



Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission
City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

TO: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Members

FROM: Ian Pike, Transportation Systems Specialist

DATE: Wednesday, September 6, 2017

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Agenda for Wednesday, August 9, 2017

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on **August 9, 2017 at 8:30AM in Room 011 of City Hall, 409 S Main St.**

Commission members present: Bill Blessing, Jim Baker, Chance Ebersold, Josh Humphries, Marian Lebherz, Leonard Van Wyk, Cpl Wayne Westfall

Advisory Members and Guests present: Lee Eshelman, Tom Hartman, Paul Helmuth, Ian Pike, Doug Stader, Erin Yancey

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

Business

1. Welcome to New Member

Marian Lebherz was recently appointed to the commission by City Council.

2. Update on Previous Items

Public Works met with EMU officials again to discuss extending the bike lane on Park Rd by removing the parking in front of the ball fields. The concern was that by removing the parking, people would park further in the neighborhood, unless EMU could provide additional parking. The EMU officials said that they would direct people to use the parking lot across the street and only allow drop-off and pick-up during games along the curb.

The group discussed that EMU should be responsible for directing drivers to the parking lot instead of parking on the street.

3. Appoint New Member to Bike/Pedestrian Subcommittee

There were four applicants to the newly vacant position. The subcommittee considered multiple factors, such as their location within the city, if they were more of a walker or cyclist, and other strengths such as their connection to other industries in the city or their work with underserved populations. In the end, they selected Matt Hassman as he is primarily a cyclist and he's the Safe Routes to School coordinator for the city schools so is a fierce advocate for getting more kids to walk and bike.

Mr. Humphries motioned to approve the appointment. Mr. Ebersold seconded the motion. The group unanimously approved.

4. E Market St/Vine St/Hawkins St/Country Club Rd Intersection Citizen Complaint (see Attachment A)

A citizen recently emailed City Council with a suggestion to redesign the E Market St/Vine St/Hawkins St/Country Club Rd intersections and create a connection from MLK Jr Way to Country Club Rd to improve traffic flow on E Market St. The group discussed the limitations with replacing the traffic signals with a roundabout at that location. There were also larger implications with how changing this intersection would impact other nearby intersections that were not considered with this idea.

There is a project listed in the city's Capital Improvement Project and the Harrisonburg-Rockingham County MPO's Long Range Transportation Plan that connects MLK Jr Way to Country Club Rd, but it is intended as an alternative to the E Market St/Burgess Rd/Linda Ln intersection.

The group largely did not support the idea, but recommended reaching out to the citizen to invite to future Comprehensive Plan meetings.

5. I-81 N/E Market St Interchange Citizen Complaint (see Attachment B)

A citizen recently emailed Cpl Westfall with a safety complaint about turning left from Honeysuckle Ln onto Vine St due to queuing at Country Club Dr and about the off-ramp from I-81 N onto eastbound E Market St. Mr. Hartman noted, as does the citizen, that the city is obtaining funding for a project to make the interchange safer for all.

The group discussed the problem at Honeysuckle Ln and suggested that the citizen take an alternative route out of their neighborhood that would not involve turning left at Vine St. The group also suggested inviting the citizen to the Comprehensive Plan meetings.

6. Letter to City Council Regarding Loitering in Medians

Cpl Westfall is working on a letter to City Council requesting a new ordinance to limit loitering in the median at specific intersections where it would be considered a safety hazard. This ordinance would cover standing or walking up and down medians, but would not cover sidewalks or the side of the roadway. It was noted that there are other ordinances that could be used for people blocking sidewalks.

There are minimum requirements that are being developed for an intersection to meet this proposed ordinance as it must be deemed a safety hazard and not simply a nuisance. Mr. Baker suggested looking at roadway volumes as well since there is typically a minimum volume needed before a median is installed.

Other Business/ Announcements

MLK Jr Way Widening Project Update

The project is planned for completion at the end of November.

Parking on Betts Ct

At the last meeting, it was said that there are no other streets in industrial or commercial zones in the city that allow on-street parking. This is not entirely true as there are industrial and commercial zones just outside of downtown that are also near residential zones that allow on-street parking.

The group then re-opened the discussion about parking on Betts Ct. As it pertains to safety, the concern is parked vehicles blocking sight distance from vehicles turning out of the entrances. Since most of the entrances are on the south side of Betts Ct, thus providing few opportunities for on-street parking anyways, the group suggested and agreed to placing “No Parking” signs only on that side. This would still allow for on-street parking on the north side of Betts Ct.

Adjourn

Attachment A

A citizen emailed the city council and the planning commission with a suggestion to connect MLK Jr Way to Country Club Rd, then limiting access at Vine St/Country Club Rd and building a roundabout at E Market St/Vine St/Hawkins St. The email is copied below for your convenience:

“Dear Harrisonburg City Council, & Planning Commission Members,

I'd like to propose a solution to the 6-way Problem-Intersection known as **Vine St.---Country Club Rd.---E. Market St.---Hawkins St.---Sheetz**

My goals here are:

- Not bulldozing houses.
- Removing as many traffic lights as possible.

My reasoning:

My original goal was a traffic circle at the Problem Intersection, but I realized that that wouldn't work because (1) Vine-->Country Club traffic, and (2) Sheetz-->Country Club traffic, both of which *avoid* the traffic circle, would have to CROSS Market-->Vine traffic, which would be at high speed, having just come 'off' the traffic circle. So to enable my original goal of a traffic circle at this problem intersection, the majority of Vine traffic would have to be rerouted south (to MLK Way), *bypassing* the problem intersection. Doing this would (1) enable those two traffic flows (1 and 2, above) to have the right of way, and not have to be watching out for other traffic-flows which they must cross. In short, I'm making an unimpeded corridor (without any lights) from Vine, along Country Club, straight to MLK Way. This is ideal, since MLK Way should be the natural junction-point for North-Harrisonburg traffic. Without any lights, I think that we can do that corridor with one lane, but at some point, we might have to 'up it' to 2 lanes.

The project would then be completed in 2 phases:

- **Phase 1** would be creating a 'release valve' for Vine Street traffic to skip further south (to MLK Way).
- **Phase 2** would be putting in the traffic circle at Market-Vine.

The only private property to be destroyed would be the Southern Freight Lines warehouse, immediately beyond MLK Way (at 241 Blue Ridge Dr). This warehouse would be replaced by the project's only short bridge.

Please see my 2 pictures, either attached, or below.

P.S. If anyone asks you **WHY** we need this project, tell them that:

1. It is consistently 1 minute shorter for Market eastbound traffic to go via Reservoir and Carlton, than it is to just stay on Market. (This is a testament to (a.) the problem intersection -vs- (b.) the *excellently* functioning traffic-circle at Spotswood Elementary. It is **NOT** a reason to impede that now excellently-functioning **NO-LIGHT-artery**.)
2. Because the 'Friendly city' will be friendlier when traffic can just harmoniously *flow*.”

Phase 1:



Phase 2



Attachment B

A citizen emailed Cpl Westfall with a different concern about the Vine St/Country Club Rd intersection and also brought up concern with the E Market St/I-81 N interchange ramp. The email is copied below for your convenience:

“Problem one --

Most times of daylight hours, when I need to exit onto Vine to go south to Market (about 100 feet) and on toward the Pharmacy or shopping off Burgess road, I cannot get out of Honeysuckle Ln onto Vine due to traffic either blocking the road entirely OR traffic proceeding downhill greatly in excess of the posted 25 MPH (Residential) Speed signs. Mostly this traffic consists of commercial "18 wheelers" and dump trucks, but many residential vehicles speed and block the intersection as well. This sometimes stalls me within two blocks of my home for 15 to 20 minutes before I can proceed to Sentara or doctors visits for my terminal cancer treatments.

When I do finally get out of my neighborhood (Reherd Acres #2) and proceed East on Market St, I run into Problem # 2:

As I approach the Northbound I-81 off ramp onto East Market St. -- (Ramp posted Speed Limit 40 MPH onto a 35 MPH road) -- I am again and again run out of my lane of traffic (right turn signal on) wanting to turn right, across two lanes, to get onto Burgess Road ahead - at the light - by all kinds of vehicles passing the YIELD sign on the ramp at speeds over 60 MPH and forcing me to slam on my brakes with traffic right behind me or totally forget the turn onto Burgess Rd where my pharmacy and shopping needs are located.

I have repeatedly had numerous close calls here since I moved back to Harrisonburg last June. I also see this happen to others in front of me causing me to stop in traffic to avoid hitting the vehicles in front of me.

This is extremely dangerous and I am sure HPD has had many calls on this problem.

I am aware that Harrisonburg was turned down by VDOT on the requested I-81 Intersection Redesign to help alleviate this problem and the same type of traffic mess with people trying to cross ALL lanes of Eastbound traffic on Market St in less than one block to make a left turn into the Motels/Lowe's.

Until these two problems are fixed by VDOT or whomever, I feel the only reasonable solution is Police Traffic control - patrols/arrests at these intersections and the possible posting of a "Do Not Block Intersection" sign on Southbound Vine St. at Honeysuckle Ln and the possible painting of a WIDE White Line across the two Southbound lanes of Vine Street just prior to the intersection so people know where to STOP until the two sets of red lights ahead allow ALL traffic to begin to flow again.”