



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: December 8, 2011

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from December 1, 2011 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Thursday December 1, 2011 at 9:00AM in Room 205 at the City Municipal Building, 345 S. Main St.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Chair), Len Van Wyk (Citizen Member), Calvin Ferrell (Citizen Member), Doug Stader (DMV), Reggie Smith (Public Transportation), Brad Reed (Public Works), and Drew Williams (Public Works)

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. Reservoir St & Costco entrance left turn safety concern

Mr. Reed shared a citizen concern from a Mr. Pinneri who contacted the Public Works Department in mid-November requesting that safety enhancement at the Costco entrance on Reservoir St be considered due to the unsafe nature of left turn movements across the multiple lanes of Reservoir St. He was recently involved in an accident at this location because he was unable to see oncoming traffic in the outer southbound lane of Reservoir St as he was turning into Costco.

Accidents records for November 2009 and November 2011 at this location were requested from the police department and also include accidents at nearby private entrances on the same block and side of Reservoir St. In some cases, the name of the entrance was not specified on the report. All accidents listed below were directly related to left turn movements at the noted location.

2009: 1 accident at Costco; 1 at unspecified entrance

2010: 2 accidents at Costco; 2 at Shenandoah Eye Care; 1 at unspecified location

2011: 1 accident at Costco

Given the varying locations of these accidents and how few occurred at the Costco entrance itself, the Commission recommended that no immediate change be made. This decision was made with the recognition that the Reservoir St Improvement Project (<http://www.reservoirstreet.org/>) will expand Reservoir St to a 5-lane roadway and provide a center turn lane for those using this entrance. Also, the Public Works department recently made changes to the lane configuration of University Blvd, which now provides a center turn lane into Costco and other nearby entrances. This University Blvd entrance was viewed by the Commission as a safer alternative to the Reservoir St entrance that could be used until the road improvements on Reservoir St are completed.

Old Business

2. City procedures for installing Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS)

At its November meeting, the Commission requested a report on the cost increase of Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) versus traditional push buttons in conjunction with their consideration of a formal city policy for the installation of APS systems. These systems aid blind and otherwise impaired pedestrians with crossing the street safely at signalized intersection by providing users with audible tones and vibrotactile feedback. Having received a cost estimate for the equipment, the Public Works Department estimates a cost of approximately \$6,000 per signalized intersection with 4 crosswalks and 8 total push buttons. This cost is approximately \$4,000 higher than the cost of standard pedestrian push buttons at an equivalent intersection. The Commission did not suggest any modifications to their previous recommendation that APS systems be installed at all new and redesigned traffic signals and that requests from citizens for APS be considered by the Commission on a case-by-case basis.

3. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program – Old Town update

Mr. Reed shared results from the most recent neighborhood traffic study in the Old Town Neighborhood, which has also been published on the Neighborhood Traffic Calming portion of the City website (<http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/index.php?id=1092>). The purpose of this study was to determine what changes in traffic volumes and speeds the neighborhood has experiences since the summer 2011 installation of several physical measures from the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan. These improvements include a raised intersection at

Franklin St & Ott St, a speed table with crosswalk on Franklin St near Monticello Ave, and a speed hump on E Bruce St between Ott St and Myers Ave.

Some fluctuations are typical when reviewing traffic data and cannot necessarily be attributed to changes in neighborhood traffic patterns. We would reasonably expect traffic volumes to increase by ~1-4% in a year due to growth and can expect another ~1-3% in fluctuation between studies. With that being said, it is apparent that more traffic is utilizing S Mason St and that volumes have decreased for the westbound direction on Franklin St. Looking at the speed data between 2010 and 2011, there were decreases in most areas with speeds increasing only slightly in a select few locations. Overall, Public Works feels that the traffic calming features have produced the desired result of slowing vehicles to a safe speed on the streets on which they are installed. Public Works will provide City Council with an update at their December 13th meeting to share the results of the traffic study.

Other Business/ Announcements

4. Discussion regarding driver compliance in stopping for school buses

Mr. Williams explained that there was a complaint expressed to City Council earlier in the school year regarding drivers failing to stop for school buses during pickups. Based upon this information, this seems to be a matter of education as to when to stop for a school bus. The Commission recommended that the city consider developing a public information campaign through schools to educate drivers on this issue. Mr. Smith suggested that this effort also include information on how to be a safe pedestrian and bicyclist. Mr. Blessing recommended making this a recurring effort would be more effective than a one-time event.

Mr. Williams noted that there should be an enforcement side in helping resolve these safety issues. Enforcement of safe pedestrian travel is especially difficult since there is no jaywalking law in Harrisonburg. Mr. Van Wyk commented that the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee has discussed the need for increased enforcement of traffic laws for cyclists.

The Commission requested that staff research these matters and report back with recommendations at a future meeting.

5. Briefing on snow & ice preparedness and procedures

Mr. Williams informed the Commission that the Public Works Department has prepared for the snow & ice season and has procedures in place that define multi-departmental roles and responsibilities for varying stages of storm severity.

The use of salt brine pre-treatment, a technique involving spraying saline water on roads prior to a winter weather event, will be put into regular use on primary roadways this year.

6. Concern regarding safety at crossovers on E Market St

Mr. Blessing shared a citizen concern regarding the design of the unsignalized crossovers, or median breaks, on E Market St. The citizen has witnessed confusion over what space a driver

should occupy within the crossover when waiting to make a turn. The individual noted that the crossover at Chick-fil-A is the most troublesome.

Mr. Reed explained that the Public Works Department is aware of this issue and has added improvements to the 2011 Comprehensive Plan that would delineate turning movements better and eliminate the ability to use the crossover to make a left turn out of a side street or entrance (only left turns by those already on E Market St would be allowed).

The improvement of the crossover at Chick-fil-A may be completed in the near future, as a fast food restaurant has submitted a site plan to redevelop the former Texas Steakhouse parcel and has agreed to make the change to mitigate traffic concerns generated by their business. The improvement would only be completed if the site plan is approved and the business moves forward with constructing the restaurant.

7. Update on Phase 3 of the Erickson Ave-Stone Spring Rd Connector project

Mr. Williams announced that the Public Works Department has advertised for bid Phase 3 of the Erickson Ave-Stone Spring Rd Connector project (<http://www.ericksonstonespring.org>) and will soon award the project to the winning contracting firm. Phase 3 will create a connection between Route 11 and Route 42, joining Erickson Ave to the west and Stone Spring Rd to the east. Construction of this phase is expected to be completed by the end of 2013, shortly after the completion of Phase 2.

8. Potential changes to Virginia roadway maintenance fund

Mr. Williams announced that there exists the potential that Virginia may reduce the maintenance fund allocations to urban localities, which would include Harrisonburg. This is the only state appropriated road maintenance fund that has been regularly increased year to year and currently provides the city with \$3.9 million. This money is critical to maintaining the city's roadways and upholding their existing quality level.

On a related note, the state is also considering whether or not to delegate the responsibility for maintaining secondary roads, a job currently under VDOT's purview, to individual counties.

9. Request for endorsement of Bluestone Trail project

Mr. Williams requested the Commission's endorsement for the Bluestone Trail project, which would create a multi-use path to connects Purcell Park to Ramblewood Park and provide a links to multiple neighborhoods. The trail has been vetted through the Parks & Recreation Commission and recommended for this Commission's approval by the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee. The endorsement of this Commission would help further support the project. A presentation and update to City Council is planned for December 13th. The Commission voted unanimously to endorse the Bluestone Trail project.

10. DMV announcements

Mr. Stader shared that the Department of Motor Vehicles is rolling out the Traffic Records Electronic Data System (TREDS)

(http://www.dmv.state.va.us/webdoc/safety/crash_data/treds.asp), which provides citizens a means to retrieve and research accident history on their own.

Mr. Stader also announced that the Governor McDonnell is considering cutting the Virginia Board of Transportation Safety along with resolution that would eliminate two state agencies, fold seven state agencies into others, and eliminate 19 boards and commissions among other changes. The resolution will be considered during the upcoming 2012 Virginia General Assembly. Mayor Baugh is currently a member of this board.

11. Department of Public Transportation announcements

Mr. Smith announced that transit bus ridership for the September-October period, is up 25% compared to last year and that there was a 10% increase in the number of bus miles and hours logged. He also mentioned that the project to create a new bus transfer center at Godwin Hall on the JMU campus is nearing completion, with lights and shelters currently being installed. The new transfer center has been functioning very well as compared to the previous configuration of bus pickups at the same location.

Adjourn