

**MINUTES
BLOOMINGTON TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, AUGUST 21, 2018 4:00 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
109 EAST OLIVE STREET
BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Angela Ballantini, Ms. Jill Blair, Ms. Maureen (Reenie) Bradley, Ms. Katherine Browne (left at 5:20), Mr. Michael Gorman, Ms. Elizabeth Kooba (arrived at 4:15)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Kelly Rumley

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. Jamie Mathy, Ward 1 Alderman; Ms. Karen Schmidt, Ward 6 Alderman; Ms. Diana Hauman, Ward 8 Alderman; Mr. George Boyle, City Attorney; Assistant Chief Ken Bayes, Police Department; Mr. Jim Karch, Director of Public Works; Mr. Kevin Kothe, City Engineer; Mr. Philip Allyn, City Traffic Engineer; and several members of the public and media.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Gorman called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

2. ROLL CALL: Mr. Allyn called the roll. With five members in attendance, a quorum was established.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

Public Comments were heard from Ms. Surena Fish. Ms. Fish is concerned about long stretches of road, particularly Wood between Center and Morris. There are not many good places to cross the street for the many young children except at the ends. There is also a lot of speeding over the long stretch without stop signs. Cars often have music too loud.

Public Comments were heard from Ms. Pamela Eaton. Ms. Eaton is concerned about wrong way traffic on narrow Evans Street between Oakland and Washington traveling at a fast pace. Requested reinstallation of arrows painted on road indicating correct direction of travel. Also concerned about pedestrian safety at Center and Monroe. Requested stop sign or in-street "Stop for Pedestrians" sign and paint diagonals in crosswalks when street is resurfaced. Elderly have trouble getting across street due to cars speeding up the hill on Center.

Public Comments were heard from Mr. Justin Boyd. Mr. Boyd mentioned Comprehensive Plan references improving walkability to destinations such as schools and parks and increase walkable character in neighborhoods. This is not happening in his neighborhood directly north of Miller Park. Regularly see 45+ mph traffic on MacArthur, which is an arterial road with regular commuters. Mentioned he had worked with Staff to get parking triangles painted on each block, which has helped, but it seems enforcement is still an issue. If cars are not parked in the lane, drivers use the whole width and speed. Walkability is a major part of the Comprehensive Plan. Would like to see a robust discussion of reducing speeding with other strategies in addition to reducing speed limits such as increased use of road diets.

Public Comments were heard from Mr. Brad Williams. Echoed concerns about traffic moving too fast in the wrong direction on Evans.

Public Comments were heard from Ms. Tammy Matthews. Ms. Matthews lives at the curve on 1700 block of West Oakland. There is a problem with cars and motorcycles driving too fast and running off the road going around the curve. It's very dangerous for bikers and walkers along the roadway. Need to trim trees by speed limit signs and requested warning sign for the curve.

Public Comments were heard from Mr. Tony Vandegraft. Mr. Vandegraft is concerned about safety in the City and throughout the County. Other areas of the country have good safety plans. We need to step up and have a safety plan to protect our people. There are problems in 700 block of W. Mulberry with people racing up and down street, loud music and children running across the road. He does his best to help elderly, children and other people be safe.

Public Comments were heard from Mr. Mike McCurdy speaking on behalf of Bike BloNo. Mr. McCurdy requested amending the Bicycle Master Plan to extend the bike route on Washington Street from Lee to the West Side Revitalization Bicycle Co-op at Allin. During the Council final approval vote of the previous amendment to include bike route on East Washington there was discussion and some support to look at this extension west. He requested the Commission work with Staff and Council to seek opportunities to push west and extend marked bike lanes on Washington from Kreitzer to get to Bloomington Cycle and Fitness and the Constitution Trail. Mr. McCurdy requested the paint on the existing bike lanes on Washington that is failing to be repainted so that lanes continue to be clearly marked. Mr. McCurdy thanked the City for including the bike lanes called for in the Bicycle Master Plan as part of the upcoming resurfacing work on Fairway and Regency. Mr. McCurdy mentioned that the in-street “stop for pedestrians” signs recently installed in Normal have made a significant impact on safety for trail users. He would like to see this signs used in Bloomington as well. Consistent signage around the community is important. Mr. McCurdy indicated that Bike BloNo would urge the City to apply for Bicycle Friendly Status from the League of American Bicyclists. A number of surrounding communities have obtained this status, including Normal, which has obtained Bronze Status.

4. MINUTES: Reviewed and approved the minutes of the June 19, 2018 regular meeting of the Bloomington Transportation Commission. Ms. Blair motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Ballantini seconded the motion. The motion was approved by the Transportation Commission unanimously via voice vote.

5. REGULAR AGENDA:

A. TC-2018-02: Funding Mechanisms for Transportation Projects - Update

Mr. Allyn gave an update on the Transportation Funding discussion. He reviewed the current sources of funding. Federal Funds are being used for Fox Creek Road Bridge and Hamilton, Bunn to Commerce projects. Engineering is currently applying for a Safe Routes to School Grant, which is a federal grant program, for a sidewalk replacement and gap-completing project along White Oak Road. This year this program is 100% federal with no local match requirement. The other non-local source of funding is State Motor Fuel Tax funds, which we are currently using for streetlight and traffic signal electricity, the Linden Bridge replacement project and Towanda and Vernon intersection project. We are also using it for the local match on the Federal projects. The final main source of funds in the Local Motor Fuel Tax and Local Sales Tax, which provides the bulk of the source of funds for maintenance work such as the asphalt resurfacing, sidewalk replacements and asphalt rejuvenator contracts. There are also other smaller sources such as TIF and miscellaneous grants.

Mr. Allyn presented graphs showing the square yards of resurfacing completed each year since 1994, a chart illustrating money spent on resurfacing each year since 1994. Discussed how the Local Motor Fuel Tax and Local Sales Tax came were created to establish a regular dedicated stream of funding which is critical to being able to properly plan future maintenance.

Mr. Allyn indicated that Engineering annually evaluates all streets as the resurfacing program is finalized. He discussed the change in pavement rating that has been seen between 2014 following the significant extra funding that year and where we are in 2017. The main take away is that even with the current level of funding, we are at best holding steady. The largest changes were drops at the top end. While these pavements just resurfaced don't hurt us going from “new” to “excellent”, as they continue to age and go from “good” to “fair” and then “fair” to “poor” it will become obvious that we are losing ground.

The next steps in the process will be to determine an updated HMA Aging table to reflect the changes in our maintenance efforts. For example, the increased use of rejuvenator and Stone Matrix Asphalt extend the number years between resurfacing. These new life-cycle ranges are key in determining the amount of money needed to maintain the streets into the future. At that point we'll evaluate the three general scenarios: 1) what level of service and pavement conditions and types can be supported with current funding; 2) what would it cost to provide a high-end, all asphalt in great condition option; and, 3) an option in the middle that is a blend of cheaper pavement types on some streets and maintaining quality asphalt surfaces on major streets with a moderate increase in funding. As part of this analysis is also working to identify potential sources of additional funding.

Ms. Blair asked for additional detail on the HMA Aging Table shown in the presentation. Mr. Allyn indicated it shows how long each type of street (arterial, collector, local, alley) can be expected to maintain a particular pavement rating and is used to determine the average time between resurfacings.

Mr. Gorman stated that more pavement costs more to maintain. Is Staff looking at ways to reduce the quantity of pavement as part of the discussion of bringing street revenues in line with expenses? Mr. Allyn indicated that this would be part of the discussion.

Mr. Gorman mentioned that we are banking MFT funds for the larger projects such as the Hamilton project. As we evaluate and plan new construction projects, are we looking at the future maintenance costs and accounting for it? For example, if adding one block of residential street expected to last 25 years, are we raising revenues 1/25 of that cost each year or setting aside that amount of money into a dedicated fund for that street? Mr. Allyn indicated that it would be impossible to track this on a street-by-street basis. We just look at the streets overall. Mr. Gorman asked for a more detailed analysis of how much it will cost to maintain the streets that we have and any time we are looking at new projects like Hamilton, Bunn to Commerce, to make sure that we are able to pay for it and part of the decision on whether to move forward with the project.

B. TC-2018-02: Discussion of City Speed Limits and Residential Neighborhoods

Mr. Allyn mentioned that this item is to facilitate a general discussion on real or perceived speeding in the City, particularly in our neighborhoods. There is background information in the packet on what our Code currently says, our current policy for setting speed limits, the applicable state laws, etc. If there is anything specific that this discussion leads to, Staff will complete research and provide recommendations for action.

Ms. Bradley thanked the residents that came to speak and express their concerns. It seems that some of this appears to be enforcement issues. Where do we go from here with regard to enforcement? Mr. Allyn indicated that when a complaint of speeding is received, first we gather speed data for the street to see if there is an actual problem or if it's just perception. If there is a speeding problem, we check to see if the street qualifies for traffic calming measures following our adopted and published traffic calming policy. If it does not qualify, we will refer the location to Assistant Chief Bays for increased enforcement.

AC Bays indicated that they have several options. They can do something as simple as a radar detail where they deploy an officer to run radar. With limited resources, it's very hard to be all over the City at all times. We do not currently have a traffic division within the department, so when traffic enforcement is needed, other officers are pulled off of their areas when calls are low. We supplement where we can with other ways such as with the use of radar signs such as the one permanently placed on South Main Street. They analyze traffic to determine the number of speeders based on time of day, etc. so that resources can be assigned in the most beneficial way based on rates of violation. Another option is to do a large media blitz such as was done last spring on Ireland Grove Road where the public was notified that there would be increased enforcement. Usually the numbers of actual speeders doesn't match the complaints. Often just creating a visual presence is enough to reduce speeding.

Mr. Gorman mentioned that he believes that the radar signs often affect behavior because it's a visible sign. AC Bays indicated that often the displays are turned off to help with this, but the sign still gathers data.

Mr. Gorman expressed his belief that the streets in Bloomington are not safe for anyone outside of a car. Vehicle speeds are a primary factor in that in that he believes that most of the streets are overbuilt for a traditional urban context. He believes most of the information in the packet is barely relevant to the discussion. For example, the Illinois Vehicle Code focused more on location-by-location changes rather than changing the City-wide speed limits. The same for the MUTCD and FHWA excerpts. What specific regulations are we required to follow when determining a new City-wide standard speed limit? Mr. Allyn indicated that we may not have that answer right now but we can research it. Mr. Boyle confirmed that we would need to do some research and would come back with that information for the next part of the discussion.

Mr. Gorman stated that he questions the relevance of documentation from the Federal Highway Administration or IDOT Manuals related to the State Highway system to our context. We are a City designing our streets for an urban and suburban context and not rural areas. In his opinion, streets need to be designed not for cars whizzing by from point A to point B but first and foremost for the neighborhoods that they are part of. What he has seen from IDOT and FHWA do not have neighborhood impact as their primary focus. He prefers to look at the advice of the National Association of City Transportation Officials, or NACTO. He looked at the NACTO Urban Street Guide which talks about things critical to our discussion about speed limits and street design. NACTO recommends first setting a target speed, then designing the street to force drivers to adhere to that speed, and then posting the speed limit at that speed. This is different than choosing a design speed based on a highway standards recommendation, measuring the 85th percentile speed, and then posting the speed limit at the speed drivers travel. NACTO recommends that arterials should be designed for 35 mph, collectors for 30 mph and residential for 20mph. It would take a really long time to rebuild all of our streets under this new model. If the Commission as a policy making body were to recommend a fundamental change to the way that our streets are designed, would staff be willing to look at ways to change our streets to enforce the expected behavior set through a speed limit reduction. For example, would staff be open to a discussion about a more liberal traffic calming policy where if a street is shown to have a large amount of speeding that we could look at treatments such as curb extensions, lane narrowing, crosswalk medians and other measures that address driver behavior, especially on collector and arterial streets. Mr. Allyn indicated that Staff would likely be open to that on a case-by-case basis if not larger scale. A lot of the stuff that we are currently doing already accounts for this. For example, we are constructing curb extensions and crosswalk medians in high pedestrian areas as we redo streets such as on Front Street. A major factor in implementing these changes comes down to cost. If the discussion is on how new streets are built, that is easier. A lot of these changes in design philosophy have been happening on facilities built in recent decades. Subdivisions are currently laid out with curvy streets and "t" intersections that don't allow people to get up to the higher speeds. There isn't a straight residential street that allows non-residents to easily pass through the subdivision, so they tend to stay on the major streets rather than local streets. The streets that we are talking about having speeding problems are in the older parts of town constructed in a grid system with long straight stretches of streets where people can accelerate to higher speeds. When the discussion turns to arterials, the discussion changes. The purpose of arterials is to convey traffic. If all the streets in town were local residential streets, there wouldn't be a way for people to get around town in a suburban type community like we have as opposed to an urban neighborhood like is found in Chicago. When we are doing our maintenance work, we do look at ways to slow people down, whether it's installing curb extensions or changing lane markings to reduce a 4-lane road to a 3-lane road. Again though we are often limited by the funding that's available to us.

Mr. Gorman indicated he wasn't completely in agreement with the statement regarding the recent subdivision model and curvy streets slowing speeding. Maybe curvy streets slow drivers somewhat, but

they are also incredibly wide with buildings set way back providing a crazy amount of visibility increasing driver comfort reducing the impact of the curviness on reducing speeds.

Mr. Gorman responded to the comment that arterials' primary purpose is to convey traffic by expressing that every street in Bloomington Normal should be there to serve it's neighborhood. We need arterials to convey traffic, but they also need to be safe and comfortable for the people that live near them. We seem to be designing them heavy on the convey traffic and lighter on the neighborhood side. He asked that we consider changing the design speed for arterial streets and changing the policy on traffic calming to address that new design speed.

Ms. Blair inquired about the NACTO Urban Street Design Guide. Mr. Gorman indicated it was available on Amazon. Mr. Allyn mentioned that Public Works has a copy available as well if anyone wanted to look through it.

Ms. Bradley asked about how specific issues move forward. For example, the issues that were brought up today regarding trees blocking signs, wrong way traffic on Evans and speeding on MacArthur and Wood. Mr. Allyn indicated that if there is a problem, the easiest way to make us aware of it by submitting an email to traffic@cityblm.org, submit a request via the website or app, or submitting the Non-Emergency Complaint/Request form found on the City's website and available in person at Public Works. Once we know about a problem, we can address it. For example, if trees need trimmed, we contact the Parks Department and have them trim them. We can't see every street every day, so if there is something that needs addressed such as a tree trimming or replacing a faded sign, let us know and we'll get it taken care of. If it something more complex that requires data gathering to make an informed decision, we'll start that process to determine potential solutions and then narrow them down to the best one.

Ms. Bradley asked why the Hershey Road speed limit change went to council. How is it decided when to change a speed limit on a section of street? Mr. Allyn indicated that for Hershey Road, there was a speeding complaint and per the policy, a speed limit was completed. The 85th percentile speed was approximately 42 mph, which is consistent with a 40 mph posted speed limit. Based on the policy, state law, and MUTCD requirements (which are legally required to be followed), the options then were to leave it posted at 40 mph or reduce it to the statutory speed. Since this was a decision about deviating from the established policy, it went specifically to Council as a separate item. Any time there is a change from the statutory speed, City Code would need to be updated. For minor changes, it would be brought to the Commission with other routine changes for a recommendation. If the Commission agrees, it would go to Council.

Mr. Gorman inquired about the next steps. He would like to see a blanket lowering of the speed limit around the community. What is that process? Mr. Allyn indicated that if the majority of the Commission wanted to pursue a reduction in the statutory speed limit, we would do the research into the legal aspects and process to make a change. We would look into the financial impacts, enforcement issues, etc. and bring the information back to the Commission with a recommendation for the Commission to vote on for a recommendation to Council.

Ms. Browne indicated that a lot of the information presented in the packet was new information. A lot of what we are dealing with is a change in culture. Either a change in culture about complete streets and multi-modal transportation as an important issue or where everyone is going to work every day. If there are other ways to think about this and how the decisions are being made, it's a good opportunity to think about the situation holistically. Ms. Browne isn't opposed to thinking about an overall speed limit change, but we need to look at it from other angles. There is a lot of information to cover.

Ms. Blair agreed that there is a lot of information. Is there a working group that we can have or speakers available to help take in everything to be able to make a decision on items? There doesn't seem to be a specific item that we are being asked to do. Ms. Browne agreed that it wasn't clear what the most

important information was and the direction that we are heading. Mr. Allyn confirmed that the intent of the discussion today was to identify a direction in which to go within the broader context of the issue of speeding in our residential neighborhoods. Without knowing where we would go, the packet was intended to contain just some basic information laying out the status quo. As the discussion narrows, Staff would prepare information focused within that narrowed area, for example lowering the statutory speed limit.

Mr. Karch asked that as this issue is framed out, to keep in mind that there are differences between professional recommendations versus policy decisions. There is some overlap. We would not professionally support a policy that results in people speeding 50 mph in a 25. For example, there is professional latitude when it comes to lowering a statutory speed limit to 25. There nothing professionally that precludes saying it's right or wrong. It comes down to enforcement and the practicality of the change. Council has given direction through the Complete Streets policy, Bicycle Master Plan and other actions to encourage Staff to implement changes, which we have already done numerous times. As we move forward, the Commission will continue to refine the framework and provide recommendations to the Council to direct the Staff. There has been some direction through the Complete Streets policy and Bicycle Master Plan that Staff has been implementing as opportunities present themselves. Council has shown that this discussion is a priority. It's not meant to be definitive today, it should to continue. Mr. Allyn will provide information and profession recommendations to guide the shaping of the larger policy.

Ms. Blair asked if we should expect to see this topic on future agendas. Mr. Allyn indicated that it would be coming for several more meetings and if there is something specific that you would like more information on, please let me know.

Ms. Bradley stated that we need to hear from the rest of the community such at the police who are responsible for enforcement, the schools and Connect Transit who base their routes on 30 mph, and commuters. Is this going to be a blanket change where every road will change to 25 or 30 mph? Mr. Allyn stated that if we are talking about changing the statutory speed, which is the default unless otherwise posted speed, then roads posted something else won't change. For example, Ireland Grove is currently posted at 45 and would stay that way.

Ms. Browne mentioned that we can't be the only community dealing with this. Are there case studies of other communities that have dealt with this type of change? What did they deal with, what factors did they consider, etc.

Ms. Kooba asked if there was any information available on noise pollution with regard to speed.

Ms. Ballantini asked about costs. There will be additional costs for new signs, etc. What is the offset, is it reduced police effort? Would it be more cost effective to post signage in higher risk specific locations like by the park as opposed to changing the entire community? Mr. Allyn indicated that this is one area of research that would be needed to be completed.

Mr. Gorman indicated that in his hometown, they implemented a changed statutory speed limit by posting signs on major streets on the edge of the community, which in the grand scheme of transportation costs, is a small cost. Lowering the speed limit is more about safety. When a pedestrian is hit by a car at 20 mph, they have a 90% chance of surviving, at 30 mph is around 50%, at 40 mph, the probability of survival is 10%. The costs of some signs placed around town is far less than the cost of lost lives. Mr. Allyn responded that he wasn't implying that this change would be cost prohibitive because of some signs, but simply stating that this was the example of the type of information that we would be gathering to help the future discussion.

Ms. Bradley asked if we have a problem with pedestrians being hit by cars. Are we throwing a solution where there isn't a problem? Maybe it's it a road design issue. By lowering the speed limit all over town, would we be creating a problem? Mr. Allyn said that there likely are areas around the City where there is

a speeding issue and when it's in a residential area there is a potential for pedestrian accidents. There are also areas of the City where there aren't pedestrians and those areas should be treated differently.

Mr. Allyn stated that it's also very important to note that there is a huge difference in changing a posted speed limit and changing the actual travel speed. If changing the speed limit doesn't change the speed at which drivers drive, then you won't see the gains in safety. Ms. Bradley concurred. Would changing the speed limits be effective at changing the travel speed? Mr. Allyn said that then leads to the discussion about what other means are available to reduce travel speed, such as a more liberal traffic calming policy.

Mr. Karch commented that another alternative to consider is pursuing a recommendation to add police officers and re-establish a traffic enforcement division. AC Bays indicated that additional police officers would always be welcomed. He confirmed that it has been some time since there was a traffic enforcement division and when we did it 3 or 4 patrol officers and a Sergeant. However, the needs of standard patrol calls have grown to where traffic enforcement officers would likely be pulled onto patrol. If the decision were made for a blanket reduction in posted speed, it would create an expectation of enforcement of the new speed. We would find a way to meet this expectation, but it would be difficult.

Mr. Gorman stated that enforcement is important as part of the discussion and recognizes that his primary solution to speeding of changing the engineering costs a lot and takes a long time. However, it does tend to result in longer, more consistent, positive impacts on speeding.

Mr. Allyn reminded everyone that if there were any requests for topics following the meeting, feel free to email them and they can be included in the next round of discussion.

C. Information: June/July Citizen Comments/Complaints Summary

Mr. Gorman requested any questions or comments. There was none.

6. OLD BUSINESS: None

7. NEW BUSINESS: None

8. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:

Ms. Browne appreciates all the comments this afternoon and thanks the Commission for creating an environment where citizens know that they can come and we'll take their comments seriously.

Ms. Bradley asked for some commentary in the future on impacts the post office relocation will have on traffic. There were a number of issues with vehicles existing the site merging across Fairway Drive. Is there an anticipated date for the move? Mr. Allyn indicated that we have received some preliminary site plans and have been discussing impacts with the Post Office. There will be more information coming next month.

Ms. Blair requested that the packets be made available sooner given the volume of material. It would even be preferable to get partial sections as they are ready rather than waiting until the entire packet is ready.

Mr. Gorman asked about the request during public comment about amending the Bicycle Master Plan to include West Washington. Mr. Allyn indicated that Staff would start reviewing this. In the Bicycle Master Plan, it does say the plan should be reviewed every couple years. It might make sense to discuss not going through the formal amendment process for every small change but waiting and grouping several small changes together and doing one larger amendment periodically. If the requested accommodation could be incorporated via pavement markings, signage, etc. it could still be done without formally amending the master plan. Mr. Gorman indicated that this extended segment has been talked about for a while.

Mr. Gorman asked if we are moving forward with applying for Bicycle Friendly Status. Mr. Allyn indicated that we are looking hard at this. Mr. Karch stated it's something that we want to do, but want to do a couple more things so that we can get a better rating.

Mr. Allyn mentioned that next month we would be voting on the 2019 meeting schedule. Please let me know if there are any issues with continuing with the Third Tuesday of the month pattern.

9. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 5:29 pm unanimously by voice vote; motioned by Ms. Bradley and seconded by Ms. Blair.

Respectfully,

Philip Allyn
City Traffic Engineer