



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

TO: Transportation Safety Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager Evan Vass

FROM: Andrew D. Williams AICP, Assistant Director of Public Works

DATE: March 8, 2010

RE: Transportation Safety Commission Summary from March 4, 2010 Meeting

The Transportation Safety Commission met on Thursday March 4, 2010 at the City Municipal Building, 345 S. Main St.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Chair), Ben Wyes (Citizen Member), Officer Greg Deeds (Police), Drew Williams (Public Works), Brad Reed (Public Works), Lee Eschelman (JMU), Sgt. William Keller (Police), Ofc. Greg Deeds (Police), Doug Stader (DMV)

Guests Present include: None.

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. Traffic Signal Operations Update: Snow & Ice

The Department of Public Works implemented a new plan for traffic signals during snow and ice events during the winter of 2009-2010. Lessons learned from the December snowstorm guided the vision and mission for this process; specifically that traffic signals hinder snow removal equipment, major snows result in minimal traffic volumes and camera detection is severely restricted during snow events. Department staff within the Traffic Engineering Division reviewed intersections that might be eligible to

be placed on “flash mode” during snow and ice, taking location and sight distance into consideration when determining whether a traffic signal is eligible or not.

New Business

2. VDOT Maintenance Funding for bicycle facilities

Ms. Dang has been talking with Mr. David Balmer, 434 Fairway Dr., regarding his concerns about speeding and cut through traffic through his neighborhood. Both Harrisonburg Police and Public Works Departments performed independent traffic counts and speed surveys in May 2009 and November 2009, respectively.

Public Works data indicates an 85th percentile speed of 39.69 mph, indicating a speeding problem in the neighborhood. However, average traffic volume was 335 per day which is less than the 500 vehicles per day eligibility requirement for enrollment into the City’s Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. Low traffic volumes indicates that the neighborhood is not experiencing high volumes of cut through traffic, but rather the speed violators are mostly drivers who live within the neighborhood.

Sgt. Keller noted that police officers have been assigned to Fairway Drive for enforcement and that the officers are sitting for a long time without any vehicles passing through. Most cars are traveling between 6am-8am, 10am-1pm and in the evening. Officer Deeds noted that there might be up to 10 cars seen during the 10am-1pm period.

Public Works and Police Department staff will continue to work with this neighborhood on education, encouragement, and enforcement strategies (rather than engineering/infrastructure strategies) to address the speeding problem. It is recommended that this neighborhood would be a good candidate to launch the new “Team Up to Slow Down” program, which includes bumper stickers, yard signs, neighborhood involvement. A meeting is being scheduled with representatives from the neighborhood for later this month. Transportation Safety Commission members will be notified for the meeting date, once it is scheduled, and are welcome to attend.

Other Business/ Announcements

3. Super Bowl Saturation

The Police was going to have a Super Bowl Saturation Patrol the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday of Super Bowl weekend.

4. Davis, CA

There was some discussion about the Davis, CA trip which is being organized and funded by community members, primarily the Voluntary Gas Tax Group, New Community Project, and the Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition. The trip will take place March 4 through March 8, 2010. The following individuals make up the Harrisonburg Delegation going to Davis: Mr. Kai Degner, city mayor; Mr. MuAwai Da’Mes, city

planning commission; Ms. Thanh Dang, city public works planner; Thomas Jenkins, Shenandoah Valley Bicycle Coalition; Ms. Lara Mack, New Community Project; and possibly someone from James Madison University. The agenda and activities for the trip are still being developed. There is a possibility that the group may also visit Sacramento, CA and/or San Francisco, CA.

There was discussion about the box culverts under I-81 that are known to be utilized for walking and bicycling by some members of the public. Mr. Williams explained that these box culverts are not tall enough to be designated as part of a shared use facility and that to make them accessible it would require significant digging into the culvert. Recommended height clearance is 10-12 ft. tall. In past discussions, VDOT was not supportive of this concept.

There was also some discussion about the Arboretum Trail and whether or not James Madison University was going to pave their portion of the trail. Mr. Eschelmann noted that to pave, light, and add emergency phones along the path it would cost about \$200,000. It is unknown at this time whether JMU would pave the trail or not.

Commission members suggested that Davis be asked about the costs of their facilities such as tunnels and bridges, and also how California supports funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Commission also suggested that questions be asked about maintenance and upkeep of shared use path; if any paths cut through private properties. And if so, who maintains them.

5. City Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan

95% draft available for review at www.harrisonburgva.gov/bikeped. Submit any comments to thanhd@harrisonburgva.gov. Planning Commission in May 2010 and City Council in June 2010.

6. Transit Drivers Safety Training

Mr. Smith noted that Transit Department staff is developing awareness training for their drivers on safe driving around bicyclists.

7. Snow Removal around Bus Stops & Shelters

There was discussion about snow removal at bus stops and bus shelters. Transit Department removes snow at bus stops and shelters on public properties, but has noticed that shelters located on private properties, such as apartment complexes, are not being cleared of snow. As passengers wait for the bus they are packing the snow down and it is turning into ice. On several occasions a passenger has slipped and damaged a bus door causing the bus to be decommissioned for repairs. This causes significant strain on bus services. Mr. Smith noted that there is a 16% increase in ridership this year compared to last year on buses. Cold weather also causes more people/students to ride the bus, particularly James Madison University's Inner Campus Shuttle.

8. Traffic Signal Operations

Mr. Williams announced that during snow and ice events, when traffic volumes are low, Public Works will make program modifications to several traffic signal operations. Some signals will go into flash. These intersections and signal locations have been evaluated for volume and have adequate sight distance. Public Works staff has discussed these changes with the Emergency Communications Center. Putting these signals in flash will decrease the amount of time vehicles are stopped unnecessarily at intersections and will also assist City plows with snow removal.

9. Grace Street & Main Street Traffic Signal Pole

The new signal pole is up and operating and the old poles are being removed.

10. RMH Hospital Relocation

There were some questions about RMH's plans for their patient move date, June 22, 2010. Staff will present this item to the Commission at next month's meeting.

NEXT MEETING THURSDAY March 4, 2010 AT 9:00AM at City Municipal Building Room 205, 345 S. Main St.