



TRANSPORTATION SAFETY & ADVISORY COMMISSION

CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA

TO: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Members, Council members, City Manager Kurt Hodgen, Assistant City Manager Anne Lewis

FROM: Brad Reed, Transportation Planner

DATE: Tuesday, February 25, 2014

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from February 6, 2014 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Thursday, February 6, 2014 at 9:00 AM in Room 205 at the City Municipal Building, 345 S. Main St.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Citizen Member, Chair), Len Van Wyk (Citizen Member), Calvin Ferrell (Citizen Member), Brad Reed (Public Works Designee), Sgt. Philip Ritchie (Police Member), Doug Stader (DMV), Ian Bennett (Fire), Lee Eshelman (JMU)

Guests Present: None

Commission meetings are open to the public and citizens are provided the opportunity to voice their views/concerns about any item before the Commission. It is the policy of the Commission to move relevant agenda items to the beginning of the meeting when citizens are in attendance to avoid detaining them for the entire meeting.

Welcome

New Business

1. By-law changes to increase Commission membership

The Commission discussed possible by-law changes that would increase the number of citizen members from 4 to 5. The Commission agreed that, as turnover occurs, it would like to institute a system for geographical representation for its citizen members. These changes will be explored during the month of February and discussed at the next meeting. Also under consideration will be Commission-related questions to put on the membership application.

2. Snow on sidewalks

Mr. Van Wyk expressed concern for the safety of pedestrians on sidewalks with snow that has not been cleared in a timely manner. He noted that this is an especially dangerous issue with sidewalks on roads with a speed limit of 35+mph. Also, plowed snow has piled up on sidewalks, making the matter worse. This issue has come up in the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee as well.

Mr. Van Wyk suggested that the city clear snow from the sidewalks on arterial streets when large snow events occur. He mentioned that the Subcommittee could be asked to help create a list of the worst locations. Mr. Reed said that, given the current funding and personnel levels for snow & ice removal, it is unlikely that this would be possible and that such a change would probably need to be requested through City Council after reviewing ideas with staff.

Mr. Blessing suggested that more media coverage of the requirement for sidewalk shoveling may help. Mr. Ferrell and Mr. Eshelman questioned whether shoveling volunteers could be found. Mr. Van Wyk said that he will take the issue back to the Subcommittee for their thoughts and report back to the Commission.

3. Leading Pedestrian Interval question

Mr. Van Wyk requested information regarding the implementation of the Leading Pedestrian Interval (LPI) at signalized crosswalks and why it isn't used at every crossing location. Mr. Reed reminded the Commission that the LPI is a traffic signal timing technique for signalized crosswalks that delays the green light of conflicting right turn traffic for 3 or more seconds to give pedestrians a chance to establish their presence in the street. LPIs are currently used at several intersections where there is an increased potential for right turn conflicts with pedestrians.

Mr. Reed went on to say that the use of the LPI is evaluated when new signal timings are in development and that it can be added to locations where the change would be feasible within the cycle of the traffic signal. When coordinating traffic signals, as is done for most signals on arterial streets, the signals being coordinated with one another need to run the same cycle length. This means that the sum of the time allocated to all of the movements at an intersection must be equal to every other intersection with which it is coordinated. Keeping these cycle lengths to a minimum is beneficial in decreasing wait times for both vehicles and pedestrians, but they must also be high enough to accommodate the level of traffic. For this reason, the busiest intersections typically dictate what the cycle length will be for a given corridor at a given time of day. Implementing a LPI at a busy intersection that requires every second of the cycle length to accommodate demand can be a challenge, as it may cause excessive vehicle backup, leading to more impatient drivers that take more chances around pedestrians. Also, increasing the cycle length to include the LPI means that the pedestrians will then wait longer to receive a walk light at every intersection in the corridor because more time is allocated to each intersection approach. These factors and many more are taken into account during traffic signal timing development. If there is a particular intersection approach where citizens feel the LPI would be a benefit, staff will evaluate the location to determine the feasibility and consequences of changing the signal programming.

Mr. Van Wyk recommended that staff try to use LPIs wherever possible and noted that intersections with low pedestrian volumes, such as S High Street & South Avenue, may benefit

more from the use of a LPI since vehicles there are less accustomed to seeing pedestrians and having to yield to them. Mr. Reed said that he would evaluate the S High Street & South Avenue intersection for the use of a LPI and would keep this point in mind when retiming other intersections.

Old Business

4. Chestnut Ridge Drive speed study & request for crosswalks

Mr. Reed refreshed the Commission that they had approved the installation of six crosswalks on Chestnut Ridge Drive in November 2013. This was done in response to a request from a citizen for crosswalks on Chestnut Ridge Drive to facilitate pedestrian crossing at bus stops and where the sidewalk ends on one side. At present, there are no crosswalks on Chestnut Ridge Drive and the street has a long crossing distance due to the presence of bicycle lanes and bus pull offs. At the November meeting, Mr. Van Wyk had inquired as to whether raised crosswalks would be better at these locations to control speed, going on to say that there should be a mechanism for installing physical traffic calming devices on non-neighborhood streets. Upon reviewing Mr. Van Wyk's comments in the meeting summary, City Council requested that staff review speeds on Chestnut Ridge Drive and evaluate the need for traffic calming.

Mr. Reed shared the results of a speed study for Chestnut Ridge Drive conducted in January 2014, which measured speeds at three locations in the vicinity of the Copper Beech and Campus View housing complexes. 85th percentile speeds at these locations were found to be between 33 and 36 mph. If this street were to be reviewed through the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program, it would be seen as having a borderline speed problem using the Program's goal of <35 mph 85th percentile speeds. Mr. Reed noted that no speeding complaints regarding speeding or the need for traffic calming have been received by the Public Works Department for Chestnut Ridge Drive. For these reasons, staff recommends that standard crosswalks be installed to meet the original request.

Mr. Van Wyk said that he doesn't feel Chestnut Ridge Drive is safe with the speeds that were found, but that he at least wants to see the standard crosswalks installed. Mr. Reed explained that Chestnut Ridge Drive is a local street in a residential area and is eligible for entry into the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. If residents have concerns about speeding, they should contact the Police Department and can begin organizing property owners and/or HOA members to make a request to enter the Team Up to Slow Down Program and Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program (information on these programs is available on the city website). Staff recognizes the next revision of the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program Guide should include information on how neighborhoods consisting primarily of rental housing, such as Chestnut Ridge Drive, can be handled.

Mr. Ferrell noted that, even with the crosswalks, there will remain an issue at the bus pull-offs when passengers choose to walk in front of the bus and cross two lanes of traffic. Mr. Reed said that a lesson learned from this street is that bus-pull offs on lower volume roads can contribute to safety issues since exiting passengers must cross two lanes of moving traffic instead of just one if there were no pull-off installed. The Commission commented that passengers seem to refuse to use safe crossing habits and that education is needed to discourage crossing in front of the bus.

The Commission directed staff to move forward with the installation of standard crosswalks on Chestnut Ridge Drive. Mr. Eshelman suggested that speeds be re-evaluated after the crosswalks are in place.

Other Business/Announcements

5. Welcome to New Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee Members

The Commission extended a welcome to Elise Barella and Eric Saner, the two new Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee members appointed on December 5, 2013. The new members have joined current members Carl Droms, John McGehee, and Len Van Wyk. The Commission also thanked Thomas Jenkins and Charlie Chenault for their service on the Subcommittee from 2010 through 2013.

Adjourn



85th %tile Speeds
 EB: 33 mph
 WB: 36 mph
 ADT: 6,000 veh/day

85th %tile Speeds
 EB: 34 mph
 WB: 35 mph
 ADT: 4,600 veh/day

85th %tile Speeds
 EB: 35 mph
 WB: 34 mph
 ADT: 3,000 veh/day

Legend

- ★ Traffic Study Location
- 🚌 Bus Stop
- ▭ Proposed Crosswalk

Traffic Study Results
Chestnut Ridge Drive

