



Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission
City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

TO: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Members

FROM: Jakob zumFelde, Public Works Planner

DATE: October 23, 2019

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary for October 9, 2019 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on October 9, 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, Len Van Wyk, Erin Yancey (Public Works), Cpl. Wayne Westfall (Police Department)

Advisory members and guests: Tom Hartman (Public Works), Jakob zumFelde (Public Works), Lee Eshelman (JMU), Matt Tobia (Fire Department), Paul Helmuth (Fire Department), Doug Stader (DMV)

Welcome

Business

1. Follow up items

a. Grattan Street speeding concern

Ms. Yancey provided an update on efforts related to the concern of traffic speeding on Grattan Street, including traffic using Grattan Street as a cut-through route between Main Street and Mason Street. Ms. Yancey indicated that City staff have determined that a 15 mph speed limit can be set and enforced in the City, as long as the justification is provided in an engineering study and the change is approved by City Council. She indicated that Public Works staff would move forward with these steps for Grattan Street.

b. Garbers Church Road crashes

Ms. Yancey provided an overview of the crashes that have occurred on Garbers Church Road in the vicinity of Glanzer Court. A crash occurred in August and residents who live nearby have expressed concern about there having been multiple crashes in somewhat close proximity over the last 5 years. Cpl. Westfall noted that many of these crashes have had speed as a factor but most of them have also included other factors, such as vehicle malfunction. Cpl. Westfall indicated that there is a behavioral concern with

drivers speeding on the road. Mr. Van Wyk asked if there was any solution to the “freak accidents” that have occurred. Cpl. Westfall indicated that with the range of causes, there is no simple way to increase safety on the road. The possibility of a road diet was mentioned, but Mr. Hartman indicated that the road was built wide as part of a regional transportation plan. As such, changing the roadway configuration should only be done with consideration of the regional implications and through discussion with regional stakeholders. Mr. Hartman indicated that staff are investigating a number of possible safety mitigations, such as centerline rumble strips, curve warning signs, digital speed radar signs to see if they are warranted at this location. Commission members agreed that these may be helpful in alerting drivers to the curve and reduce speeding, thereby increasing safety.

c. Update on grant applications

Ms. Yancey noted that two grant applications were submitted that were previously discussed with the Commission – the University Blvd Extension (Revenue Sharing Program) and N. Main Street Sidewalk Extension (Transportation Alternatives Program). She stated that an additional project was also submitted for Transportation Alternatives funding. This project is the Federal Street Shared Use Path project between E. Market Street and E. Water Street. This project was not funded through the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), despite being initially recommended for funding, due to a change in HSIP funding priorities to focus on systematic safety improvements.

d. Update on Neighborhood Traffic Calming implementation efforts

Ms. Yancey updated the Commission on implementation of various improvements proposed in Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plans. In Sunset Heights, landowners have been contacted in order to find a location for the digital speed sign on Maryland Ave. Stop bars have been installed at all stop bars in the defined boundary for traffic calming measures, and a centerline has been painted in the bend on S. Dogwood Drive. In the Portland East area, stop bars with double yellow center lines were added at 3 stops signs. A traffic island with a stop sign was installed at the intersection of Springfield Drive and Portland Drive. Public Works staff have met with the Retreat and the representatives of the other property that has rights to the access road, and was not able to obtain cooperation for a channelizing island or signage that would restrict drivers from, or advise them not to use Fieldale. Public Works staff worked with the Fire Department to identify an appropriate place for a speed table, and Ms. Yancey indicated that it was scheduled for implementation at the intersection of Fieldale Place and Springfield Drive on the day of the meeting. Finally, Ms. Yancey mentioned that the Northeast Neighborhood has submitted a completed petition to enter the Traffic Calming program. Staff will work on verifying the petitions requirements were met.

2. Traffic Studies

a. S. Main St STARS Study

Mr. Hartman explained that the goal of the STARS (Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions) program, run by VDOT, is to develop feasible improvements at areas that have notable needs. The S. Main Street corridor, stretching from Mosby Road to Pleasant Hill Road, has been selected for a STARS study. He noted that the Stone Spring/Erickson connector had only 8,000 vehicles per day traveling on it when it opened and now has 20,000 vehicles per day traveling on it. This has caused congestion at the intersection with S. Main Street, with delays for left turn movements in particular. He also noted safety concerns related to the number of driveway entrances/exits on S. Main Street.

b. Erickson Ave & Pear St Intersection

In coordination with the S. Main Street effort, an improvement to the Erickson Ave & Pear Street intersection will be further developed. As shown at the last Commission meeting, City staff identified the possibility of an R-CUT (Restricted Crossing U-turn, sometimes referred to as a “Michigan left”) to improve conditions at the intersection. Mr. Hartman said that consultants will be evaluating this and further developing plans for the improvement. He noted that a survey was created to collect feedback from residents, business owners, and others traveling along S. Main Street and the Erickson Ave/Pear Street intersection – over 200 responses to the survey were received. Staff indicated that ideas and potential recommendations from the STARS efforts will be provided to the Commission at the next meeting.

3. Studies Implementation phase

a. E Market St STARS

Mr. Hartman said that additional recommendations from the study have been implemented, including the turn lanes on University Blvd being extended at Market Street. In response to a question from Mr. Lawrence, Mr. Hartman indicated that approximately 50% of the recommendations have been implemented, with most additional recommendations requiring additional funding to be implemented. The improvements at the Valley Mall entrance and E. Market Street are likely to be put in the City’s next CIP (Capital Improvement Plan) as the cost of that project increased due to a drainage issue.

b. Port Republic Rd Study

Ms. Yancey stated that multiple recommendations from the Port Republic Road study have been implemented, with the installation of left turn restrictions being a primary change. Mr. Van Wyk asked whether there had been pushback to the changes, and Ms. Yancey and Mr. Hartman indicated that complaints had been relatively limited. Cpl. Westfall indicated that compliance has been an issue, particularly at Hunters Road. He recommended extending the time until 9:30 AM on Tuesday and Thursday, as there is a rush of students (and associated safety concern) given that 9:30 is the start time for some classes on those days. Ms. Yancey said that Public Works staff would make this change. Ms. Yancey indicated that staff are working to identify and respond to some

ripple effects of the things that have been implemented. Additional left turn restrictions will be put in place at Carrera Lane (formerly Hillcrest Drive, south of Port Republic Road) as vehicles have used that as an alternate route to Crawford Ave, replicating the safety problem. Staff are evaluating a “don’t block the box” effort on S. Main Street to ensure that residents can turn left onto S. Main Street from Maplehurst Ave, as this is an important alternate route to Hillcrest Drive. Additionally, the intersection of S. Main Street and Port Republic Road was discussed, as there have been concerns that the addition of dual right turns has decreased safety for pedestrians. Mr. Hartman indicated that staff would evaluate whether this could be reconfigured to 2 left turn lanes, only 1 through lane, and 2 right turns lanes. This would allow the right turn lanes to have flashing yellow arrows to indicate to vehicles that they should proceed with caution, in hopes of better compliance with the yield-to-pedestrians in crosswalk law.

Other Business/ Announcements

Adjourn