



Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission
City of Harrisonburg, Virginia

TO: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Members

FROM: Jakob zumFelde, Public Works Planner

DATE: June 24, 2020

RE: Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission Summary for June 10, 2020 Meeting

The Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission met on June 10, 2020 at 8:30am using a GoToMeeting. The meeting was not held in person due to the state of emergency related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Commission members attended by calling in using a phone or joining by audio/video on a computer. Information allowing members of the public to join by phone or computer was provided in the agenda, posted on the City website in the week prior to the meeting. During the meeting, members of the public were provided the opportunity to comment on the items discussed using the GoToMeeting chat feature.

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

Advisory members and guests: Kirsten Tynch (VHB), Chuck Conran (VHB), Dastan Khaleel (Public Works), Jakob zumFelde (Public Works), Tom Hartman (Public Works), Kelly Adams (Public Works), Matt Tobia (Fire Department), Dana Harshberger, Brad Reed (VDOT), Charles Hendricks, Jonathan Howard (Central Shenandoah Planning District Commission), Andrea Dono (Harrisonburg Downtown Renaissance), Hunter Woodard, Jenny Toth, two unidentified callers

Welcome

Ms. Yancey explained the ground rules for the meeting, given that it was being held in a different format than previous meetings. The TSAC members introduced themselves.

Business

1. Downtown Traffic Operations Study – Presentation by VHB

Mr. Hartman provided an overview of the context for the Downtown Traffic Operations Study. He noted that the study was funded by the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). He said that the study will be incorporated into the Downtown Master Plan, along with the Downtown Parking Study and others, so the findings of this study will not lead to immediate implementation. He introduced Kirsten Tynch from VHB, who conducted the study.

Ms. Tynch explained the goal of the study, and the scenarios that were evaluated in the downtown study area. One scenario reduced Liberty St to one lane, another scenario reduced Main St to one

lane, and the final scenario reduced Liberty St and Main St both to one lane. She explained the modeling effort that was completed to identify the impact of each scenario on all relevant intersections in the downtown study area. She provided information from the model of the road network in 2030 with no changes to roadway design. She noted that the intersections along Liberty St and Main St were expected to operate at acceptable levels in the downtown core. Ms. Tynch then explained that some traffic currently going through downtown would be likely to re-route if the scenarios being explored were implemented. To consider the potential re-routing volumes and routes, the study used information from the regional travel demand model and from a data source, StreetLight, which uses anonymous data from cell phones. She said that approximately 25% of existing traffic on Main St and Liberty St would be expected to re-route. This information was used to create a model for each of the scenarios to identify any intersections where delay could become a concern if the changes were made.

Based on the modeling completed, Ms. Tynch said that all scenarios are operationally feasible, as they show limited impacts to vehicle delay in the downtown area. She then provided some improvements that would be recommended depending on the scenario considered for implementation. She noted that these changes are not necessitated by the proposed lane reductions but rather improve the baseline conditions regardless of whether any scenario is implemented.

Ms. Tynch noted the evaluation that was completed related to I-81 incident management, given that the US 11 corridor is a detour route. She said that more evaluation may be necessary if this is a concern.

Ms. Tynch concluded with a summary and then took questions. Mr. Hartman responded to questions about the likely increase in traffic on Mason St through a residential neighborhood where there are high pedestrian volumes. He indicated that that is an important discussion to have during the Downtown Master Plan, as decisions made at that point may impact behavior to reduce traffic re-routing to Mason St and/or to reduce traffic speeds and enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety on Mason St. It was also pointed out that Mason St is designated as a “major collector”, a functional class that indicates there will be higher traffic volumes than most neighborhood roads. Additionally, it was calculated that the increase in traffic on Mason St projected in the study would be approximately a 12% increase during the peak hour. Mr. Van Wyk asked about the purpose of reducing the number of lanes downtown. Mr. Hartman indicated that reducing speeds and improving safety were primary reasons for consideration of this, along with the desire to increase space for walking, biking and downtown amenities along the corridor.

2. Federal Street reconfiguration

Ms. Yancey introduced the next item, noting that it is building off of the Downtown Streetscape Plan. Mr. Hartman said that the project is planned in response to impacts of the pandemic – the need for social distancing, decreased vehicle traffic volumes, and increased numbers of people walking and biking. He provided the details of the plan for each of the 4 blocks that are included.

The block between Water St and Newman St will be closed to vehicle traffic. The block between Market St and Water St will become one-way for vehicles, with the remaining roadway converted into a shared use path. Mr. Hartman said that the permanent shared use path was recently completed between Elizabeth St and Market St. Finally, he said that a contra-flow bike lane will be added so that people biking can go southbound on Federal St between Wolfe St and Elizabeth St.

3. Sunset Heights Neighborhood Traffic Calming

Ms. Yancey said that the traffic study has been completed to evaluate conditions following implementation of phase I of the Traffic Calming Plan. She told the Committee that the proposed changes at the intersection of W. Market and High St were not able to be made due to concerns from VDOT. As that was intended to have notable impact on cut-through traffic volumes, staff were not surprised that the traffic study showed minimal change in traffic volumes. Additionally, the traffic study showed speed concerns on Willow St and Chestnut Dr that make those streets eligible for traffic calming. Ms. Yancey also explained that there have been additional discussions with concerned residents on one segment of S. Dogwood. Due to these reasons, staff will be working with the neighborhood committee, and doing public outreach, to revise phase II of the Traffic Calming Plan.

4. Updates on Previous Agenda Items

Ms. Yancey asked if anyone had questions related to the updates provided in the agenda. Sergeant Westfall said that he had contacted businesses with trucks that will be impacted by the truck turning restrictions being added on High St and that he didn't hear any concerns.

Other Business/ Announcements

Ms. Yancey said that Public Works has received concerns about recent crashes at Franklin Ave and Mason St. Public Works will install post alerts – bright colored stripes on the post – to increase visibility of the stop sign. They will also ensure that shrubs that are hindering visibility at the intersection are removed. Sergeant Westfall said that a portable speed radar sign can be installed there on Mason St.

Adjourn