



City of Harrisonburg

City Hall
409 South Main Street
Harrisonburg, VA 22801

Meeting Minutes - Final Bicycle and Pedestrian Sub-Committee

Marci Frederick

Jessica Pyle

Benjamin Craig

Jenny Toth

Dudley Bonsal

Monday, November 16, 2020

6:00 PM

Virtual

1. Call To Order

The Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee meeting on Monday, November 16, 2020 at 6:00pm was held using a GoToMeeting. The meeting was not held in person due to the state of emergency related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Subcommittee members attended by calling in using a phone or joining by audio/video on a computer. Information allowing members of the public to watch the meeting live was provided in the agenda and posted on the City website in the week prior to the meeting. Members of the public were given the opportunity to provide comments on the items discussed by phone or e-mail prior to the meeting.

Mr. zumFelde opened the meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves, so that all members knew who was on the call. Those present included the following.

Subcommittee members: Marci Frederick, Jenny Toth, Jessica Pyle, Ben Craig, Dudley Bonsal

Staff: Tom Hartman (Public Works), Erin Yancey (Public Works), Jakob zumFelde (Public Works), Gerald Gatobu (Harrisonburg Department of Public Transportation, HDPT), Elliot Menge (HDPT)

Other attendees: Kyle Lawrence (Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission chair)

2. Transit in Harrisonburg - Presentation/Discussion

Mr. Gatobu, Director of HDPT, thanked the Subcommittee for the opportunity to present about the work that HDPT does. He said that he and Elliot would provide a brief overview and then be glad to answer any questions. Mr. Menge explained that HDPT has multiple services, including transit, paratransit, and the City of Harrisonburg school buses. He said that City transit routes operate year-round throughout the City. The JMU routes, which JMU contracts with HDPT to provide, run only when JMU is in session and serve both on-campus and off-campus locations. The paratransit service, which provides curb-to-curb service to anyone applicable through ADA standards, is available anywhere that is within $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of a bus stop. Mr. Menge said that pre-Covid, approximately 1500 people per day would use HDPT transit services when JMU was not in session and about 15,000 people per day would use it when JMU was in session.

Mr. Gatobu provided information about long-term plans and possibilities for HDPT. He said that a Transit Development Plan was completed in the past few years. One recommendation that HDPT is pursuing would expand the hours that routes operate, particularly to increase evening service for City routes. He said that a feasibility study has been funded for a transit/transfer center that would have a park and ride lot. The study will work to identify a location for this multimodal transportation center, which will serve HDPT routes and other services such as the Virginia Breeze bus (which runs on I-81 to destinations including Washington, DC). Mr. Gatobu also indicated the possibility of evaluating micro transit in the City. Micro transit is a service that functions somewhat similar to services such as Uber and Lyft and could serve people who live far from bus stops or who are otherwise not well-served by existing fixed route bus service. He said that additional analysis will be done on the existing City routes to determine improvements, such as increasing the frequency of the service. This analysis will be completed in coordination with the feasibility study for the transfer center, as those changes would need to be coordinated. He noted that there have been significant efforts related to Covid-19, particularly related to cleaning and safety for transit operators and those riding the buses.

Mr. Craig asked when the last Transit Development Plan was completed and when the next one will be done. Mr. Gatobu said that the last one was done in 2018 and that the next one will be called a "strategic plan" and will begin in 2022. Mr. Craig asked if they knew when the feasibility study might be completed. Mr. Gatobu said they have been delayed due to the fiscal impacts of Covid-19 on state finances, but he hopes to have the study progress quickly after likely beginning in early 2021. Mr. Craig asked whether smaller vehicles would likely be used for micro transit. Mr. Gatobu said yes, they would expect that service to use smaller vehicles. Mr. Craig asked if the fare would be more expensive for micro transit. Mr. Gatobu said that the cost would need to be determined by a feasibility study, but that he would expect the cost to be higher. Ms. Toth asked if there would be an app for the micro transit. Mr. Gatobu said that he thinks this would be necessary to ensure the service is competitive and used by people in the community, but the details would need to be determined by a feasibility study. Ms. Frederick asked about transit service to other localities, including both larger cities such as DC and other locations in the region such as Bridgewater. Mr. Gatobu noted that he is frequently asked about service to other locations, including locations in Rockingham County, but currently the only service that HDPT provides in the County is the result of contracts with organizations, businesses or housing developments.

Mr. zumFelde indicated a few ways in which bicycle and pedestrian planning has been coordinated with transit planning. He mentioned that bike racks have been in place on the buses for many years now. He said that Public Works staff have coordinated with HDPT staff to identify appropriate places for bus shelters when creating SMART SCALE or other funding applications. He said that HDPT input has been helpful in identifying sidewalk needs and priorities. Mr. Lawrence asked if there was any data on usage of the bike racks on the buses. Mr. Menge said this isn't tracked, but he is aware that multiple people do

use the bike racks.

3. Follow up Items

- N. Liberty reconfiguration between Rock St and Gay St

Mr. zumFelde said that efforts were continuing regarding planning the reconfiguration of this block that had been discussed at a previous meeting.

- Old Furnace Rd bicycle climbing lane

Mr. Hartman said that he has been in touch with VDOT about whether this climbing lane can be created as part of the detour improvements for the Smithland Rd bridge replacement. He said that VDOT will also be determining whether the sidewalk can be constructed on that bridge when it is replaced. Mr. Lawrence asked if this could be completed with the paving schedule if it is not able to be completed with the bridge replacement. Mr. Hartman said staff would evaluate options if it cannot be completed with the bridge replacement.

- Evelyn Byrd & Reservoir St Intersection

Mr. zumFelde brought up the map of this intersection to provide a clear explanation of the planned change at this intersection. He reminded the Subcommittee that the concern Ms. Pyle expressed at the last meeting was that when biking Westbound through this intersection, she has determined that it is safest for her to use the pedestrian signal and crosswalk to cross Reservoir St. Yet she has found that vehicles turning right from Evelyn Byrd Ave onto Reservoir do not yield to her in the crosswalk. Mr. zumFelde indicated that changing the configuration of the vehicle lanes at this intersection would require significant evaluation, which current staff do not have the ability to complete. He said that staff have identified a leading pedestrian interval as a measure that would likely increase safety for the crossing that Ms. Pyle noted as being unsafe. Ms. Pyle said that that makes sense and she would expect that to improve safety at that location.

- Safe Routes to Schools and walk zones

Mr. zumFelde started by asking if members had any questions about the school zone maps that were presented to the School Board. He then provided information about a proposed concept for creating a pedestrian space on Gay St between Rockingham Dr and Willow St. He said that staff are still evaluating the details for how this would be implemented, with 'No Parking' signs being necessary, and with wanting to have a line or other delineation to ensure separation from the travel lanes. Mr. Bonsal asked what the speed limit is and Mr. zumFelde said that it is 25mph. Mr. Craig asked if neighbors would be concerned about loss of parking. Mr. zumFelde said that outreach will be completed before implementation, but nearly every house has off-street parking as well as side streets where on-street parking is available. Ms. Pyle asked if this segment would become a school zone with a reduced speed limit. Ms. Yancey said that she isn't aware of locations in the City where a school speed limit is lower than 25mph. Ms. Pyle asked if this pedestrian space would be permanent. Ms. Yancey said that it would be permanent, unless a sidewalk is funded on the segment in the future. Mr. Lawrence indicated that it would function as a sidewalk,

and be much more affordable than building a sidewalk.

Mr. zumFelde indicated a few crosswalks that staff are working to evaluate with Eric King, the City Safe Routes to School coordinator. Enhancements could include in-road Yield to Pedestrian signs at Chicago Ave & 1st St, adding crosswalk markings at 3rd St & Collicello St, and evaluating whether a crosswalk, crossing flags, or both would be justified at Central Ave & Southampton Dr and at intersections on Myers Ave near Spotswood Elementary. Ms. Yancey indicated that she has encouraged Eric to pilot the crossing flags at one location to see how they work and if they stay in place or if people remove them from where they belong. Mr. Lawrence asked about the original plans for a bicycle and pedestrian space along Central Ave. Mr. zumFelde and Ms. Yancey said that staff think more outreach and effort will be necessary before conversion of this parking area into a bicycle and pedestrian space. Mr. Lawrence expressed significant skepticism to usage of pedestrian flags, unless as a temporary application. He indicated that other, more established, infrastructure improvements are preferable. Ms. Yancey and Mr. zumFelde agreed, with Mr. zumFelde indicating that the flags would not be considered for other applications throughout the City, but that they could be found to be beneficial for kids walking to school.

4. Crosswalks at Intersections

Mr. zumFelde said that Mr. Lawrence had reached out to staff regarding lack of crosswalks at intersections in the City, with the intersections of Gay St & Main St and Gay St & Noll Dr being examples. Mr. zumFelde showed the map, and indicated that the current configuration is not ideal for pedestrians because someone would have to cross Gay St multiple times to walk through the corridor. Mr. Hartman indicated that one or both of these intersections may be evaluated at part of an upcoming VDOT STARS study. Ms. Yancey brought up safety as a possible justification for why the decisions were made at these intersections. Mr. Craig noted that the sight distance for someone driving and turning left from Gay St onto Main St could be limited due to the building on that corner, making that crosswalk potentially unsafe. Mr. Lawrence said that he hopes staff will continue to evaluate intersections throughout the City, and particularly in areas such as downtown where many people walk, to ensure crosswalks are provided where necessary to improve safety.

5. Public comments

- Detection of bicycles at traffic signals

Mr. zumFelde said that staff have received a public comment about detection of bicycles. Specifically, the resident raised concerns about not being picked up when going southbound on Dogwood Dr at W. Market St. Ms. Toth and Ms. Frederick said that they have both also experienced this issue. Mr. zumFelde said that the second location where the resident indicated having this problem was when going eastbound on Grace St at High St. Ms. Toth said that she has experienced this at this intersection, even when in a car. Mr. zumFelde said that staff would work to see if detection can be improved at these locations.

6. Project Updates - see attachment

Ms. Toth asked about the plan for naming the path that has been referred to as the 'Garbers Church Rd Shared Use Path'. Mr. Hartman said that staff are still going through the process, and more information will be provided in early 2021. Mr. Lawrence asked if there was any update regarding right-of-way for the Garbers Church Rd Shared Use Path. Mr. Hartman said that staff are optimistic that acquisition of the right-of-way is nearly complete.

Mr. Craig asked how many signals will be upgraded with the Audible Pedestrian Signal (APS) project. Mr. zumFelde said he didn't remember the exact number, but that over 15 signals will be upgraded.

Mr. Lawrence asked when more information will be available regarding the Port Republic Rd study. Ms. Yancey said that staff and the consultants have identified a consolidated crosswalk alternative as being preferable to a bicycle and pedestrian bridge, with additional evaluation being completed. She noted that there will be a public outreach component as part of the next phase of the study.

7. Announcements/Other Business

Mr. Lawrence explained that a Harrisonburg-Rockingham Bike Walk Summit was not held this year due to the pandemic. The Committee that coordinates the Summit has created a survey to evaluate people's biking, walking and other transportation habits. Mr. zumFelde asked the Subcommittee members to help by sharing the survey.

8. Subcommittee member applications

The Subcommittee members, other than those who had applied for re-appointment, discussed the applications that had been submitted. A determination was made regarding who to recommend for TSAC to appoint or re-appoint to the Subcommittee.

9. Adjournment