



**TRANSPORTATION SAFETY & ADVISORY COMMISSION**

**CITY OF HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA**

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

**FROM:** Brad Reed, Transportation Planner

**DATE:** Tuesday, October 20, 2014

**RE:** Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from October 8, 2014 Meeting

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The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Wednesday, October 8, 2014 at 8:30 AM in Room 205 of the City Municipal Building, 345 S. Main St.

Members and Advisory Members present included: Bill Blessing (Citizen Member), Calvin Ferrell (Citizen Member), Len Van Wyk (Citizen Member), Brad Reed (Public Works Member), Thanh Dang (Public Works), Doug Stader (DMV), Paul Helmuth (Fire), Reggie Smith (Public Transportation), Lee Eshelman (JMU)

Guests Present: James Wininger (Public Transportation – Safety & Training Coordinator)

*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.*

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*Welcome*

*Old Business*

**1. S Mason St & Martin Luther King, Jr. Way Pedestrian Safety Complaint**

Mr. Reed reintroduced a citizen complaint discussed at previous meetings regarding southbound vehicles on S Mason St not yielding to pedestrians in the crosswalk when turning left onto Martin Luther King, Jr. Way. The citizen described having near misses with vehicles on multiple occasions and having drivers yell at her because they do not understand that they must yield to pedestrians when turning. She requested that the exclusive crosswalk movement be

returned to the intersection to stop all vehicular traffic while pedestrians are crossing. Public Works presented the issue to the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee at their September 22 meeting (meeting summary available at <http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/bicycle-pedestrian-summaries>), which the complainant attended and shared her concerns. The Subcommittee recommended that education and enforcement be used as the primary tools to address the issue and suggested that the Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission consider a few second extension of the leading pedestrian interval for the north-south pedestrian movements. It was recommended that an exclusive pedestrian phase not be considered as a way to address this issue, as it would not be the appropriate tool for the type of pedestrian movements at this intersection, which are mostly north-south with virtually no pedestrians wishing to cross diagonally. Further, the Subcommittee felt that the leading pedestrian interval is a helpful feature that works well in lieu of an exclusive pedestrian phase and commented that the exclusive pedestrian phase, if used, which would have a significant impact on delays for vehicles and pedestrians if it were to be used.

Mr. Van Wyk commented that making only small changes to the intersection now would be a good approach, as conditions are likely to change in the near future given that there is renewed consideration for a hotel conference center on the S Main St & Martin Luther King, Jr. Way block. Mr. Van Wyk also noted that this issue could occur anywhere where there is a permissive left turn even with low turn volumes, so this issue is a broader one possible caused by distraction and not knowing the law.

Mr. Ferrell asked if there had been consideration given to changing the signage on the signal arm to remind drivers to yield to pedestrians when turning left. Mr. Blessing commented that no amount of signage and on-road educations seems to be 100% effective and there is already a sign indicating that vehicles must yield on the green ball when turning left.

Mr. Blessing went on to question whether there is a possibility of the City hiring a professional public relations person who knows how to do outreach specifically on bike-pedestrian-motorist education. Mr. Eshelman said that JMU is interested in this as well for educating the public on their new Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan and has looked into an individual that ran a campaign for Virginia Tech when they put out their bicycle & pedestrian plan. Mr. Blessing and Mr. Van Wyk suggested that the City and JMU considering teaming up to find someone who can fulfill these needs.

The Commission made a final recommended that further education & enforcement efforts be explored and that the leading pedestrian interval be lengthened to 10 seconds to help pedestrians get farther across the intersection before traffic starts moving.

### *New Business*

## **2. Northend Greenway Project & Funding**

Ms. Dang asked the Commission for their thoughts on the recommended phasing and funding of the Northend Greenway Project by the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee (details on these recommendations along with a map of the referenced project segments can be found in the Subcommittee's October 6 meeting agenda and summary available at <http://www.harrisonburgva.gov/bicycle-pedestrian-subcommittee>). The Subcommittee's first choice in their recommendation was the completion of segments 2-4 using the available \$1.2 Million of funding. These funds are comprised of \$600,000 from the City and \$600,000 from the

VDOT Revenue Sharing Program (more info on this state funding program can be found at <http://www.virginiadot.org/business/local-assistance-access-programs.asp>). Segment 1 would likely be completed by the City as part of the Mt. Clinton Pk & Chicago Ave/Park Rd roundabout project, which is not fully funded at this time. Segment 5 would be considered a later phase of the Northend Greenway Project.

The Subcommittee's recommendations are ranked in the following order with the preferred option listed first:

- **Option F1 (Segments 2, 3 and 4)** - This option runs from the intersection of Mt. Clinton Pike and Virginia Avenue to the end of pavement at Suter Street.
- **Option F2 plus Segment 4 (Segments 4 and 5)** - This option runs from Suter Street & Liberty Street to Washington Street.
- **Option E (Segments 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5)** - This option "combines" the Northend Greenway project with the Mt. Clinton Pike Roundabout and Road Improvement Project.
- **Option D (Segments 2, 7, 8, and 4)** – This option considers an alternative alignment starting at the intersection of Virginia Avenue and Mt. Clinton Pike, and travel east on Mt. Clinton Pike to Liberty Street intersection.
- **Option C (Segments 2, 7, 8 and 9)** – This option starts at the intersection of Virginia Avenue and Mt. Clinton Pike, and travel east on Mt. Clinton Pike to Technology Drive

Mr. Van Wyk commented that the Subcommittee's top recommendation preserves the spirit of the Northend Greenway, which is supported by the community.

The Commission voted unanimously in favor of the Subcommittee's suggestions.

### **3. Request for All Way Stop Control in Northeast Neighborhood**

Mr. Reed shared a citizen concern regarding poor sight distance at several intersections on E Wolfe St in the Northeast Neighborhood due to parked cars. The citizen requested that 4-way stops be considered at these intersections to improve safety. Public Works will be looking into this issue in more detail and is not prepared to make a recommendation at this time.

### **4. Central Ave Road Marking Study**

Mr. Reed shared results from a Public Works study of different marking configurations on Central Ave in an effort to determine which configuration would produce the lowest vehicle speeds. Recent repaving of Central Ave between South Ave and Pleasant Hill Rd presented an opportunity to perform such a study to provide quantitative data related to the impacts of street markings on driver behavior on residential streets. Traffic studies were completed before repaving with white edgelines and a yellow centerline, after repaving with no markings, and after the application of white edgelines. Through review of research from other localities and observation of city streets, it has been found that not having a centerline has the following benefits:

- The street has a more residential feel.
- Vehicles have space to give pedestrians and cyclists a wider berth when passing in areas with parked vehicles. A lot of residents walk & bike inside the edgelines since there is no sidewalk on Central Ave and must walk into the travel lane to get around parked cars.

- Drivers tend to use more caution when approaching one another due to the lack of demarcated lane space.

During the study period, city staff received calls from several residents inquiring as to why the centerline was not replaced, with some callers stating that they have observed vehicles not staying on the far side of the street, especially in the curved section between Laurel St and Southampton Dr (north side). One commenter suggested that the Commission consider marking a centerline all the way to Hope St from the north to cover the section with a blind hill between Laurel St and Hope St and direct vehicles to the edge of their lane space, though it was indicated that no issues have been observed without a centerline in this area.

Through observations, staff has witnessed drivers tending to settle slightly towards the middle of the street, but then moving over to the edge when passing. These qualitative observations also showed that drivers tended to provide more space when passing cyclists and pedestrians without a centerline present. The results of the speed study indicate that there is no significant difference in speed between each marking configuration. For this reason, and given concerns from residents, it is City staff's recommendation to only mark a centerline in the curved section of Central Ave and leave the rest of the street as-is with no centerline. The option of extending the centerline to Hope St is one that staff feels should be left up to the Commission, as no issues have been observed due to the vertical curve in that area.

Mr. Van Wyk stated that he used to live in this neighborhood prior to any markings being installed and did not witness issues near Hope St. He went on to suggest that a centerline only be installed from Laurel St to Southampton Dr (north side) to maximize the area without a centerline given the observed benefits of not using one. Mr. Blessing suggested that markings for residential streets should be consistent and that, since the preference on most streets is to not have a centerline, one should only be installed on Central Ave if it is necessary. The Commission was in agreement with these statements and unanimously recommended that City forces mark a centerline on Central Ave only between Laurel St and Southampton Dr (north side).

#### *Other Business / Announcements*

##### **5. Update on Old Town Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program**

This item was tabled until the November meeting, as data collection is still in progress to evaluate the effects of the temporary E Bruce St & Ott St half-closure.

##### **6. Update on traffic pattern changes at Evelyn Byrd Ave & university Blvd and E Market St & Linda Ln**

Mr. Reed provided the Commission with an update on two recent traffic pattern changes, the information for which can be found in the attached press releases. Mr. Reed noted that a few citizen comments have been received for the change on Evelyn Byrd Ave, all of which were related to vehicles in the right turn lane not noticing the new markings and signage and proceeding straight through the intersection, putting them in conflict with vehicles in the correct through lane. Additional markings and signage have been added to help with this issue.

Mr. Van Wyk commented that the inconsistency in lane designations in this area creates confusion for drivers. Mr. Reed responded by noting that this area has changed significantly

since the streets were first constructed and the City has had to get creative in its approach to improving conditions for present traffic patterns given the many difficulties involved with street expansion.

**7. Guest introduction**

Mr. Smith introduced James Winger, the new Safety & Training Coordinator for the Department of Public Transportation. Mr. Winger will help represent HDPT in Commission proceedings.

**8. Advertisement for new Commission member**

Mr. Reed announced that there is a Commission opening advertised on the City website. Mr. Blessing noted that his position and that of Mr. Van Wyk will also be opening at the end of the year. An advertisement will be posted by the end of October for these two additional positions, the appointments for which would begin on January 1, 2015.

*Adjourn*



For Immediate Release  
September 22, 2014

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## Changes to Traffic Patterns Take Place

Harrisonburg, VA – The Public Works Department’s Traffic Engineering Division will be tweaking traffic patterns this week at two city intersections.

### **Evelyn Byrd Avenue and University Boulevard**

The approach lanes will be reconfigured on each side of Evelyn Byrd Avenue to provide left-turn-only, through only, and right-turn-only lanes. This change will improve visibility of oncoming traffic and provide a dedicated waiting area for vehicles turning left.

These changes will not include left turn arrows on the traffic signals as the left turn volume is too low to justify their use.

This configuration was chosen using a traffic analysis completed by Public Works and through a recommendation by the Transportation Safety and Advisory Commission.

A matching lane reconfiguration is planned for University Boulevard, when it is scheduled to be repaved during the summer of 2015.

### **East Market Street and Linda Lane**

The approach lanes on Linda Lane, traveling southbound, will be reconfigured to provide a dual left turn lane on to eastbound East Market Street. This reconfiguration was developed through analysis of traffic patterns as a way to reduce wait times on Linda Lane and improve overall traffic flow at the intersection with East Market Street.

This work will be done this week when the intersections are repaved as part of the annual paving program.

This schedule can be subject to change due to weather conditions and unforeseen maintenance on equipment.

-more-



Intersection of Evelyn Byrd Avenue and University Boulevard



Intersection of Linda Lane and East Market Street

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