



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, December 23, 2014

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary from December 10, 2014 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on Wednesday, December 10, 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 (NE Citizen Member), Len Van Wyk (SW Citizen Member), Russell Presnell (NW Citizen Member), Joshua Humphries (At-Large Citizen Member), Brad Reed (Public Works), Thanh Dang (Public Works), MPO Greg Deeds (Police), Sgt. Pete Ritchie (Police), 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. Welcome to new Commission member Joshua Humphries**
- 2. Thank you to Len Van Wyk for his service on the Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee from September 2010 through December 2014**
- 3. Recommendation of new Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee members**

The Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee recommended that the Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission reappoint Carl Droms and appoint as a new member Alleyn Harned. The Commission agreed with the Subcommittee's recommended appointments. The other applicants will be notified that they were not appointed and invited to attend meetings as citizen participants.

Old Business

4. Request for bicycle & pedestrian accommodations on Garbers Church Rd

Mr. Van Wyk notified the Commission that he intends to draft a letter to City Council and the School Board requesting that a shared use path on Garbers Church Rd be included in the bond for the potential new school. This correspondence would piggyback letters sent in August from the Commission on the same topic.

5. Request for All Way Stop Control in Northeast Neighborhood

Mr. Reed provided a recap on this topic from the last Commission meeting. This information is excerpted below from the November meeting summary:

Mr. Reed relayed concerns from two citizens regarding poor sight distance at several intersections on E Wolfe St in the Northeast Neighborhood due to parked cars. One citizen requested that 4-way stops be considered at the intersections of E Wolfe St & Broad St and E Wolfe St & Myrtle St to improve safety, noting that other factors such as perceived high speeds on Broad St, Myrtle St, and Sterling St and possible added pedestrian traffic on a newly added E Wolfe St sidewalk may be added justification for a 4-way stop. The other citizen requested that parking be restricted to improve sight at the E Wolfe St & Sterling St intersection in the wake of a recent vehicle crash.

Mr. Reed shared a results map from a recent traffic study in the neighborhood, which is attached to this summary. He went on to note that there are existing parking restrictions on 4 corners of Broad St and 2 corners of Sterling St, but that they are inconsistent in their distance from the intersection and do not provide the 250-ft standard intersection sight distance that would be required at a new public street intersection with a 25 mph speed limit. Myrtle St has no existing parking restrictions at its intersection with E Wolfe St.

Public Works staff performed an all-way stop control study as per the FHWA Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices at the E Wolfe St & Broad St and E Wolfe St & Myrtle St intersections. These studies define engineering warrants for whether a 4-way stop would be appropriate at a given location, taking into consideration factors such as traffic volume, speed, and crash history. Neither of the studied intersections met the parameters needed to justify a 4-way stop because the volume on the streets is too low and fewer than 5 crashes were experienced in the past year that could have been prevented by a 4-way stop.

Mr. Reed went on to share the 1-Year crash history at each of the three intersections, finding the following:

- *Broad St – 1 (DUI, ran stop sign)*
- *Myrtle St – 1 (crash report specifically stated that parked vehicles blocked sight)*
- *Sterling St – 2 (ran stop sign, unknown reason(s))*

Upon review of the on-street parking restriction needed to achieve standard intersection sight distance, it was found that a number of homes without off-street parking would be impacted:

- *Broad St – 2 multi-family buildings & 1 single family home*
- *Myrtle St – 2 single family homes (both have the option to park on E Wolfe St instead)*
- *Sterling St – 1 single family home (has the option to park on E Wolfe St instead)*

It was also found that homes with off-street parking in this neighborhood typically have small driveways that can accommodate only 1-2 vehicles. For these reasons, it is anticipated that a parking restriction to achieve standard sight distance would be unfavorable to the neighborhood and may displace on-street parked cars to locations that block on-street parking access for homes near the middle of the street block.

Mr. Blessing commented that he travels the streets in this neighborhood frequently and a couple of the intersections have poor sight due to parked vehicles, particularly in the morning before people have left for work.

Mr. Van Wyk said that the stop signs at the E Wolfe St & Myrtle St intersection seem to be flipped, as E Wolfe St carries more traffic than Myrtle St. The Commission briefly discussed this and concluded that it would likely be a challenge to flip this configuration given the consistent nature of the stop configuration in the neighborhood, with east-west streets being stop controlled and north-south ones being uncontrolled. It was also noted that, to achieve sight lines after flipping these stop signs, there would likely be a need for a parking restriction on E Wolfe St which has much more on-street parking demand than Myrtle St.

Mr. Presnell commented that the E Wolfe St & Broad St intersection seems particularly bad, as a cab driver he knows was recently involved in an accident there.

Mr. Van Wyk said that 4-way stops may be good, whereas parking restrictions would be much harder. He asked whether there would be a downfall to using 4-way stops. Mr. Reed responded that there is an allowance in the 4-way stop warrant analysis for engineering judgment, which could be applied to situations where existing sight distance problems are unable to be resolved by other measures. It is the City's policy to first explore other alternatives prior to installing a 4-way stop that may not be warranted based on the MUTCD. This is important, as the issues related to the use of unwarranted 4-way stops are numerous and well-documented (<http://www.ite.org/traffic/documents/aha99b49.pdf>), with safety problems being created when drivers fail to obey the stop sign when they only rarely encounter conflicting vehicles on the cross street.

Mr. Baker suggested that there may be other ways to improve sight distance without going to the extent of a parking restriction for the full standard sight distance. Given the challenges involved with resolving this issue, the Commission requested that Public Works explore the issue further and return with ideas in December.

After further review, the Public Works department found that much improved sight distance could be obtained by restricting parking within 50 feet of the intersection radius on all four corners of all uncontrolled side streets. This would provide better sight lines while not having a major parking impact. Public Works recommended against 4-way stops at these locations because of their failure to meet the previously discussed MUTCD warrant studies, the fact that conditions can be improved by a small parking restriction, and because there is concern that

stop signs on Broad St, Myrtle St, and/or Sterling St would be unexpected and have a high potential for roll through due to their lack of consistency with other neighborhood streets and the much lower cross street volume on E Wolfe St.

Mr. Van Wyk questioned whether there would be a higher incidence of stop sign roll through on E Wolfe St with better sight distance. Mr. Reed responded that this is not expected, as sight will not be wide open as it is at some city intersections that have roll through problems. Mr. Reed added that pedestrian visibility would be better with less parking at the corners of the intersections.

Mr. Presnell asked whether the parking restriction would be enough to improve the situation at Broad St and suggested that the 4-way stop may be safer. Mr. Blessing said that he is in favor of the parking restriction rather than a 4-way stop. Mr. Van Wyk said that this location is not appropriate for a 4-way stop because of the traffic volume difference between the two streets. Mr. Reed added that there will be opportunity to evaluate the effectiveness of the parking restriction and consider further measures if needed.

In reference to the crash history research provided for this evaluation, Sgt. Ritchie noted that crashes are only reported if there is over \$1,800 worth of property damage and/or if there is an injury. Other incidents are only reported as Calls for Service, but that format does not include any details on what happened. He believes that all crashes should be reported to improve our transportation study efforts and tracking of issues. The Commission agreed with this idea and suggested that it could draft a letter to Chief Monticelli to recommend more thorough crash reporting. Sgt. Ritchie added that this would not necessarily mean completing a full report for every crash, a process that takes some time, but could mean some variation on it for crashes that don't meet the formal report damage/injury threshold.

Mr. Van Wyk asked how significant the parking impacts of the proposed restriction would be. Mr. Reed said that they would have the impact of removing 1-2 spaces at each corner of each intersection beyond the existing parking restrictions and the ordinance imposed 20-ft from corner restriction, though some corners already meet the suggested restriction and would not be impacted.

The Commission voted unanimously to proceed with the 50-ft parking restriction recommended by the Public Works Department. Public Works staff will inform the Police Department when the signs are installed so that enforcement can be started.

6. Citizen concern regarding University Blvd & Evelyn Byrd Ave lane configuration changes

Mr. Blessing informed the Commission that he received a citizen complaint about vehicles proceeding straight in the newly designated right turn only lanes on Evelyn Byrd Ave at its intersection with University Blvd, which is creating confusion and a dangerous situation. Sgt. Ritchie added that there have been crashes as a result of this issue.

Mr. Reed explained that the Public Works Department is aware of these issues and has received several complaints to the same effect. The intersection has been monitored closely since the lane change was made and the number of vehicles making this incorrect maneuver has been counted periodically to determine whether there is a learning curve tapering off as with any other traffic pattern change, or whether there is a broader issue that needs to be dealt with. Signage and lane markings at the intersection are extensive, with orange flagged 'New Traffic

Pattern Ahead' signs, 'Right Lane Must Turn Right' signs, and pictorial lane designation signs. The most recent round of observation was conducted by Public Works using video recorded for a 3-hour period during evening rush hour (3:30-6:30 PM) and found that a total of 47 drivers went straight in the right turn only lane, with 35 of those approaching eastbound and 12 approaching westbound. This incidence was much higher than previous counts performed during morning and lunch hours. To address this issue, Public Works recommends that delineators be installed to physically direct right turn traffic and block them from traveling straight in the right lane. This measure would be very similar to what is in place at the right turn lanes on Reservoir St at Neff Ave and on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way at Reservoir St.

Mr. Van Wyk asked whether there is any concern with trucks making the right turn with the delineators, which would restrict turning radii. Mr. Reed said that large trucks were not observed during the study period and have other route options anyway. Also, the Fire Department and Department of Public Transportation have been notified of this recommendation and stated that they have no issues with the proposal.

Mr. Huffman noted that he had not observed issues with left turn safety prior to the change and that he had not noticed the right turn issues in discussion.

The Commission voted unanimously to proceed with the recommendation to install delineators for the right turn lanes. Mr. Reed added that the delineators would be situated so as not to block the crosswalks and that this delineator configuration would be installed automatically when University Blvd is repaved and given the same configuration as Evelyn Byrd Ave in the summer of 2015.

Other Business / Announcements - None

Adjourn