



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, February 15, 2012

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from February 6, 2012 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Wednesday, February 8, 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), Doug Stader (DMV), Deputy Chief Ian Bennett (Fire), Paul Helmuth (Fire), Lee Eshelman (JMU), Andy Muncy (Rockingham County Sherriff), Brad Reed (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. Port Republic Rd & I-81 South sight distance concern

At a previous meeting, Mr. Van Wyk shared a concern regarding the poor sight distance for southbound vehicles on the I-81 South off-ramp attempting to turn right on red onto Port Republic Rd. Sight distance for these vehicles is hindered by the parapet wall of the Port Republic Rd bridge, forcing vehicles to progress past the stop bar and rest in the crosswalk to see westbound traffic. This has the potential to create conflicts between pedestrians in the

crosswalk and vehicles pulling forward while looking away from where pedestrians may be approaching. A possible solution to this issue, restricting right turns on red, was mentioned.

Mr. Reed shared staff research on this issue, which found that no accidents had occurred as a result of poor sight distance within the 2009 through 2011 period. Staff monitored traffic to observe how vehicles navigate right turns on red at this location and witnessed no conflicts. While vehicles do need to pull forward to obtain sight distance, visibility of oncoming pedestrians is very good and all drivers remained behind the crosswalk when a pedestrian was approaching or present.

Since no issues or accidents were found, and given that the allowance for right turns on red at this location helps alleviate busy traffic conditions, it was staff's recommendation that no change be made. The Commission agreed with this recommendation and no change will be made.

It was noted that accident history was also researched at the Port Republic Rd & I-81 North ramp where there is the potential for a similar sight concern, but no sight distance related accidents were found between 2009 and 2011.

2. Right Turn Yield to Pedestrian signage at S High St & W Grace St (via email after meeting)

Councilman Chenault requested that the Commission consider the installation of 'Right Turn Yield to Pedestrian' signage at the intersection of S High St & W Grace St due to the high volume of pedestrians. He did not mention seeing any close calls recently, but has shared concern regarding the potential for vehicle-pedestrian conflicts at the northern S High St crossing in the past.

When the standard for selecting appropriate locations for these signs was developed and accepted by the Commission in November 2011, city staff assessed this intersection and found that it did not meet our new right turn volume requirement, but did exceed the pedestrian volume requirement. Mr. Reed noted that he hadn't witnessed any right turners failing to yield to pedestrians while counting at the intersection and the Commission agreed with staff's recommendation that no signage be installed until traffic volumes change. Pedestrian and right turn volumes were:

Midday Peak Hour

Pedestrians: 53

Conflicting westbound right turns: 62

PM Peak Hour

Pedestrians: 84

Conflicting westbound right turns: 52

Staff has since researched the reported accident history at the intersection and has found no pedestrian collisions in the 2009-2011 period except for one between an eastbound left turning vehicle striking a pedestrian on S High St prior to the reconfiguration of the traffic signal to service each side of W Grace St separately.

Given the new request from Mr. Chenault and the fact that pedestrian concerns at this location have been brought to staff several times in the past, the Commission reconsidered this matter and recommended that signage be installed. Members noted that, while it would be preferred to abide by the volume standards when choosing sign locations, it is recognized that certain intersection pose unique challenges to pedestrian safety. With right turn volumes being barely below the standard, and pedestrian volumes exceeding it, it was deemed acceptable to add a safety countermeasure to this geometrically awkward intersection.

Old Business

3. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program – Old Town update

A meeting between city staff and the Old Town neighborhood representatives took place on January 30th, wherein the group discussed the traffic study completed after the installation of calming features on Franklin St and E Bruce St and next steps for the neighborhood. The notes from this meeting can be found at <http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/trafficcalming>. The Commission discussed the three requested speed humps and was of the opinion that the speed humps on Paul Street are warranted due to high speeds and traffic volumes. It was the consensus of the Commission that the speed hump on Bruce Street between Mason Street & Ott Street is unnecessary given that 85th percentile speeds are 32 mph and the narrowness of the street acts as a natural form of traffic calming.

Public Works will request funding for the neighborhood's three additional traffic calming measures in the FY 2012-2013 budget, which is currently under review and will be adopted by City Council this spring.

4. Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program – Pleasant Hill Acres update

Staff gave an update to City Council on January 24th to share the results of the traffic calming 'referendum' conducted in the Pleasant Hill Acres Neighborhood in early December. All residents of the neighborhood were sent a briefing on the traffic calming plan developed at the neighborhood meetings earlier in the year, which included several traffic calming devices on Central Avenue, sidewalks on one side of Central Avenue, and increased police enforcement. Neighbors were given a listing of all the plan's recommendations and asked to vote on each item.

The results of this referendum can be found at <http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/trafficcalming>.

Given the apparent lack of agreement amongst referendum responders on the plan items, staff requested guidance from City Council on how to proceed. It was recommended that staff

perform an updated traffic study in March to determine whether or not speeding problems still exist in the neighborhood now that a year of traffic calming proceedings has taken place. An update will be provided once data collection and analysis have been completed.

Adjourn