



Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission
City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

TO: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Members

FROM: Jakob zumFelde, Public Works Planner

DATE: August 8, 2019

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary for June 12, 2019 meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on June 12, 2019 at 8:30am in Room 011 of City Hall, 409 S Main St.

Commission members present: William Blessing, Marian Lebherz, Chance Ebersold, Kyle Lawrence, Erin Yancey (Public Works), Cpl. Wayne Westfall (Police Department)

Advisory members and guests: Dastan Khaleel (Public Works), Jakob zumFelde (Public Works), John Hood

Welcome

Business

1. Follow up items

a. Grattan Street speeding

Mr. Khaleel presented data that was collected recently by cameras and counters on Grattan Street, while JMU was not in session. The traffic counts were about 300 vehicles/day Eastbound, with an 85th percentile speed of 33 miles per hour, and 285 vehicles/day Westbound with an 85th percentile speed of about 30 miles per hour. He noted that the Westbound traffic counts were similar to those collected when JMU was in session, but the Eastbound traffic decreased by around 200 vehicles/day. Ms. Yancey noted that in the initial counts, while JMU was in session, the vehicle counts on Grattan St were higher than on Paul St, even though Paul St has a 'collector' functional classification while Grattan is a local street.

Since it is clear that vehicles are using Grattan to cut through to Mason Street instead of using MLK Jr. Way, public works staff are assessing the signal at Main Street and MLK Jr. Way to identify if the phasing and timing can be improved. If the signal can be made

more efficient, Grattan St should become less attractive as a cut through route. If improvements are identified, staff will work to implement them before classes begin in the fall.

Ms. Yancey suggested that Public Works, in collaboration with the Police Department, may also pursue developing criteria for reducing the speed limit below 25 miles per hour on roads such as Grattan Street. Cpl. Westfall said that this was done on Monument Ave, but additional research will be necessary to clarify the enforcement mechanisms for these lower speed limits. He said that he would contact the Commonwealth Attorney's Office to resolve this question. Ms. Yancey said that it would be important to also research what other localities have done, and to develop a full set of criteria to ensure that it is clear which streets this would be appropriate for. There was some discussion about traffic calming measures such as curb extensions/bump outs. Staff previously suggested that this location/problem is not appropriate for the Neighborhood Traffic Calming program, however a similar approach would be used, to start with small, less restrictive solutions, and progress to more resource intensive strategies, as needed. Staff will take the actions discussed – reviewing the Main St/MLK Jr Way signal and identifying whether a speed limit change is appropriate and enforceable – prior to considering additional measures.

2. Grant awards & new applications

Ms. Yancey gave an update on projects that are likely to receive funding, pending final approval by the Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board (CTB). The addition of a shared use path and southbound I-81 off-ramp realignment at Exit 247 were recommended for funding through SMART SCALE, adding additional improvements to the previously funded VDOT project to replace multiple East Market Street bridges, as well as improvements to the northbound I-81 off-ramp. The shared use path will stretch from MLK Jr. Way to Linda Lane/Burgess Road, crossing I-81 in the median of East Market Street, thereby eliminating multiple uncontrolled conflict points between motorized and non-motorized travelers at the acceleration and deceleration lanes for the interchange. Ms. Leberherz asked about access to the shared use path at the intersections. Ms. Yancey indicated that the exact design would be determined during the design phase for the project, and would likely be similar to crosswalks in the Charlottesville example that the project was modeled after. A second project that has been recommended for funding is the extension to a second block of the shared use path on Federal Street, between Market St and Water St, which was an application for HSIP funding. The first block will be constructed from E. Elizabeth Street to E. Market Street.

A list of proposed 2019 grant applications, with project descriptions, had been provided to the Commission and Ms. Yancey asked for comments from the Commission. Ms. Leberherz indicated that she was glad to see the North Main Street sidewalk on the list, as there are many people who walk along the road there already. There was additional discussion about creating connections to Harris Gardens apartments. Cpl. Westfall noted that there is an informal trail,

through an opening in a fence, that people use to walk from Harris Gardens to Emerson Lane. Ms. Yancey showed a diagram and described the proposed extension of University Blvd. The new alignment will provide more direct travel and improve roadway design and safety. Mr. Lawrence indicated that he has an overall concern about installing shared use paths in place of sidewalks. In particular, crossings such as driveways and intersections can be safety concerns when bicycling on a shared use path parallel to a roadway. He suggested a physically-separated bike lane as a potentially more desirable design. For shared use paths along roadways, he encouraged increasing visibility of crossings, including potentially raising the crosswalks. Cpl. Westfall also noted that the language in the state code should probably be changed, as it suggests that vehicles in private driveways must yield to pedestrians on sidewalks, but does not reference shared use paths along roadways. Ms. Yancey said that alternatives will be looked at for the University Blvd project. Mr. Lawrence noted that his concern is not specific to the University Blvd project, but may be more relevant to other locations where shared use paths are proposed along roadways.

Ms. Yancey noted that creating a sidewalk along the south side of Port Republic Road from S. Main Street to Hillside Avenue will be re-submitted for funding. Extension of the left turn lane from Port Republic Road to Bluestone Drive will also be an upcoming grant application, as it was a recommendation of the recently-completed Port Republic Road study.

3. Traffic Studies

a. S. Main St STARS study

Mr. Khaleel indicated that this study will look at the segments of S. Main Street between Pleasant Hill and Mosby Road, including the intersections at Erickson Road and at Mosby Road. The study will identify potential changes that could improve safety and congestion, as both aspects are concerns along this corridor. He noted that a separate, less detailed, evaluation is being completed regarding the potential traffic impacts from the new High School.

b. Erickson Ave & Pear St

Mr. Khaleel showed a design concept for improving this intersection, which required an unconventional design due to challenges associated with the proximity of the intersection to the railroad tracks. Additional evaluation will be done to identify the details of the improvement and get to the 60% engineering level. Mr. Lawrence asked if there will be crosswalks or other pedestrian accommodations. There are no crosswalks at the intersection currently, so this will be evaluated for whether crosswalks are warranted.

4. Studies Implementation phase

- a. E Market St STARS
- b. Port Republic Rd

Mr. Khaleel reported that one change has already been made following the completion of this study, as there are now dual right turn lanes from Port Republic Road onto S. Main Street. Peak-hour left turn restrictions at Hillcrest Dr, Crawford Ave, and Hunters Rd will be completed in the near term. Median posts will be installed south of the Forest Hill Rd intersection in 2020, when the Exit 245 Realignment project is constructed, which will make the gas stations entrances right-in/right-out.

Other Business/ Announcements

Cpl. Westfall asked about the status of traffic calming on Portland Drive. Ms. Yancey said that it is proceeding, and that the Fire Department concerns will preclude the installation of a speed hump.

Adjourn