



**TRANSPORTATION SAFETY & ADVISORY COMMISSION**

**CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA**

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**TO:** Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen

**FROM:** Brad Reed, Transportation Planner

**DATE:** Tuesday, May 15, 2012

**RE:** Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from May 9, 2012 Meeting

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The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Wednesday, May 9, 2012 at 8:30 AM 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), MPO Greg Deeds (Police), Deputy Chief Ian Bennett (Fire), Paul Helmuth (Fire), Doug Stader (DMV), Reggie Smith (Public Transportation), Lee Eshelman (JMU), 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.*

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*Welcome*

*New Business*

**1. Passing on Blue Ridge Dr**

Mr. Reed shared a concern voiced by two citizens to the Police and Public Works Departments regarding vehicles passing one another on Blue Ridge Dr. Both citizens reside in the Blue Ridge Dr neighborhood and were informed about the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. The Public Works Department performed a traffic study on Blue Ridge Dr and found 85<sup>th</sup> percentile

speeds of 40-41 mph between Country Club Rd and Star Crest Dr, 39 mph between Robin Ct and Bobwhite Pl, and 34-36 mph between Founders Way and Old Furnace Rd.

As a means to discourage passing on Blue Ridge Dr, the Public Works Department recommended that edgelines be painted for the full length of the street, creating 11 ft. wide travel lanes. While painting edgelines has not been proven to have an effect on travel speeds, it does make passing more difficult by narrowing the roadway and also provides a delineated area for pedestrians. The Commission agreed with the recommendation that edgelines be painted.

If traffic calming measures to reduce speeds are desired in the neighborhood, the residents would need to go through the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. Information about the program can be found on the City's website at <http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/neighborhood-traffic-calming-program>.

## **2. Obedience of stop sign on Founders Way at Blue Ridge Dr**

Mr. Blessing informed the Commission that he has frequently witnessed a failure to stop by vehicles at the stop sign on Founders Way at its intersection with Blue Ridge Dr. The primary contributing factor is thought to be the very good sight distance, which allows vehicles to check for conflicting traffic on Blue Ridge Dr before reaching the stop sign.

The Commission recommended that a stop bar be installed on Founders Way as a supporting visual indication that vehicles are required to stop at the stop sign.

## **3. Speed limit on E. Washington St**

Mr. Reed explained that the Public Works department has received citizen requests to consider raising the speed limit on E. Washington St between N. Main St and Vine St. The Public Works Department performed a speed study at two locations on the street and found 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds of 36-39 mph between Myrtle St and Simms Ave and speeds of 37-40 mph between Northfield Ct and Tower St. Sight distance was measured at all public street intersections and it was found that the removal of an ~150' section of on-street parking on E. Washington St on the northeast side of its intersection with Northfield Ct would need to be considered to gain the 350' of sight needed for a speed limit increase to 35 mph.

Mr. Reed went on to explain that, given adequate sight distance and lack of environmental factors that may present safety concerns, engineering guidelines recommend that speed limits be set near the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed. Studies by the Federal Highway Administration have found that there is no statistically significant correlation between increasing speed limits and a rise in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile travel speed. Since the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed is considered by the Traffic Engineering field to be the maximum speed at which reasonable drivers are comfortable traveling given roadway conditions and the surrounding environment, it can be concluded that 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds can be expected to stay roughly the same if the speed limit on E. Washington St were to be increased to 35 mph.

Mr. Smith spoke against increasing the speed limit, citing the presence of the Lucy Simms School, Ralph Sampson Park, and adjacent high-density residential neighborhoods as drivers for high volumes of pedestrian traffic. He explained that children crossing E. Washington St at the Northfield Ct intersection are of especially great concern to him. He also noted that when the new Public Transportation building is completed, all buses will use the E. Washington St entrance instead of being distributed between E. Washington St and Tower St as they are at present.

The Commission shared these concerns with Mr. Smith and recommended that the speed limit stay at 25 mph to discourage unsafe speeds. It was also recommended that the Public Works Department install a crosswalk at the Northfield Ct intersection to increase safety for those crossing E. Washington St to Ralph Sampson Park.

*Adjourn*