



Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission

City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

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

FROM: Thanh Dang, Transportation & Environmental Planning Manager

DATE: April 18, 2016

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Meeting Summary for Wednesday, April 13, 2016

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on **Wednesday, April 13, 2016 at 8:30AM in Room 011 of City Hall, 409 S Main St.**

Members present included: Bill Blessing, Chance Ebersold, Joshua Humphries, and Thanh Dang.

Advisory Members & Guests Present: Jim Baker, Cpl. Wayne Westfall, Doug Stader, Deputy Chief Ian Bennett, and Paul Helmuth

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

1. Update on Safety/ Sight Distance concerns at Washington Street/ Liberty St

Ms. Dang provided an overview of the Commission's recommendations from the last meeting in March 2016. Having brought the matter back to Public Works, she explained that staff has a new suggestion for the Commission's consideration. The stop bar on Washington Street will still be moved closer to the intersection. However, instead of relocating the double yellow line on Liberty St, staff recommends leaving the double yellow line where it is and to add white edge lines on both sides of Liberty Street.

The white edge lines would serve to:

- Direct drivers traveling northbound on Liberty St to move closer to the center of the road, instead of driving closer to the right curb as they currently are, thus improving positioning to be seen by drivers stopped on Washington St.
- Slow down drivers on Liberty St as they are traveling in a narrower space.
- Delineate parking areas on Liberty St for residential homes that have limited to no off street parking
- Not require any grinding/ removal of existing pavement markings. Removal of the double yellow line for relocation may result in confusion as old markings would still be lightly visible.

Ms. Dang reported that collision reports for 2014 had zero reportable collisions, in 2015 there was 1 or 2 reportable collisions (discrepancy in data sources on whether there was a second collision or not), and to date in 2016 there have been no reportable collisions. Since there are reports of close calls, improvements to the area were still recommended.

The new white edge lines will result in travel lanes would be about 10 to 10.5 feet wide, and the white edge line would be marked on both sides of Liberty St from approximately Edom Road to Kratzer Avenue.

The Commission recommended the Public Works move the stop bar on Washington St and add the white edge lines on Liberty St.

2. Review of pedestrians crossing on N Liberty St & Kratzer Ave

The Commission was asked to visit this site prior to the meeting, and the following observations were made (reference attached aerial photo/ sketch in Attachment A):

- Lots A, B, and C are at different elevations. Lot A is the highest elevation. It is difficult for pedestrians to cross between the different parking lots.
- At afternoon shift change, pedestrians were observed leaving from the facility from Exits 1 and 2 and walked to their vehicles following many different paths. Those paths are shown on the sketch in red.
- At afternoon shift change, a number of vehicles parked and standing on Liberty St in front of the facility on both sides of Liberty St. A few vehicles blocked the crosswalk. Pedestrians crossed mid block to get to the waiting vehicles across the street.

Overall, Commission members are concerned for pedestrian safety.

Ms. Dang stated that Public Works staff will meet with managers of the facility to discuss concerns and would make recommendations for improvement. Commission members recommended that the following be considered:

- Installing a new crosswalk on Kratzer Ave, and new sidewalk at the locations shown on the sketch. This would help to consolidate the crossings to Lots B and C at one location. And would provide pedestrians traveling between lot B and C with a hard, level surface to walk on.
- Prohibiting parking and standing vehicles in this area. The facility would need to provide off street loading and unloading zones.

There was discussion that we needed to provide safe pedestrian infrastructure first, and then we need facility managers to communicate these concerns and instruct their employees on where the safest places are to cross.

Public Works will schedule a meeting with facility managers and will report back to the Commission.

3. Mason St & Water St

Ms. Dang presented that concerns have been received. Drivers traveling westbound on Water St are having difficulty seeing cross traffic on Mason St at the intersection, especially with vehicles parked at or very close to the corner both north and south of the intersection on the east side (in front of Benny's and Shenandoah Joe's and the lawyers office). Cpl. Westfall has ticketed and towed vehicles at this location for violating the city code (no parking 20-ft from corners).

The Commission discussed that people are parking on street to get to the new stores in this area and within Urban Exchange. Urban Exchange residents and visitors also park on street. Ms. Dang stated that sight distance at this location, even without on street parking, is not ideal. The Commission discussed that many intersections in the downtown area do not meet sight distance standards, but that the context of the area is different than other parts of the city.

Ms. Dang recommended on street parking be designated and marked on Mason St similar to other streets downtown. If a vehicle is not parked within the marked parking space then they are illegally parked. Additionally, on street parking will slow down drivers who must negotiate a narrower space.

Ms. Dang recommended that on Mason St north of the Water St intersection (in front of the Urban Exchange) that the first parking space closest to Water St be marked at minimum 20-ft away from the corner, equal to the minimum distance in city code. She then recommended that to the south of the Water St intersection, because sight distance is poorer in that direction, that parking be marked starting a minimum of 30-ft away from the Water St intersection.

The Commission supported the recommendations.

4. University Blvd & Evelyn Byrd Ave

Ms. Dang reviewed the intersection's history. Figures 1, 2, and 3 show the lane configurations prior to September 2014, between October 2014 to August 2015, and after 2015. Prior to changes made in September 2014, the Commission and City received many complaints regarding left turn safety issues due to poor sight distance of oncoming traffic. Commission meeting summaries indicate that this discussion began in 2012, possibly as early as 2008.



Figure 1. Above. Original configuration, prior to October 2014.

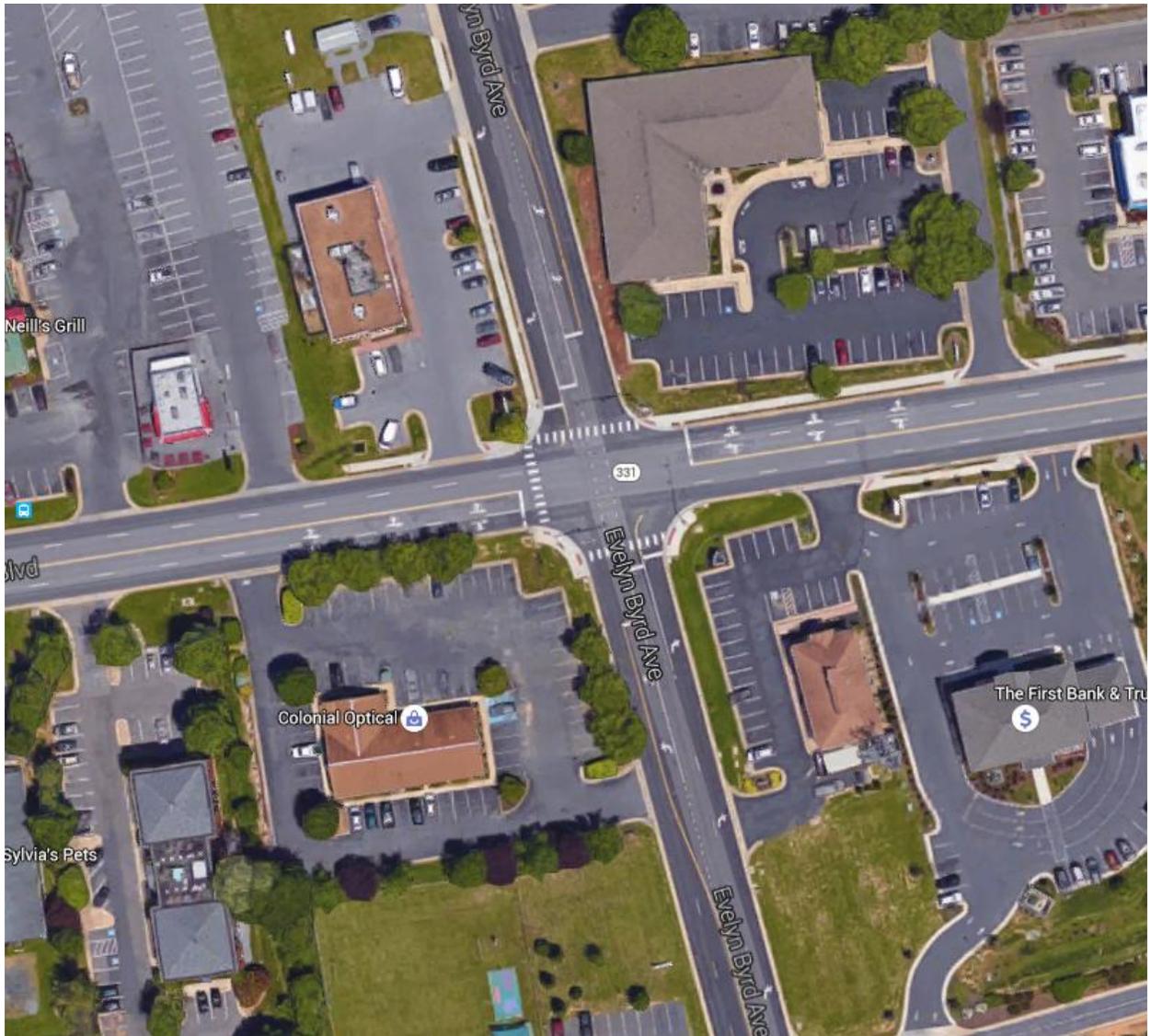


Figure 2. Above. After lane configurations changed on Evelyn Byrd Ave only between October 2014 to mid-August 2015.



Figure 3. Above. After lane configurations changed on University Blvd after mid-August 2015.

Research of collision reports found:

- Between January 1, 2013 through September 2014 –
 - 12 total collisions at this intersection, of those
 - 3 collisions on University Blvd due to left turn vehicles failing to yield the right of way and
 - 3 collisions on Evelyn Byrd Ave due to left turn vehicles failing to yield the right of way.
 - The remaining collisions were due to running red lights or were rear collisions not attributed to the intersection design.

- Between October 2014 through mid-August 2015, when only Evelyn Byrd Ave's lane configuration changes were made
 - 12 total collisions, of those
 - 4 collisions on University Blvd due to left turn vehicles failing to yield the right of way and
 - 5 collisions on Evelyn Byrd Ave due to left turn vehicles failing to yield the right of way.
- Between mid-August 2015 through March 2016, after University Blvd's lane configuration changes were made,
 - 6 total collisions, of those
 - zero (0) on University Blvd due to left turn vehicles failing to yield the right of way and
 - 2 on Evelyn Byrd Ave due to left turn vehicles yielding the right of way.
- Between October 2014 through March 2016 –
 - Only one reported collisions due to a conflict between the right turn lane and straight through lane. It occurred on University Blvd - V1 traveling northbound on University in straight lane and V2 traveling northbound in right turn lane; V1 attempted to change lanes and enter right turn lane striking V2.

In summary, there was no decrease in left turn failing to yield collisions on Evelyn Byrd Ave. After University Blvd was changed, there have been no collisions due to left turn failing to yield.

Due to the reported close calls and confusion with the current intersection configuration, Public Works recommended replacing the sign on the mast arm. The middle through lane arrow on the sign will have bends in it to represent the maneuver drivers take to get through the intersection.

Mr. Humphries stated that he did not know how much more advance warning the city should provide at this intersection and asked what is the next step if this doesn't work? He suggested that the intersection should return to its original pre-2014 configuration. Mr. Blessing noted that the original configuration had more collisions than present day configuration and he does not recommend going back.

The Commission discussed other possible improvements:

- Pocket right turn lanes to help with driver expectancy with the right turn lane, and also reduce the deflection for drivers through the intersection, since the left turn lane would be shifted one lane width to the right. It was acknowledged that pocket right turn lanes has significant right of way costs and would also require the replacement of the traffic signals.
- Road diet on University Blvd and/or Evelyn Byrd Ave, which is where the 4-lane roadway with 2-lanes in each direction is changed to a 3-lane roadway with 1-lane in each direction and a center two way turn lane. This is an accepted Federal Highway Administration practice under the right conditions and has been used by VDOT and other localities to improve road safety. Mr. Baker noted that with the current 4-lane configuration oftentimes the two inner through lanes become left turn lanes, and the through capacity of the street is reduced to 1 lane in each direction. Neff Avenue is a 3-lane roadway and has 8,500 vehicles per day. Compare to University Blvd which has 10,300-10,900 vehicles per day. Mr. Baker added that more extensive study of this area is needed before road diets can be recommended.

- Elimination of left turns at this intersection was suggested, but Commission members and advisory members present overwhelmingly did not recommend this. Too many people use this intersection to get places, and eliminating left turns would push the volume and potentially push problems to other intersections.

It was brought up and emphasized by several present that the challenge with this intersection is the topography; this intersection is at the crest of a hill making it difficult to see the other side of the intersection particularly on University Blvd. If this intersection was flat, we may not be discussing this intersection. Mr. Baker showed an aerial image of the Neff Ave and Reservoir St intersection. The southbound through lane on Reservoir St has deflection through the intersection, but because the intersection is flat drivers can see the northbound left turning vehicles and other traffic.

The Commission recommended that the next step would be to change the sign on the mast arm. Public Works will change the sign within a few weeks, and will monitor the intersection.

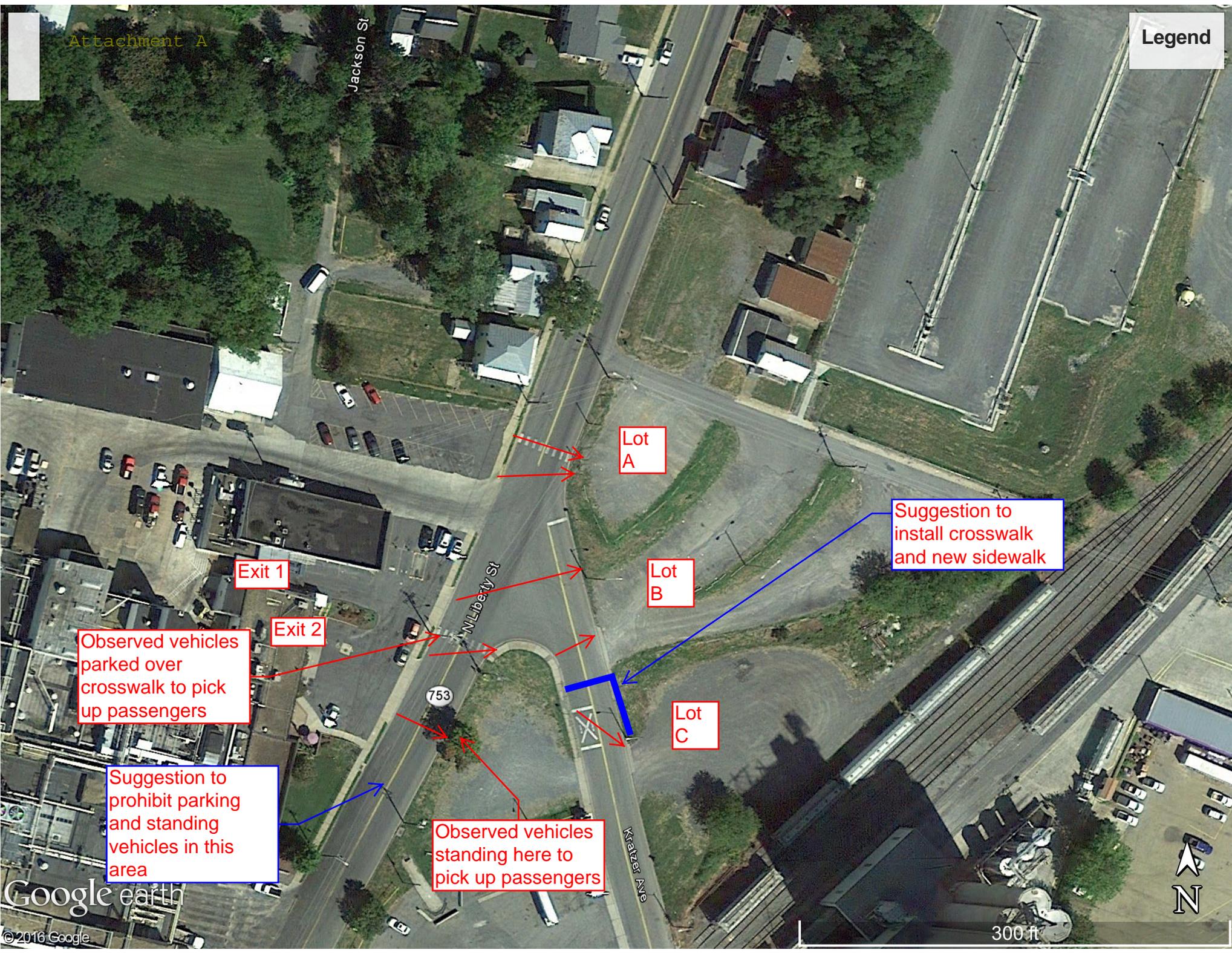
The Commission had an extensive discussion regarding the guide tracks through the intersection. Public Works will look into this further.

Other Business/ Announcements

No announcements

Adjourn

Next Meeting May 11, 2016, 8:30am



Exit 1

Exit 2

Lot A

Lot B

Lot C

Observed vehicles parked over crosswalk to pick up passengers

Suggestion to install crosswalk and new sidewalk

Suggestion to prohibit parking and standing vehicles in this area

Observed vehicles standing here to pick up passengers

