

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Tuesday, July 2, 2013

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joe Smith, Senior Civil Engineer
Pat Connolly, Police Chief

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Michael Madigan, City Council Member, Ward 6, Chair

OTHERS PRESENT:

Phillip Hoggatt, 1305 East McHenry Street
Diane Marlin, Council Member, Ward 7
Patrick Patterson, 2005 South Anderson
John Collins, Operations Manager
Peter Hood, 1303 East McHenry Street
Craig Shonkwiler, Senior Civil Engineer
Michael Pollock, 710 South Broadway Avenue
Christian Ray, 715 South Broadway Avenue
Tracey Pettigrew, MTD, 811 West University Avenue

The meeting began at 4:01 p.m. Pat Connolly chaired the meeting in Mr. Madigan's absence.

Additions to the agenda:

There were no additions to the agenda.

Approval of Minutes:

Joe Smith moved to approve the minutes as read. Pat Connolly seconded the motion. The Commission voted 2-0 to approve the minutes of the June 4, 2013 meeting.

Public Input

Those present wished to speak to the Commission at the time the item was discussed.

Unfinished Business

None

New Business

Item #1- Discussion of speeding concerns on Mumford Drive and McHenry Street.

Phillip Hoggatt discussed his concerns about traffic on McHenry Street. He said that he felt that many of the drivers were exceeding the speed limit and that they were using McHenry Street as a cut through to get to the Meijer's store. He stated that the problem was at its worse between 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. He mentioned that there were many children who lived on the street. He

indicated that it was a bus route. Mr. Hoggatt asked if the City could install speed bumps on the street.

Pat Connolly stated that speed bumps were not used in the City.

John Collins said that speed bumps made it difficult for snow removal and street sweeping.

Peter Hood also discussed traffic concerns on McHenry Street. He reiterated the points made by Mr. Hoggatt. He stated that he believed that traffic had increased since the opening of the Meijer's store. Mr. Hood asked if the City could do a traffic count to determine if the number of vehicles had increased since the Meijer's store opened.

Joe Smith said that he would install traffic counters on McHenry Street to measure the volume, speed and frequency of vehicles.

Mr. Hood asked for a clarification on what the speed limit was and what was considered speeding.

Pat Connolly stated that the speed limit was 30 m.p.h. and that any speed over 30 m.p.h. on that street would be considered speeding. Chief Connolly said that officers had some discretion depending upon the situation.

Joe Smith stated that most streets had violation rates of 10% to 20%, with most speeds being close to 30 m.p.h. He asked those living on McHenry Street if the problem seemed to occur close to Philo Road.

Mr. Hood said that he noticed the problem on McHenry Street occurred from Anderson Street to Philo Road.

Pat Connolly said that frequently when the Police Department hears concerns about speeding, they investigate since it is difficult for pedestrians to gauge speeds of vehicles.

Barb Stiehl said that she sent invitations to the meeting to residents on Mumford Drive who had expressed concern about speeding on that street in the past.

Diane Marlin said that she had received e-mails regarding speeding in the south part of Urbana. She mentioned an e-mail from Mr. Bearman who expressed concern about speeding and reported seeing a car pass another moving vehicle on McHenry Street. She said that another e-mail, from Nicole Allen, expressing concern about cut-through traffic on Montclair Road.

Mr. Hoggatt expressed concern about the intersection of McHenry Street and Philo Road.

Joe Smith said that he would conduct a study of McHenry Street and report his findings at the August 6th meeting of the Traffic Commission. He asked that discussion of traffic on Mumford Drive be scheduled for the September meeting and the discussion of traffic on Montclair Road be scheduled for the October meeting.

Chief Connolly asked the Recording Secretary to notify those who were concerned about specific issues of the meeting dates for those issues.

Item #2- Discussion of parking restrictions on Broadway Avenue between Washington Street and Illinois Street.

Patrick Patterson stated that he was a property owner on Broadway Avenue. He commended the City of Urbana for the extensive plan developed for bicycle routes in the city. He stated that Race Street and Vine Street were arterial streets and that Broadway Avenue was almost exclusively for the residents on that street. Mr. Patterson opined that the City had a historical commitment to provide on-street parking. He said that the existing parking really filled up on the street. He stated that the proposed parking restrictions would eliminate half of the existing parking on the street. He asked that the parking remain unchanged and that bicycle lanes be removed from the plan and replaced with bicycle routes. Mr. Patterson argued that driveways on Broadway Avenue were not adequate for parking, bicyclists would be safe without the bicycle lanes, and the installation of bicycle routes would increase usage. He felt that the City should invest in bicycle routes first before trying any other method. He stated that signage would be aesthetically pleasing and encourage bicycle traffic.

Christian Ray stated that the City was already bicycle-friendly and that he did not see the connectivity of the bicycle lanes on Broadway Avenue connecting the bicycle route on Washington Street to the proposed bicycle lanes on Illinois Street. He expressed concern about having bicycle lanes next to parked cars, especially with high school students parking on Broadway Avenue. He felt that the high school students might door bicyclists.

Michael Pollock said that he was not supportive of bicycle lanes on Broadway Avenue since Broadway Avenue was a wide street so he felt that lanes were not necessary. He expressed concern about bicycle lanes next to parking lanes. He said that he understood that Washington Street would have bicycle routes since it was narrow and Illinois Street would have bicycle lanes. He expressed concern about bicycle lanes next to on-street parking. He said that many homes had driveways, but he thought some of the apartments might not have parking, except for on-street parking. Although he said that he was very supportive of bike routes, he was not in favor of the bicycle lanes on Broadway Avenue.

Craig Shonkwiler explained the rationale for recommending bicycle lanes on Broadway Avenue. He stated that Objective #1 of the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan was to create and maintain a bike network that was continuous, which would be accomplished by connecting the Illinois Street bicycle lanes to the Washington Street bicycle route with the addition of bicycle lanes on Broadway Avenue. He also stated that another objective of the plan was to connect to destinations. He said that during the early stages of the development of the bicycle plan, the installation of bicycle lanes between Lincoln Square and Urbana High School was the most frequently requested connection suggested by the public. He said that Broadway Avenue, as a lower volume traffic street, would be the preferred street to connect the bicycle route on Washington Street to the proposed bicycle lanes on Illinois Street. He described the proposed configuration of Broadway Avenue 39-foot width (from the west to the east) to include a 5-foot

bicycle lane by removing parking, reducing the two vehicle lanes from 12 feet to 10 feet, adding a 6-foot bicycle lane and providing an 8-foot parking lane. He reviewed the process used in selecting roadways for the bicycle lanes stating that the wide street and low volume traffic made the street suitable for the installation of bicycle lanes. Mr. Shonkwiler addressed the concerns about bicycle lanes next to parked cars by pointing to the fact that no accidents between bicycles and vehicles had been reported in Urbana on streets where bicycle lanes were marked. He said that there had been accidents where bicyclists were riding on unmarked streets. He mentioned that the bicycle route for Washington Street, west of Vine Street, was recommended because the street was not wide enough to accommodate bicycle lanes. He added that dedicated bicycle lanes promote bicycle ridership as was witnessed on Washington Street, east of Philo Road, following the addition of bicycle lanes on that street.

Mr. Pollock asked if the school district was aware of the proposal.

Mr. Shonkwiler stated that he had contacted the Urbana School District Superintendent, Mr. Don Owen. He mentioned that Mr. Owen was concerned about the loss of parking for students, but that the school district was not opposed to the project. He added that the school district wanted to promote bicycle use by students. Mr. Shonkwiler stated that the Engineering Division viewed the primary function of a street as a route for through traffic and that a secondary function would be to use any space remaining for vehicle parking. He felt that the plan for Broadway Avenue allowed installation of the bicycle lanes while still retaining some of the existing on-street parking.

Mr. Patterson again recommended that the City invest in the installation of bicycle route signage on Broadway Avenue to see if that would promote bicycle usage.

Mr. Shonkwiler emphasized that the current plan was approved by City Council and that changes to that plan would have to be approved by them.

Mr. Patterson said that the City had created a favorable situation for bicyclists but had created problems for people wanting to park in front of their homes. He felt that the most fundamental need should go to the person living on that street. He felt that the plan could be changed.

Mr. Pollock felt that the plan would disadvantage the neighborhood. He felt that the plan needed to be reviewed. He did not think that the loss of parking would be worth the advantages gained by the installation of bicycle lanes. He said that nothing was more personal than parking.

Joe Smith said that he had two people contact him to express their thoughts about the proposed plan—Ms. Tang was opposed to the plan since she did not have a driveway and Ms. Kalmar was in favor of the plan.

Michael Pollock asked who was notified.

Barb Stiehl said that she sent notifications to residents and property owners on Broadway Avenue. She mentioned that she received an e-mail from a resident at 603 South Broadway who was in favor of the proposed bicycle lanes.

Joe Smith recommended the parking restrictions on Broadway Avenue as proposed in the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan.

Pat Connolly was concerned about voting on the issue without the chairman present. He felt that the City Council needed to be aware of the concerns of the residents and did not want the City Council to assume that the approval of the Traffic Commission meant that the Council should approve it without discussion.

John Collins stated that the same issues had come before the Traffic Commission when parking restrictions for other streets in the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan were presented and the Traffic Commission approved those restrictions.

Michael Pollock asked if those on Broadway Avenue would be notified about Committee of the Whole meeting.

Ms. Stiehl stated that mailings had been sent out for other streets when residents expressed a desire to be notified.

Mr. Pollock asked if he could receive a copy of the mailing list for Broadway Avenue.

Ms. Stiehl stated that she would check to see if an official request was needed to obtain the list and let Mr. Pollock know how to obtain the list.

Craig Shonkwiler stated that the pressing need for the Engineering Division was to resurface the road and update the accessible ramps on Broadway Avenue. He said that to install the bicycle lanes when resurfacing was done was the most sensible way to approach the implementation of the bicycle plan.

Mr. Pollock asked if the work could be done without striping the lanes.

Mr. Shonkwiler said that he would work with the recommendation of the Traffic Commission.

Pat Connolly said that the City Council would make the final decision.

Mr. Pollock said that he would discuss the issue with those on Broadway Avenue.

Chief Connolly asked if the decision could be postponed until the August meeting.

Mr. Shonkwiler stated that it is preferred to complete the striping at the time of the resurfacing. He said that to proceed with the resurfacing project, a decision from the Traffic Commission at this meeting would help move the project forward.

John Collins said that to keep the Operations Division on schedule, the Traffic Commission would need to make a decision to go to Council.

Mr. Patterson was concerned that the decision was being rushed.

Mr. Collins stated that the plan was approved in 2008.

Joe Smith moved to remove parking on the west side of Broadway Avenue.

Pat Connolly moved to send this item to City Council without recommendation.

Joe Smith seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 2-0.

The Traffic Commission moved this item to City Council with no recommendation.

Item #3- Discussion of speed limit on Windsor Road between Susan Stone Drive and High Cross Road.

Craig Shonkwiler stated that the street was designed for a 40-mile-an-hour speed limit to be consistent with the remaining section of the street.

Joe Smith recommended that the speed limit be decreased from 45 miles per hour to 40 miles per hour. Mr. Smith recommended that the restrictions be from Susan Stone Drive instead of Stone Creek Boulevard.

Pat Connolly seconded the motion.

The Traffic Commission approved the motion 2-0.

This item will go to City Council for approval.

Item #4- Discussion of pedestrian crossing at One South (1321 North Lincoln Avenue).

Pat Connolly said that one of the officers reported seeing many students crossing at this location. He said that MTD dropped off passengers who crossed in front of moving traffic. Chief Connolly said that the officer was concerned since there had been several near misses where pedestrians crossing in traffic had almost been hit. He wanted to know if MTD could keep people on the bus so they would not cross in the middle of a busy street.

Tracey Pettigrew stated that it was very difficult for MTD to hold people on the bus when they wanted to exit at a stop. He added that it would create an uncomfortable situation for passengers and drivers to keep someone on the bus. He said that MTD was looking at some different options. He said that MTD had no control over the actions of passengers after they left the bus. Even so, he said that he would send some information to the Traffic Commission about what MTD was exploring to encourage passengers to move safely around busses.

Joe Smith said that a crosswalk could not be endorsed with the configuration at that location.

Pat Connolly agreed that a crosswalk would not be an appropriate solution.

Barb Stiehl asked if the Police Department could ticket pedestrians for illegally crossing the street.

Tracey Pettigrew said that MTD had been encouraging passengers to wait until the bus had left before crossing so both pedestrians and motorists could accommodate safe street crossings. He added that there were not crosswalks at most intersections where their busses stopped so MTD promoted waiting until the busses cleared the area before pedestrians entered the roadway.

Pat Connolly asked if the bus stop in front of Atrium Apartments could be eliminated.

Tracey Pettigrew said that the location could be reviewed. He added that MTD was not typically involved in the development process so they have been trying to provide service as best as they could.

Pat Connolly asked if bus stop could be eliminated to encourage crossings at controlled intersections.

Tracey Pettigrew stated that it was difficult to eliminate bus stops. He said that MTD was looking at a consolidated stop system instead of stopping at every block, but that system was not in effect yet. He said that there were several situations similar to this location around Urbana-Champaign. He said that he would forward information about their plans to improve pedestrian crossing.

The meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on August 6, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. at the Urbana City Building, 400 South Vine Street, second floor conference room.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary