



**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: September 18, 2020

RE: Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee Meeting Summary for Monday, July 27, 2020

The Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee met on Monday, July 27, 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 watch the meeting live was provided in the agenda and posted on the City website in the week prior to the meeting. Members of the public were given the opportunity to provide comments on the items discussed by phone or e-mail prior to the meeting.

Attendees

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

Other attendees: Eric King (Safe Routes to School coordinator), Kyle Lawrence (Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission chair)

Staff: Tom Hartman (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

- Federal St reconfiguration
Mr. zumFelde reminded the Subcommittee members of the interim improvements to Federal Street that were discussed at the last meeting, and he reported that the improvements had been completed.

- N. Liberty reconfiguration between Rock St and Gay St

Mr. zumFelde said that discussions were continuing regarding the reconfiguration of this block that had been discussed at the last meeting.

2. Safe Routes to Schools and Walk Zones

Mr. zumFelde indicated that Harrisonburg City Public Schools (HCPS) has begun a collaborative effort – coordinating with Public Works, the Police Department, HDPT, and the Safe Routes to Schools coordination – to identify zones around City schools where bus transportation will not be provided for children to get to school. The necessity for this is clear, due to significantly reduced capacity on school buses due to physical distancing that is necessary for safety due to Covid-19.

Mr. zumFelde provided an overview of the process that is being completed to create these zones and ensure the ability for children within these zones to walk to school safely. He said that the zones would generally extend a maximum of $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ miles from each school and would only be implemented where safe infrastructure exists for students to walk. He said that roads with sidewalks as well as most neighborhood roads without sidewalks would be considered safe for inclusion in a walk zone. He said that crossing guards, walking school buses, changes to the pedestrian phase at signalized intersections, and other Safe Routes to Schools efforts will be important for ensuring safety in these zones.

Ms. Pyle asked about children riding bikes and whether that is being considered. Mr. zumFelde said that that is not a main consideration for determining the walk zone boundaries because all students will be expected to travel to school in all weather conditions. So biking to school will certainly continue to be encouraged, but the understanding is that walking is an option that will be more common and more feasible in all weather conditions. Ms. Toth asked how children with mobility issues who live in the walk zone will be accommodated. Mr. Hartman indicated that Craig Mackail with HCPS has said that transportation will be provided for students in this situation. Mr. King explained that the Safe Routes to School efforts will build off of previous efforts and will need to expand with increased walking and biking by students. Mr. Lawrence asked about number of students who will potentially fall in these walk zones. Mr. zumFelde said that the zones aren't clear enough yet to determine this. Mr. Hartman said that we will be able to determine this as we finalize the zones. Ms. Frederick asked which schools would not have a school zone due to unsafe infrastructure. Mr. King indicated that Smithland Elementary and Skyline Middle School will be the only two schools without a walk zone.

Mr. zumFelde then provided information about potential infrastructure improvements. He said that a bike/walk space similar to the Federal St improvements would be one option, with a 'slow street' being another possibility. Mr. zumFelde and Mr. Hartman showed an initial concept for creation of a bike/walk space on Central Ave south of South Ave. The space would likely have delineators and would be of a similar style to the Federal Street space. Mr. zumFelde showed a slightly different initial concept for Gay St west of Waterman Elementary, which would be a pedestrian space that is created potentially using paint or markings but probably not using delineators.

Mr. Hartman said that we are pursuing this so that it is ready whenever the schools have more in-person classes. Mr. Hartman noted that the Safe Routes to School efforts that have existed in the community for many years allow the current walk zone effort to be feasible.

3. Upcoming City Studies/Plans

- Port Republic Rd & Bluestone Dr/Hillside Ave intersection bicycle and pedestrian overpass
Mr. zumFelde and Mr. Hartman provided information about a study that will be completed regarding a potential bridge for bicycles and pedestrians over Port Republic Rd at Bluestone Dr/Hillside Ave. They indicated that this would remove the crosswalks at the intersection and provide a safe route for people walking and biking through the intersection, to accommodate all users while improving traffic flow through the intersection, as recommended by a corridor study completed in 2019. Mr. Hartman emphasized that it is a feasibility study, and will evaluate the impacts to people walking, biking and driving to determine whether it is a project that may be an application for funding in the future. Ms. Pyle asked if a tunnel was being considered, and noted that she was having trouble envisioning how a bridge will provide appropriate access for all users at this intersection, which she uses very frequently. Mr. Hartman said that dealing with rock and the water table are the reasons that a bridge will likely be more appropriate than a tunnel.

- Downtown Master Plan

Mr. Hartman gave an overview of the Downtown Master Plan. He said that it will include a lot of different items that have been discussed or studied in recent years, including the proposal for a park near City Hall, the results of the downtown parking study, and the results of the downtown traffic study, among other things. The City Manager's office will be leading the effort and will ensure that a wide range of aspects are addressed in the Plan, which will look ahead and plan for what the downtown area could look like over the next 20 years.

4. Project Updates – see attachment

Ms. Pyle asked about the Mt. Clinton Pike shared use path project and how it will connect to the Northend Greenway. Mr. zumFelde reminded the members that the Mt. Clinton Pike path will extend from Virginia Ave to Park Rd. He said that the plan is to extend the Northend Greenway across the railroad tracks and build it to the southeast corner of Mt. Clinton Pike and Virginia Ave, where users will be able to use the crosswalks to reach the new path. Before that Northend Greenway extension is built, people walking between the paths will continue to use the sidewalk on the north side of Mt. Clinton Pike and the crosswalk at the railroad tracks.

Ms. Pyle asked whether a sharrows symbol will be added to the new bike lane on Federal St between Wolfe St and Elizabeth St. Mr. zumFelde said that a bike lane symbol will be added here. He also said a sharrows will be added in the northbound direction. He said that signs on the new shared use path between Elizabeth St and Market St will need to be created and installed. He explained another change or two that will be made to accommodate delivery trucks on the segment of Federal St between Market and Water St. Mr. Lawrence observed that the vehicles often pull out into the concrete shared use path segment, while vehicles do this less on the segment where the path is in the pavement and created by delineators.

Announcements / Other Business

Mr. zumFelde said that Ms. Frederick has brought up transit as a logical topic for discussion at a Subcommittee committee. He asked if there are any specific ideas that the members would want to discuss. Ms. Frederick said that she thought a broad discussion of the ways in which bicycle and pedestrian efforts overlap with transit efforts. Mr. Hartman said that this would make sense, particularly as HDPT has been doing some planning efforts over the past few years, and that staff will try to get someone from HDPT to join a future meeting.

Mr. zumFelde said that a survey of residents of the region regarding biking and walking during the pandemic will be released in the near future, so he will make sure to share it with the Subcommittee members.

Ms. Pyle brought up multiple locations where she has heard concerns from people walking and biking in the City. The first location she brought up is the hill on Old Furnace Rd, where people biking up the hill do not have any dedicated space to bike. The second concern she noted is Grace St between High Street and Mason St. She also asked if there are any plans for improvements to Erickson Ave between High St and Garbers Church Rd. Finally, she noted that Country Club Rd has high demand from people walking and biking, including to the elementary and middle schools. Mr. zumFelde responded that they are aware of the high demand on Country Club Rd and will seek to provide infrastructure there when possible. Mr. Hartman said that there are many challenges in that area and opportunities will be pursued as changes occur. Mr. zumFelde said that the new shared use path will be the primary bicycle and pedestrian route to the high school, as an alternative route to Erickson Ave. Mr. Hartman added that changes are being made at the intersection of Erickson Ave and Garbers Church Rd to improve traffic flow at that intersection, and that the City has unsuccessfully applied for funds to improve Erickson Ave in this corridor. For Grace St, Mr. zumFelde said that plans call for bike lanes to continue to be added as development occurs between High St and Main St. Mr. Hartman said that Grace St east of Main St is controlled by JMU and not by the City. Regarding Old Furnace Rd, Mr. zumFelde said that staff will look at possibilities, but given the varying width of the road there is not a clear option for a continuous bike lane on the segment.

Mr. Bonsal asked about the new Virginia law that requires drivers to stop at crosswalks. Mr. zumFelde said that the law is not as clear as the public communication has indicated. He said that everyone should stop at crosswalks, but his understanding is that the law will not lead to the City needing to replace “yield to pedestrians in crosswalk” signs with “stop for pedestrians in crosswalk”.

Next Meeting: September 28, 2020 @ 6pm – City Hall, Room 011 (lower level), 409 South Main St