



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Final Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

8:30 AM

Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center

1. Welcome and Introductions

In attendance at the meeting were commission members John Scherpereel, Chance Ebersold, Marian Lebherz, Kyle Lawrence, and Rob Jezior. Also in attendance were City representatives Paul Helmuth, Sgt. Wayne Westfall, Tom Hartman, Timothy Mason, Tom Hartman, and Brittney Clem-Hott, as well as JMU representative Valerie Kramer. The meeting was held at Lucy Simms Continuing Education Center.

2. Public Comment Opportunity

There were no public comments at this time.

3. Election of Chair

Timothy Mason proposed an election of the Commission Chair, noting that they would look to do this every year going forward. He then asked if there was anything Kyle Lawrence, the current Chairperson, would like to share about his experience being in the position, and about the duties he had performed. Timothy Mason also noted that the commission had gone away from official assignments to members, but that Public Works had asked previous chair-people for letters of support on various applications and projects.

Kyle Lawrence asked what role the TSAC chair officially has in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. Tom Hartman answered that in the current program guidelines, any neighborhood going through the process would go directly to City Council.

Kyle Lawrence indicated that he would be willing to remain as the chair but noted that he would be happy to step aside if someone else would like to join. He also noted that the duties of the chairperson are not difficult or time-consuming. As no one else volunteered for the position, Sgt. Westfall

motioned for Kyle to be reappointed, which passed unanimously.

4. Eastover Drive Traffic Calming Summary

Timothy Mason provided a brief update on the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program for the Eastover Drive neighborhood. While the neighborhood officially graduated in 2004, some residents had brought up concerns with speeding and cut through traffic through the neighborhood. Public Works recollected traffic data using tube counters in the neighborhood in 2023.

Paul Helmuth asked where the speed data had been collected. Timothy Mason answered that both counts were collected on Eastover Drive, one location between Paul Street and Cardinal Drive, and another between Cardinal Drive and Reservoir Street. Speed and volumes were not shown to be significantly different between the two locations, and the volumes were not shown to have grown significantly since 2004.

Timothy Mason noted that Public Works is not proposing any measures be taken in this neighborhood as there hasn't been a history of crashes in the neighborhood, and the speed and volumes do not meet the lower limit for the city's current Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. He added that Public Works is hoping to update the program to better meet citizen's expectations and that the neighborhood may be revisited if the criteria changes.

Sgt. Westfall noted that the residents consider traffic from JMU to be cut-thru traffic, and that there had been restrictions in the neighborhood previously. Timothy Mason answered that the cut through traffic restrictions had only applied to traffic coming directly from Martin Luther King Way. He also noted that changes to the intersection of Martin Luther King Way & Reservoir Street had made cutting through the neighborhood less beneficial. Merian Lebherz asked whether the study was the result of new complaints from residents. Timothy Mason confirmed that residents along Eastover Drive had reached out with the concerns.

Valerie Kramer asked if there was anything the city or JMU could do to dissuade vehicles exiting the parking lot on Duke Drive from turning right and using Eastover Drive. Sgt. Westfall responded that officers had been periodically stationed at the Paul Street & Eastover Drive intersection to

dissuade vehicles from disregarding the stop signs. Valerie Kramer followed up by stating that if there is any coordination required between the City and JMU, they would be willing to partner. Timothy Mason reiterated that Public Works does not think any further action is warranted currently.

Kyle Lawrence asked when the updates to the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program would be implemented. Tom Hartman said they will begin the process to change it in July but didn't have a solid date of when or if it would be officially implemented/ adopted.

5. Summary of all crashes for 2023

Timothy Mason presented a summary of the crashes on City Streets over the past nine years, presenting trends in severity, type, and volume. One trend he pointed out was the higher trend in crashes from August to December over the past three years. The theory he posited was that the influx of unfamiliar and inexperienced drivers that arrive at JMU for the Fall Semester had an impact on crash rates. Paul Helmuth stated that traffic from JMU football games could also be a cause, as the trend does not extend into the Spring.

Kyle Lawrence asked whether crash trends were affiliated with less daylight, and driving at night. Timothy Mason responded that there is a general spike in October and November statewide, but that the rates in the city are more pronounced. Paul Helmuth suggested that the city compare their crash rates to other localities with large student populations.

Valerie Kramer suggested that the City and JMU work together to reach students regarding safety information. John Scherpereel also suggested that the City work with apartments to reach students. Timothy Mason stated that other departments had worked on putting together information packets to share with students. Sgt. Westfall mentioned that the Police Department often goes door to door with information at the beginning of the semester.

John Scherpereel asked if Public Works would be able to develop the informational packets to be distributed by the start of the JMU Fall semester.

Timothy Mason said that he would work with Valerie and Sgt. Westfall to develop the packets, and try to work with the appropriate parties on distributing the packets.

Timothy Mason continued the presentation on Traffic Crashes, giving an overview on the trends of crash severity. He noted that there were three

fatal crashes in 2023, all of which involved midblock roadway departures.

He did not indicate that this was a trend, as the sample size was not large enough. Sgt. Westfall added that all three fatal crashes involved impaired drivers.

Timothy Mason stated that there is a continued trend of inconsistent reporting on the severity of injury crashes. The city's crashes are being reported in higher rates for severe and non-visible injuries, but a significant downward trend on visible injury crashes. This trend was noted at the April 2023 TSAC meeting, and Public Works had theorized it could be an issue with the reporting tools which PD use, however further investigation gave no indication this was the cause. The total number of injury related crashes are on a more stable trend, so Public Works plans to use that as the reportable figure moving forward.

Timothy Mason continued the presentation on crash history by giving a broad overview of the City intersections and road segments that have been determined by the state to have the most potential for safety improvement (PSI), meaning that the crash rates are higher than would be anticipated for the volume and infrastructure type. He also gave a summary of which PSI intersections and segments the city has applied for or received funding for improvements and studies, or otherwise made safety related improvements.

6. Safe Streets and Roads for All grant application

Timothy Mason then presented a summary of the City's grant application for the USDOT Safe Streets and Road for All grant program. He clarified that this is a planning grant, as infrastructure projects can only be funded after an "Action Plan" is adopted. The City's action plan will include supplementary plans, in the form of an updated Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, a Safe Routes to School Plan, and a Complete Streets Design Guide. He also noted that during the process of developing these plans there would be additional involvement from both TSAC and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee, potentially requiring additional meetings and work sessions from its members.

Marian Lebherz asked if these plans would be binding, or if City Council would have the authority to ignore them. Tom Hartman responded that the City Council is typically able to allow variances to its own standards. City staff

would give recommendations for or against these variances, as they come up.

Sgt. Westfall commented that the Complete Streets guide should be consistent with state code. Tom Hartman confirmed that the Action Plan and the supplemental plans would all be compliant with state code.

Kyle Lawrence asked what the dollar amount would be for the grant application. Tom Hartman answered that the estimate for all the plans would be \$750,000. He also noted that it would require a 20% match from the city. He said that it will be presented to City Council in May, and the application would be submitted that month as well. Timothy Mason asked for a vote of support for the application, Kyle Lawrence made a motion to vote to recommend the application, which John Scherpereel seconded. TSAC voted unanimously in support.

7. South Main Street Speed Limit Change

Timothy Mason provided an update on the South Main Street speed study, which had previously evaluated a potential speed reduction from Mosby Road to Reedy Circle. The follow up evaluated the segment of from Mosby Road to Port Republic Road but does not recommend a change to the posted speed limit of 35 MPH.

Marian Lebherz asked whether there would be school zone speed limit for the new high school. Tom Hartman responded that the school zone would be on East Kaylor Park, which already has a 25 MPH speed limit.

8. Other Business/Announcements

Valerie Kramer asked whether additional lane assignment information could be added for roads where a through lane becomes a dedicated turn lane. Tom Hartman noted that in several locations, the presence of entrances and cross streets limit the distance where turn only signs and pavement markings may be appropriate, but that Public Works evaluates locations to change.

Timothy Mason announced that Public Works is evaluating the intersection of Gay Street & Chicago Avenue, noting that the crossing guard position which had served at the location during school hours has not been filled for the past year.

Timothy Mason announced that there was a public survey for a city SMART SCALE application at the Exit 245 interchange at Port Republic Road. Valerie Kramer noted that for public information to be distributed by JMU, they would need at least a week in advance, but that she would try to send out information about the survey by the end of the school year.

Timothy Mason announced that Public Works had decided on a treatment for the bike lanes at the Harrisonburg High School entrance, and that it would be based on the MUTCD guidance for a shared right turn lane with bike lane.

Kyle Lawrence announced that the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Bike-Walk Summit would be the upcoming Friday, and that there were still available slots if people were looking to attend. He also announced that there would be updates soon regarding the Shenandoah Rail Trail public meetings and surveys from VDOT and that a public event would be held later in the month at Pale Fire Brewery with speaker Chuck Marohn.

Adjournment