



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, September 27, 2021

6:00 PM

Lucy F. Simms Continuing Education Center

Welcome and Introductions

The Bicycle & Pedestrian Subcommittee meeting on Monday, September 27, 2021 at 6:00pm was held at Lucy Simms Continuing Education Center. The meeting was streamed live on the Public Works Facebook page. Members of the public were also 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. Those present were the following.

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

Staff: Tom Hartman (Public Works), Erin Yancey (Public Works), Jakob zumFelde (Public Works), Kelly Adams (Public Works)

Other attendees: Kyle Lawrence (Transportation Safety & Advisory Commission chair), Gretchen Sallah, John Sallah

1. N. Liberty St between Rock St and Gay St

Mr. zumFelde said that the reconfiguration of N. Liberty St between Rock St and Gay St has been completed, with the pedestrian improvements also being completed as discussed at previous meetings. Mr. zumFelde said that Public Works has heard considerable concern from people who had previously biked northbound on this block of Liberty St and can no longer do so. He said that after discussions at the last Subcommittee meeting, staff further discussed the green contra-flow bike lane proposal and discussed possibilities with TSAC. Due to additional concerns about safety for people

biking next to the parked vehicles, and concerns about the challenges associated with the possibility of installing a parking-protected bike lane, staff have not identified an appropriate contra-flow bike lane on this segment. Mr. zumFelde and Mr. Hartman said that staff are considering returning this road segment to two-way traffic, as it would maintain the primary benefits gained for pedestrians while resolving the concerns for people biking. Additionally, all parking on the block would be maintained. Mr. Lawrence asked whether there would be any downsides, particularly for pedestrians, of returning the road to two-way traffic. Mr. Hartman said that a primary reason for the change to one-way was to allow for pedestrians improvements at the intersection of Liberty & Rock St, but these improvements were not able to be made due to the railroad tracks. Mr. Lawrence asked about access to the northbound lane, as there was discussion about whether the right turn from Rock St onto Liberty St was legal. Ms. Yancey and Mr. Hartman said that Public Works staff will have additional discussions with Sergeant Westfall to identify whether this movement is legal for people biking, particularly given the recent crosswalk installed at this intersection.

John Sallah introduced himself as the property owner of multiple properties on this block of Liberty St and as someone who rides a bicycle in this area. He said that he is very surprised that this change back to two-way traffic is being proposed, given that he has heard specifically from the Police Department that the right turn from Rock St onto Liberty St is not legal. He said that an additional concern with the potential change is related to safety at the intersection of Liberty St and Gay St, where multiple crashes have occurred. Mr. Hartman reiterated that staff are still pursuing an answer to the question of whether bicyclists can turn right from westbound Rock St onto northbound Liberty St. He added that the change to two-way is not likely to be made if that turn is not legal for bicyclists. Mr. Lawrence pointed out that people biking have been making this right turn for a long time, without signs or enforcement indicating that it was illegal, so it would be unfortunate if that is the reason that changes to accommodate these people biking would not be made.

Mr. Hartman added that the current VDOT STARS study is evaluating the intersection of N. Liberty & W. Gay St, along with multiple other nearby intersections in the downtown area. He said that the study may recommend consideration of a roadway reconfiguration on Gay St to create bike lanes.

2. Shared Use Path Naming

Mr. Hartman said that Public Works staff have been working with Public Safety staff over the years about appropriately addressing paths so that anyone injured on the path can provide information to emergency responders. This, among other reasons, has led staff to work toward identification of a name for the path that has been referred to as the Garbers Church Rd Shared Use Path. He said that a survey was put out in early 2021 to collect potential name ideas. He said that staff eliminated some of the options, to ensure that it was consistent with the City's naming policy and emergency communication requirements. Mr. Hartman said that a survey with seven potential names will be released shortly for a vote that Council will review before choosing a name for the path. After the name is chosen, staff will continue efforts related to addressing the path and providing adequate wayfinding signs for those using the path.

3. Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Grant Applications

Mr. zumFelde reminded the Subcommittee members that information about the Transportation Alternatives Program grants, and potential projects to be submitted, was presented at a previous meeting. He said that the two projects identified as TAP full applications are the Northend Greenway segment between Jefferson St and Roberts Ct and the project to construct a sidewalk along the south side of Country Club Rd between Spotswood Homes Trailer Park and Linda Ln.

Mr. Lawrence asked if the Safe Routes to School Non-Infrastructure programs will be applied for through TAP. Mr. zumFelde and Mr. Hartman said that this will not be a project submitted for funding. Mr. Hartman asked if this means that the city will not have a Safe Routes to Schools program for at least two years. Mr. Hartman and Mr. zumFelde said that this is true, unless other funding is identified for the program.

4. Concerns regarding pedestrians crossing S. Main St near South Avenue

Mr. zumFelde said that staff were contacted by a JMU student who lives near the intersection of S. Main St and South Ave. The concerned student said that he has observed many pedestrians crossing S. Main St within a few

hundred feet of the intersection, particularly late at night on Friday night and Saturday night when students are attending parties in the vicinity. He also noted his concern about vehicles speeding on S. Main St and mentioned the fatalities that occurred last fall when a speeding motorcycle hit someone walking across the street at this location. Mr. zumFelde said that staff are in the early stages of considering any potential changes that could be made, and that they will have a discussion with HPD next week. Ms. Pyle said that there are many houses in the vicinity that host parties, and she has also observed the concerns expressed. Mr. Lawrence asked how well-lit the intersection is and Mr. Hartman and Ms. Pyle said that it is rather well lit. Ms. Yancey noted that there are slight hills to both directions from the area of concern, and Mr. zumFelde noted that this is another aspect that the concerned resident raised.

5. Project Updates - see attachment

Mr. Lawrence asked about CDBG funding for projects and Mr. zumFelde noted that funding was approved for the Commerce Dr sidewalk in the most recent CDBG funding year.

6. Other Business/Announcements

Mr. zumFelde read a statement from a City resident, Rob Alexander, to the Subcommittee. In the statement, he asks the Subcommittee to create a letter to Council or otherwise comment on a recent decision regarding a development on Peach Grove Avenue. Mr. Hartman said that he does not see a role for advocacy to Council by the Subcommittee, as defined in the Subcommittee bylaws. Mr. Hartman explained the process for reviewing development projects and said that staff provide many comments and require creation of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure with development projects when it can be required. He noted that this is part of why the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan is so important, as this is the primary way that the Subcommittee can influence what is created as it relates to both private development and City projects.

There was notable discussion about the process of development review, given the importance of development in creating bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. It was clarified that the Planning Commission is the primary

City body that reviews certain development proposals prior to decisions being made by Council. Mr. Hartman said that he would reach out to Mr. Alexander in response to his comments.

Mr. Lawrence noted that he has heard previous concerns from Subcommittee members that there is not an official way for the Subcommittee to comment to Council, although he noted that members may comment to Council as individual residents.

Mr. Lawrence asked about alley closings and undeveloped alleys, which he understands is another thing that Planning Commission and Council make decisions regarding. Mr. Hartman said that there were discussions many years ago to identify alleys that could be developed into bicycle and pedestrian paths, but that it may be time to revisit those.

Mr. Craig asked if the STARS study regarding multiple intersections in the City has been completed. Mr. Hartman said that the public survey has wrapped up and that a final report will be available in the coming months.

Adjournment