

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Tuesday, January 12, 2016

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Michael Madigan, City Council Member, Ward 6, Chair
Craig Shonkwiler, Assistant City Engineer
Pat Connolly, Police Chief

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

John Collins, Operations Manager

The meeting began at 4:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Craig Shonkwiler moved to approve the minutes of the October 13, 2015 meeting. Pat Connolly seconded the motion. The Commission voted 3-0 to approve the minutes of the October meeting.

Additions to the agenda:

There were no additions to the meeting.

Public Input

Those wishing to provide input preferred to do so at the time the topic was discussed.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business to discuss.

New Business

Item #1- Approval of the 2016 meeting calendar.

Pat Connolly moved to approve the 2016 meeting calendar.

Craig Shonkwiler seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 3-0.

The calendar will be placed on the City of Urbana website.

Item #2- Discussion of the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan.

Craig Shonkwiler explained that the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan was available for public input until Monday, February 1, 2016. He reviewed sections of the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan highlighting sections of significant importance to the Urbana Traffic Commission. He said that the purpose of the discussion was to bring awareness to the Commissioners of possible items that would come before the Commission and to discuss any concerns or objections the Commissioners might have with the proposed plan. He said that the plan would come back to the Plan Commission at the end of February. He questioned whether or not the Traffic Commission should endorse the plan since the Commission would be asked to make recommendations about specific aspects of the plan as implementation of those specific items became necessary.

Michael Madigan agreed that it was not within the authority of the Traffic Commission to endorse the plan since the Commission would be acting upon specific portions of the plan that relate to future traffic control and parking requests.

Mr. Shonkwiler explained the process for developing the plan and who was involved in that process. He then reviewed the contents of the plan and focused on specific parts of the plan related to future Traffic Commission discussion. He pointed to the Green Loop, which was the Urbana Park District's proposed bicycle network to connect parks within Urbana. Next, he discussed the proposed Urbana Bicycle Master Plan specifically as it pertained to the Traffic Commission. Since 2008, he said that most of the parking removal had been completed. He said that Green Street from Busey Avenue to Race Street would be the most significant area brought before the Traffic Commission. Mr. Shonkwiler explained that as part of the Multimodal Corridor Enhancement Project (MCORE), a request to eliminate parking along the north side of Green Street would come before the Traffic Commission this spring. He mentioned that another area where bicycle infrastructure would be added was on Amber Lane between Philo Road and Myra Ridge Road, north of the Meijers store. He said that parking was already restricted on the south side of Amber Lane and that there was not enough street width to allow parking on the north side. He said that bicycle lanes were planned for that section and would come to the Traffic Commission for action possibly within the next five years. He added that a third possible item for discussion would be bicycle infrastructure on Oregon Street from Goodwin Avenue to Mathews Avenue where a contraflow bike lane would be studied. He said that many factors would need to be considered before bringing this item to Traffic Commission, but that area was a possible location for the removal of on-street parking. He said that those were the only three items in the plan that involved parking restrictions.

Michael Madigan asked if the City Council would have to approve the contraflow plan afterwards.

Craig Shonkwiler said that the removal of parking as part of the contraflow plan would have to go through Council, but that project was not in the five-year plan. He said that Green Street project

was coming and Amber Lane would probably happen within the next five years, but the bicycle facilities on Oregon Street would probably not happen soon.

John Collins asked if the number of no parking signs on Main Street could be reduced once people were familiar with bicycle traffic and parking restrictions on the street. He said that the reduction in signage would reduce costs for the City. He added that it was illegal to park in bicycle lanes, so he asked if the signage could be reduced. He recommended removing the no parking signage after the restrictions had been in effect for a year, using those signs at other locations and eliminating sign clutter on the streets.

Craig Shonkwiler said that part of the plan's recommendations was to develop a wayfinding system. He mentioned that Engineering staff was working on the wayfinding system plan for the bicycle network and there was money in the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to implement the program. They were developing a design plan and preparing costs and implementation plans. He said that staff would determine if the plan would be fiscally sustainable—if there would be enough money to maintain and replace the signage.

John Collins stated that the removal of the additional no parking signs would eliminate sign clutter and allow more room for the wayfinding signage.

Craig Shonkwiler felt that the initial installation of the no parking signs on Main Street helped motorists understand and the Police Department enforce the parking restrictions. He agreed that the removal of some of the signs should not create problems after the public adjusted to the addition of bike lanes and elimination of parking.

Chief Connolly said that the initial signage did assist officers when the parking restrictions were first implemented and he agreed that the signage could be reduced.

John Collins encouraged plans to educate the public about parking prohibitions in bicycle lanes to reduce the number of no parking signs needed throughout the city.

Craig Shonkwiler recommended removing signs in a selected area to see if the reduced signage was effective.

Chief Connolly asked about the determination of the number of signs for bicycle lanes on the street. He indicated that there are some areas where there were several signs within a short span on the street.

Mr. Collins said that there were areas where there were several signs along Washington as the type of bicycle facility changed.

Mr. Shonkwiler said that there were areas on some streets that changed from a shared lane to a separate lane and that signage indicated those changes. He added that some in the bicycle community favored the Bicyclist May Use Full Lane signage over the Share the Road signage so that signage may change. He asked if the signage was problematic for the Police Department.

Chief Connolly said it was more confusing for drivers. He said that drivers did not understand the meaning of the signage since the law states that bicyclists should move over to allow traffic to pass.

Michael Madigan asked about the safety criteria for allowing bicyclists to use the full lane.

Craig Shonkwiler said that engineering judgment had to be used to determine when the lanes would be narrow enough to allow the bicyclist to use the full lane. He said signage was usually installed if the street was not wide enough to allow motorists three feet of room to pass the bicyclist.

Mr. Madigan asked if there were any cost-sharing plans for those using the bicycle facilities, such as registration.

Mr. Shonkwiler indicated that the plan did not have any cost-sharing proposals.

Pat Connolly asked if there were any plans to discuss the parking restrictions with those on Green Street where parking would be removed as part of the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan.

Craig Shonkwiler said that the Public Works Director Bill Gray and he had met with the churches on Green Street to discuss the parking restrictions. He mentioned that the First Presbyterian Church was considering a plan to provide an off-street loading area in front of the church. As for opposition, he said that they had notified those along the impacted area about the plan, but those along the Green Street area had not voiced concern about the parking restrictions in any of the MCORE open houses. He said that staff had surveyed the use of on-street parking in that area and found that it appeared to be used by commuters since very few vehicles were parked on the street during the off-peak times.

Mr. Madigan stated that the MCORE project was a comprehensive plan with multiple components extending beyond just Green Street.

Mr. Shonkwiler stated that there could be an off-street loading and unloading area near the First Presbyterian Church where the church could install accessible parking.

Mr. Madigan mentioned that the church had discussed a possible request to vacate a street for increased access to the facility.

Craig Shonkwiler discussed the goals and objectives of the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan. He highlighted the themes and timelines within the plan.

Pat Connolly asked about the responsible parties for each of the goals listed.

Craig Shonkwiler mentioned that there was a list in the plan indicating which agency would be responsible for implementing or maintaining the recommendations within the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan. He added that the Steering Committee would like to see staff look at a pilot program for different bicycle/vehicle treatments. Mr. Shonkwiler directed attention to the Vision Zero Initiative mentioned in the plan and as a Council goal. He explained that currently when a fatality would occur, the Police Department would review the scene and Engineering staff would look at possible problems and solutions to reduce the occurrence. He stated that the initiative included

suggestions to lower vehicle speeds, redesign streets, increase enforcement of vehicle codes and implement education to change road users' behaviors, which would specifically fall under the review of the Urbana Traffic Commission.

The Commission watched a video about Vision Zero, which defined the major idea, "In every situation an individual may fail, the system should not."

Chief Connolly said that the unintended consequence of the bike lanes during snow storms, the use of bicycle lanes as sidewalks had created problems for motorists and bicyclists. But he added that embracing the scrambled crossings on campus had actually improved safety at those locations.

Michael Madigan said that car technology was beginning to incorporate systems to counter human error.

Pat Connolly asked that those impacted by parking removal as part of the implementation of the plan receive advanced notice before the issue would go to the Traffic Commission.

The Traffic Commissioners agreed to extend the notification period from one week to two weeks when any parking restrictions resulting from the implementation of the Urbana Bicycle Master Plan were brought before the Commission.

With no other business at hand, the meeting was adjourned at 4:49 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled Traffic Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 9, 2016, at 4:00 p.m. at the Urbana Public Works Department, 706 South Glover Avenue, second floor conference room.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary