



Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission
City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

TO: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Members

FROM: Jakob zumFelde, Public Works Planner

DATE: April 15, 2020

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary for April 8, 2020 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on April 8, 2020 at 8:30am using a GoToMeeting. The meeting was held as normal, with Commission members attending by phone or computer. Information allowing members of the public to join was provided in the agenda, posted on the City website in the week prior to the meeting.

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

Advisory members and guests: Dastan Khaleel (Public Works), Jakob zumFelde (Public Works), Matt Tobia (Fire Department)

Welcome

Business

1. Crashes at Liberty Street & Wolfe Street intersection

Ms. Yancey provided updates on steps that staff have taken or are considering to improve safety at this intersection. She said that post alerts – bright colored stripes on the post – have been added to the stop sign posts on Wolfe St. Cpl. Westfall said that these do catch the attention of drivers and are a good step to ensure that people on Wolfe street see the stop sign. Ms. Yancey said that additional steps that staff are pursuing include adding pavement markings on Liberty St to show that the right lane is for through/right movements and the left lane is for through/left movements. This is primarily to increase awareness of drivers on Liberty St that they are on a one-way road, as some crashes have occurred due to drivers turning left on Wolfe St from the right lane. Ms. Yancey said that staff are also planning to add a crosswalk across Liberty St at this intersection.

There was some discussion about the history of this intersection, with Mr. VanWyk noting that there had been a traffic signal there in the past. Ms. Yancey said that staff's understanding is that that signal was removed in 2013 as it no longer met warrants for a traffic signal. Mr. VanWyk said that there was a time when there was both a stop sign and a traffic signal, with the signal being flashing

red for Wolfe St and flashing yellow for Liberty St. With this in mind, he indicated that safety seems to have been a concern at this intersection for many years now. Mr. Tobia noted that the business representative who attended the last meeting had primarily pointed to the site distance on Wolfe St, particularly in the westbound direction, as an issue. There was some discussion of whether the speed of drivers on Liberty St is a problem, and Cpl. Westfall said that he captured speed data at the intersection and it showed an 85th percentile speed of 31 mph. The Commissioners agreed that that is not high enough to be considered a major concern. Ms. Yancey said that if the measures currently proposed are not enough, the next step might be to install a stop sign with flashing LED lights, but that staff would prefer not to do this, given the downtown context.

2. Trucks turning at Gay Street & High Street intersection

Mr. zumFelde said that concerns have been raised about tractor trailers turning right from N. High St onto Gay St. The trucks have trouble making the turn, which causes safety concerns and has also impacted the property on the corner where there are concrete bollards to protect the house that is close to the corner. Mr. zumFelde said that an initial review of the available data, including a few hours of video on Gay St at the intersection with Noll Dr, indicates that a considerable amount of this traffic is going to local industries. Ms. Lebherz said that she drives through here often and does see a large amount of truck traffic, including both trucks going to the local industries and some trucks cutting through to go north on US 11. Cpl. Westfall said that is his observation as well, with some trucks also going to E. Market St.

The Commission members then discussed alternate routes for these trucks. Ms. Lebherz indicated that trucks going to US 11 north of the City can use Virginia Ave to Mt. Clinton Pike. Mr. Tobia suggested Edom Rd as an alternative route for trucks going to the local industries, and expressed concerns that trucks may cut through the neighborhood on 3rd Street if not well-directed to Edom Rd. Cpl. Westfall and the other Commission members agreed that this alternate route – Edom Rd to Liberty Street – appeared to be appropriate. Mr. Lawrence asked if Gay Street is the truck route around downtown going in the westbound direction, and Cpl. Westfall indicated that it is. Mr. Lawrence asked how effective a sign prohibiting tractor trailer turns would be at the High St & Gay St intersection. Cpl. Westfall said that there would be enforcement and that he could also talk with the local industries to ensure that they are aware of the restriction.

Ms. Yancey indicated that the Commission was suggesting something that staff had also discussed, which is to restrict trucks from turning from High St onto Gay St and provide signs directing them to either Edom Rd or Mt. Clinton Pike. Mr. Khaleel asked if the sign prohibiting turns could just prohibit turns by tractor trailers or trucks over a certain length. Cpl. Westfall agreed with this suggestion as tractor trailers are the problem at the intersection. Mr. VanWyk asked whether residents on Virginia Ave would be concerned about the additional truck traffic. Ms. Yancey said that it is a primary route (VA 42) and that her understanding is that there are already a notable number of trucks on the road. Mr. zumFelde indicated that traffic counts do show at least as many trucks going straight on Virginia Ave as there are turning on Gay St.

Mr. zumFelde asked the Commission for their final thoughts on the proposal, and whether it is necessary to install the truck route signs at the same time as restricting turns for tractor trailers. The Commission members were concerned about trucks finding undesirable cut-through routes, 3rd Street in particular, if adequate signs are not provided. Ms. Yancey said that staff would work to create and install these signs in the next few months.

3. Port Republic Rd Left Turn Restrictions

Mr. Khaleel reminded the Commission that the Port Republic Rd Safety and Operations Study was completed in 2019. The recommendations included peak hour left turn restrictions for Hunters Rd and addition of a traffic signal at Bradley Dr. As discussed at the last meeting, the left turn restrictions have been in place for multiple months but have not seen high levels of compliance. In response to a suggestion by the Police Department, staff analyzed what would happen if the Hunters Rd intersection were to be permanently made right-in/right-out. Mr. Khaleel explained that this analysis was done using traffic and turning counts collected after implementation of the left-turn restriction. He said that the analysis showed that converting Hunters Rd to right-in/right-out would cause considerable concerns at the intersection of Bradley Dr and Port Republic Rd. It would lead to long wait times on Bradley Dr as well as queuing on Port Republic Rd, which would be a concern for traffic flow and safety. Given these concerns, staff are pursuing funding to install a traffic signal at Bradley Dr and intend to submit a SMART SCALE application this year for this project. The project would install the traffic signal at Bradley Dr along with a left turn lane for vehicles turning onto Bradley Dr from Port Republic Rd, and would also convert Hunters Rd into a right-in/right-out intersection.

Staff also provided updates on short-term efforts to continue improving the situation at Hunters Rd. As suggested by the Police Department, staff will be installing a second left turn restriction sign and flashing light facing Port Republic Rd at Hunters Rd. This will ensure that turning vehicles see the sign. Staff are working with Starbucks to have the directional signs installed that were required with their Site Plan, but which were not installed. These signs will direct drivers exiting the Starbucks site to use Bradley Dr to return to Port Republic Rd.

4. Updates on Previous Agenda Items

The Commissioners did not ask any questions related to the updates that were provided with the agenda.

Other Business/ Announcements

Cpl. Westfall said that pedestrian safety pamphlets were created many years ago and that he recently had them updated. He said that they would be handing them out soon.

Mr. zumFelde asked if there was any feedback on the GoToMeeting format. The Commissioners indicated that it had worked as well as expected.

Adjourn