



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 18, 2011

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from July 7, 2011 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Thursday July 7, 2011 at 9:00AM in City Council Chambers at the Community Development Building, 409 South Main Street.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Chair), Russell Presnell (citizen member), Calvin Ferrell (Citizen Member), MPO Greg Deeds (Police member), Brad Reed (Public Works), Drew Williams (Public Works), Off. Paul Helmuth (Fire), Sgt. Andy Muncy (Rockingham County Sherriff's Office)

Guests Present: 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

New Business

1. Consider integrating traffic signal into project plans at Reservoir Street & Lucy Drive/Woodland Drive

Mr. Reed explained that vehicular demand at this intersection has been found to be higher than was expected in the planning efforts surrounding the Reservoir Street Improvement Project. Upon project completion, this intersection would have been unsignalized with stop control on Lucy Drive/Woodland Drive. Prompted by citizen concerns about delays when turning left off of Lucy Drive, City staff completed a traffic signal warrant study that shows that a traffic signal is

warranted with present traffic volumes. For this reason, Mr. Reed requested a recommendation from the Commission to incorporate a traffic signal at this location into the Reservoir Street Improvement Project. Mr. Williams explained that the Lucy Drive intersection would be included in the first phase of the project construction, but a start date is unclear because funding efforts are still underway. The Commission recommended that staff move forward with this addition to the project plans.

Mr. Blessing expressed concern about the way in which Lucy Drive narrows as it approaches Reservoir Street and questioned whether the road would be widened as part of the project. Mr. Williams explained that this is not part of the Reservoir Street project; rather it is the final stage of the Lucy Drive widening project and is out of the City's control at present. City staff must wait until the property on the corner of the intersection is vacated prior to widening that section of Lucy Drive to its designed width.

2. Consider removal of traffic signal at N. Liberty Street & W. Washington Street

Mr. Reed shared staff findings regarding the necessity of the traffic signal at N. Liberty Street & W. Washington Street. This signal was installed as a temporary signal in the early 2000s while bridge construction was taking place on N. Main Street near Johnson Street and traffic from N. Main Street was detoured to W. Washington Street.

As part of the sidewalk improvement project currently underway on the North side of W. Washington Street, Harrisonburg Electric Commission (HEC) plans to relocate the two electric poles to which the traffic signal is mounted. Since this relocation will necessitate a rebuild of the signal, either using the new poles or through the installation of a standalone pole and mast arm, Public Works staff explored the possibility of removing the signal altogether.

A traffic signal warrant study was performed and found that the signal is not warranted under present traffic volumes or those 10 years in the future. Staff closely reviewed sight distance and truck turning radii at the intersection, finding that the stop bar can be moved forward approximately 50 feet to a point that provides adequate visibility to the North and South without having to alter on-street parking conditions on N. Liberty Street.

To avoid costs for relocation and to remove an unwarranted traffic signal, City staff requested the Commission's recommendation to remove the signal. Without the signal, traffic on N. Liberty Street would have free flow in both directions and stop control would be installed on W. Washington Street. The Commission recommended that staff move forward with the signal removal. Approval for this change will be requested from City Council in August.

Old Business

3. Consider change of directionality on Federal Street between E. Market Street and Elizabeth Street

Mr. Williams explained that David Lee, a developer, is requesting that the City consider making Federal Street one-way northbound between E. Market Street and Elizabeth Street. Mr. Lee plans to redevelop the lot at 24 N. Main Street to create a parking lot and, as part of the project, rebuild sidewalks on E. Elizabeth Street between N. Main Street and N. Federal Street and on N. Federal Street between E. Market Street and E. Elizabeth Street. Mr. Lee has proposed that the sidewalk on N. Federal Street be widened using City resources. Since widening the sidewalk on N. Federal Street would narrow the road too much to accommodate two-way traffic, Mr. Lee is requesting that the effected portion of N. Federal Street be made one-way. If approved, Mr. Lee has agreed to notify businesses of this change to gather comments prior to the work beginning.

Public Works staff performed a traffic count on N. Federal Street and found average daily traffic of about 400 vehicles in the northbound direction. The counter used for southbound traffic malfunctioned, so the count for that direction will need to be redone. MPO Deeds noted that there are businesses on N. Federal Street that may need loading zones if this change were to take place. The Commission did not have any comments against the change, but requested that the updated traffic count results be shared at the August meeting prior to making a decision.

Other Business/ Announcements

4. Change in traffic pattern on University Boulevard between Carrier Drive and Reservoir Street

Mr. Reed shared the recent traffic pattern changes implemented on University Boulevard to help improve traffic flow and safety. After University Boulevard was repaved, Public Works forces restriped the street between Reservoir Street and Carrier Drive to create a center two-way left turn lane by taking away one of the westbound lanes. This change creates a refuge for the heavy left turn traffic going into Costco and other businesses.

Also changed, was the configuration of the traffic signal at University Boulevard & Reservoir Street. The center turn lane on University Boulevard now transitions into a dedicated eastbound left turn lane, while the two remaining lanes are now a dedicated thru and dedicated right turn lane. The westbound side of University Boulevard was changed to a left turn only lane and a thru/right combo lane to accommodate the westbound lane removal on the opposing side. These changes allow the signal to operate in a more efficient configuration, allowing simultaneous east and west traffic flow, and provide additional capacity for the strained eastbound approach. By making University Boulevard operate more efficiently, traffic flow on Reservoir Street is slightly improved. New signal timings and coordination plans were implemented to support these changes.

MPO Deeds noted that all of the entrances to the Sheetz and Exxon gas stations at this intersection are very wide and are unmarked, which has led to traffic utilizing the incorrect side of the entrance when entering or leaving the stations. To resolve this issue, MPO Deeds recommended that the Commission write a letter to each of the businesses requesting that they install road markings in their entrances to guide traffic safely. The Commission agreed with this recommendation and Mr. Blessing will proceed with preparation of the letters.

5. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program – Pleasant Hill Acres August 4th meeting

Mr. Williams announced that the second meeting of the Pleasant Hill Acres neighborhood will take place on August 4th at 6 PM at Keister Elementary School to discuss the traffic calming plan. Speed humps, a raised intersection, and a traffic island will be considered as solutions to calm traffic on Central Avenue. All neighbors present at the meeting must reach consensus on the plan prior to it being brought before this Commission and City Council for approval.

Adjourn