfigurations that could otherwise be considered here. Mr. Hartman said that discussions would continue with the developer, and then also with the railroad, to determine if and when this effort moves forward.

5. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Applications

Ms. Yancey explained that Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funding is provided to the City each year for projects that benefit residents in low- or moderate-income census tracts. She said that staff had submitted applications for CDBG funding for two sidewalk projects, both of which have been recommended for approval. One project is sidewalk on Water St between Willow St and Dogwood Dr, which would extend the existing sidewalk to connect to a sidewalk on Dogwood Dr which was funded by CDBG last year. This project would improve access to Westover Park. The second project would build sidewalk on Vine Street between Washington St and Emerson Lane. This would connect sidewalk on Emerson Ln to the sidewalks on Washington St and Vine St.

6. Project Updates – see attachment

Announcements / Other Business

Mr. Lawrence asked about the status of the Garbers Church Rd Shared Use Path. Mr. Hartman said that final easements and right-of-way are being acquired and construction is expected in 2021. Mr. Lawrence asked about the study that had been completed regarding Main and Liberty Streets downtown. Mr. Hartman answered that information about this could be provided in the next TSAC and Subcommittee meetings.

Next Meeting: July 27, 2020 @ 6pm – City Hall, Room 011 (lower level), 409 South Main St