



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: Wednesday, January 11, 2012

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from January 5, 2012 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Thursday January 5, 2012 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), Russell Presnell (Citizen Member), Doug Stader (DMV), Deputy Chief Ian Bennett (Fire), Sgt. Roger Knott (Police), MPO Greg Deeds (Police), 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. New meeting day & time

To accommodate Mr. Van Wyk's schedule for this school semester and to match up a new time with everyone else, the Commission chose to move its meeting time to the 2nd Wednesday of the month at 8:30 AM beginning next month (February).

2. Request for Accessible Pedestrian Signals on W Market Street

Mr. Reed shared a request from a blind citizen, Mr. John Stetson, for accessible pedestrian signals (APS) at the intersections of W Market St & N High St and W Market St & Waterman Dr. Staff performed a study of these intersections using best practice guidelines for APS published by the National Cooperative Highway Research Program. These guidelines include a prioritization worksheet tool for identifying characteristics of road crossings that may make traversing them more or less challenging for a blind pedestrian. Through this assessment, a point score can be calculated for each crosswalk at a signalized intersection. This point score is only meant to help prioritize one intersection or crossing over another for planning purposes and there is no particular score that dictates that APS is required. One of the crossings at each intersection was found to be particularly challenging for blind pedestrians, with priority scores higher than those at the other crosswalks at the intersection and higher than might be expected at an average crossing in Harrisonburg. These worksheets are attached at the end of this summary.

The northern east-west crossing at W Market St & N High St has a significant skew, creating a hazard for the blind, as they use the sidewalk orientation to help determine their direction for crossing the intersection. If the sidewalks do not line up, this can lead an individual into an oncoming travel lane. This issue could be helped by APS signals, which provide an arrow as the push button that is oriented to face in the crossing direction. Intersections with dedicated left turn movements also create challenges to blind pedestrians, as they use the sound of traffic to determine when to cross and have trouble differentiating between turn traffic and through traffic. APS helps this problem by providing an audible indication when the Walk light appears.

At the W Market St & Waterman Dr intersection, Mr. Stetson has expressed concern over the difficulty in crossing W Market St and has had conflicts with turn traffic coming off of Waterman Dr. This intersection has a signalized crosswalk to cross W Market St on the East side of the intersection, which operates independent of vehicle traffic since there is no northbound approach to the signal. For blind pedestrians, crosswalks with no concurrent vehicle movement are especially difficult to navigate because there is no way to tell when the Walk light is active. APS helps this problem by providing an audible indication when the Walk light appears.

Due to these the challenges presented by these two crossings, Mr. Reed recommended that both intersections be considered as a high priority for APS when funding becomes available. Mr. Williams recommended that the money for APS installations be vetted through the budget process with a specific request for the Commission's suggested number of intersections in need of APS upgrades. Mr. Williams also noted that, when making decisions about accommodating blind pedestrians, it may also be helpful to evaluate what other transportation options are available to reach a given destination. Paratransit and taxi service may sometimes be the better option if a walking route is especially difficult.

The Commission agreed with staff's recommendation and decided that a budget request should be made for APS at two intersections, which would total about \$12,000.

3. Request to task the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee with developing a bicycle, pedestrian, and motorist safety education campaign

Mr. Reed requested the Commission's recommendation to task the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee with developing a bicycle, pedestrian, and motorist safety education campaign as per the Commission's request at its December meeting for such a program. Thomas Jenkins of the Subcommittee plans to invite city and JMU officials to their next meeting to discuss and develop a plan. The Commission agreed with this recommendation and Mr. Blessing suggested that the plan be coordinated with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and also with the Rockingham County Bicycle Advisory Committee.

4. University Blvd & Evelyn Byrd Ave lane reconfiguration

Mr. Reed explained that Councilman Degner and other Council members have received complaints about left turn safety issues at the intersection of University Blvd & Evelyn Byrd Ave due to poor sight distance of oncoming traffic. Staff assessed a number of potential improvements to the intersection to add left turn lanes using the existing street width and found that the best option would be to covert each approach to include a left turn lane, through lane, and right turn lane. This configuration would leave a single receiving lane on each side of the intersection. No change to the intersection is scheduled in the immediate future, as the marking changes would likely need to be made when the intersection is repaved, but staff wished to share the work that had been completed in finding a possible solution to citizen safety concerns.

Old Business

5. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program – Old Town meeting in January

Mr. Reed announced that a meeting between city staff and the Old Town neighborhood representatives will take place in January. The group will discuss the traffic study completed after the installation of traffic calming improvements on Franklin St and E Bruce St and next steps for the neighborhood. A notification will be sent out once a time is selected.

Adjourn