

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION

Tuesday, December 7, 2010

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dennis Roberts, City Council Member
Pat Connolly, Chief of Police
Joe Smith, Senior Civil Engineer

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Jennifer Selby, City of Urbana, Civil Engineer
Leslie Stratton, 305 East Florida Avenue
Trent Stern, 111 West Park Street
John Lawler, 907 East Florida Avenue

The meeting began at 4:00 p.m.

Additions to the agenda:

There were no additions to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes:

Joe Smith moved to approve the minutes. Dennis Roberts seconded the motion. The Commission voted 3-0 to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2010 meeting.

Unfinished Business

Item #1- Discussion of bicycle and pedestrian safety suggestions for downtown Urbana.

Pat Connolly mentioned that the previous Traffic Commission meeting the Commissioners discussed the option of purchasing sandwich board signs for shop owners to place on sidewalks to encourage bicyclists to walk their bikes.

Dennis Roberts asked Jennifer Selby if there were any funding options available for purchasing the signs.

Jennifer Selby said that she would bring up the issue at the next Streetscapes Committee meeting. She suggested that the message be friendly.

Pat Connolly suggested that the signage be in both English and Spanish.

Jennifer Selby said that the striping for bicycle lanes in downtown Urbana would occur in 2012.

Dennis Roberts said that tickets have been issued to those who have violated the ordinance. He recommended printing posters for the downtown businesses to place in their windows as a reminder to bicyclists.

The item will be placed on the February agenda to discuss whether funding for signage is available.

Dennis Roberts thanked Jennifer Selby for the installation of the crosswalk on Main Street at Urbana Avenue.

New Business

Item #2- Discussion of pedestrian crossings on Illinois Street between Vine Street and Broadway Avenue.

Joe Smith discussed an e-mail from Cheri Fletcher, who works at the Health Alliance Medical Plan offices in Lincoln Square. He mentioned that she was concerned about the difficulty pedestrians had when crossing Illinois Street to go to the Lot 24 parking lot. He added that she recommended crosswalks on the west side of Walnut Street since many employees cross at that intersection.

Pat Connolly said that the City should observe the situation to see what could be done.

Joe Smith said that a study would need to be conducted, but that one could not be done until the spring when weather conditions provide a better opportunity to count pedestrian traffic and vehicle speeds.

Jennifer Selby said that when the bicycle lanes are added to Illinois Street, the lanes widths for motorists would be reduced. She suggested using a rapid flashing beacon that would be activated when someone crosses Illinois Street.

Les Stratton recommended that the beacon be hand activated so motorists are not trying to determine when or if a pedestrian is crossing the street.

Joe Smith said that he would begin pedestrian counts when the Farmer's Market begins in May.

This item will be discussed in the spring after counts are taken.

Item #3- Discussion of parking restrictions at various locations in Urbana for implementation of the Bicycle Master Plan.

Jennifer Selby explained that the City of Urbana was pursuing funding through the Safe Routes to School program that would provide bicycle facilities for the Urbana Middle School and Urbana elementary schools. She mentioned that the facilities would include 8 miles of on-street facilities on Fairview Avenue from Goodwin Avenue to Lincoln Avenue, Florida Avenue from Race Street to Kinch Street, and Kinch Street from Florida Avenue to Washington Street (which were all part of the Bicycle Master Plan). She added that as a result of this parking would need to be removed from the north side of Fairview Avenue; the north side of Florida Avenue from Vine Street to Philo Road, the south side in front of the Pointe at U of I (1601 East Florida Avenue), and the north side from Adams Street to Kinch Street; and the west side of Kinch Street from Florida Avenue to Washington Street.

Les Stratton said that there were many mature trees on Florida Avenue between Race Street and Philo Road creating difficulty for residents to back out of their driveways if bicycle lanes were included on Florida Avenue. He recommended moving the bicycle lanes to Pennsylvania Avenue where there would be fewer conflicts between motorists and bicyclists.

Jennifer Selby stated that Pennsylvania Avenue between Anderson Street and Vine Street had already been designated as a bike path. She mentioned that Florida Avenue was chosen as a street for bicycle lanes because it provided access to Sunnycrest Mall and the Pointe and because it extends across Urbana and Champaign.

Les Stratton said that he felt that bicycle lanes on Kirby Avenue (Florida Avenue in Champaign) would not be safe.

Jennifer Selby said that there were many conflicts at Pennsylvania Avenue and Vine Street.

Les Stratton contended that bicyclists would have more maneuverability crossing Pennsylvania Avenue at Vine Street.

John Lawler asked if there would be bicycle lanes going in each direction on each side of the street.

Jennifer Selby affirmed that there would be one bicycle lane for eastbound traffic and one bicycle lane for westbound traffic on Florida Avenue.

Mr. Lawler asked how there could be a parking lane and a bicycle lane on the south side of Florida Avenue.

Ms. Selby said that with the bicycle lane and parking lane on the south side of Florida Avenue, motorists would not be able to pass on the right side, which would make travel safer. She added that the addition of the bicycle lanes would reduce vehicles speeds.

Les Stratton said that he was not convinced that the addition of bicycle lanes would reduce traffic speeds.

Pat Connolly said that a similar configuration on Lincoln Avenue reduced traffic speeds.

John Lawler asked if there would be congestion along Florida Avenue with the addition of the bicycle lanes.

Jennifer Selby said that the bicycle lanes should not create congestion.

Dennis Roberts stated that the Bicycle Master Plan was drawn by bikers who wanted these routes. He added that the plan had already been approved by the City Council and that there were not many choices to vary the plan. He asked Jennifer Selby if Pennsylvania Avenue could be extended to end at Anderson Street and if Anderson Street could end at Philo Road.

Jennifer Selby said that Spring 2013 would be the earliest that any of the lanes would be installed.

Les Stratton said that he was concerned about the restriction of parking along the bike lanes.

Trent Stern asked if there would be additional bike racks installed at the Urbana Middle School.

Jennifer Selby said that there would be additional bike racks installed at all of the schools except King Elementary School, which was undergoing remodeling.

Mr. Stern asked if bicyclists would be forced to register their bikes.

Jennifer Selby said that there would not be any forced registration.

Les Stratton asked if the project would be done with grant money.

Jennifer Selby said that 100% of the project would be covered by grants.

No action was required. This item will come back to the Traffic Commission when parking restrictions are required to implement the project.

Mr. Trent Stern asked if traffic speeds on Park Street along Crystal Lake Park could be monitored as he felt motorists were travelling too fast in that area.

The meeting adjourned at 4:50 p.m.

The January 4, 2011 meeting of the Urbana Traffic Commission has been cancelled. The next meeting will be held February 1, 2011 at 4:00 p.m. at the Urbana City Building, 400 South Vine Street, second floor conference room.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary