

**MINUTES
BLOOMINGTON TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
TUESDAY, JUNE 19, 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, Mr. Michael Gorman, Ms. Elizabeth Kooba

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Kelly Rumley

OTHERS PRESENT: Mr. George Boyle, City Attorney; Mr. Jim Karch, Director of Public Works; Mr. Kevin Kothe, City Engineer; Mr. Philip Allyn, City Traffic Engineer; and several members of the public.

1. CALL TO ORDER: Mr. Gorman called the meeting to order at 4:01 pm.

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

3. PUBLIC COMMENT:

No Public Comments were heard.

4. MINUTES: Reviewed and approved the minutes of the May 15, 2018 regular meeting of the Bloomington Transportation Commission. Ms. Blair motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Kooba seconded the motion. The motion was approved by the Transportation Commission unanimously via voice vote.

5. REGULAR AGENDA:

A. Information: Proposed Improvements: Front Street between East and Madison

Mr. Allyn mentioned that there was an Open House for the proposed Front Street improvements and asked for any comments or questions. Mr. Gorman inquired about general feedback received at the Open House. Mr. Allyn stated that comments received verbally were positive and the project was well received. There was support for the removal of the signals and the concepts that were presented.

Ms. Blair noted from the packet that of the comments received were around 70% supportive. Were there any specific concerns from those opposed of which we should be aware? Mr. Allyn indicated that the most common concern was related to the ability of people to cross Front Street without a button to push to stop cars. This has been mitigated with the various features that are being incorporated. The all-way stop at Center Street will allow crossings at that intersection. The raised center medians and the curb bump-outs at each intersection will mean that pedestrians will only need to cross about 14 feet of pavement with traffic from one direction at a time. In addition, at Main Street, we are looking at installing pedestrian crossing signs with a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) controlled by a product called Blinker Beam. This provides a pushbutton that will activate the RRFB flashing LED's which will give an active warning to drivers that there are pedestrians crossing. One thing that we noticed during the test last week was that most people were stopping when pedestrians were in the crosswalk, which is the law in Illinois. In extreme cases, there will also still be signalized crossings one block in either direction at East and at Madison.

Ms. Blair asked if there was outreach done specifically to disability advocate organizations in addition to the general public. Mr. Allyn indicated that we are still in the process of this. Several comments have

been heard about whether the busses parking with their engines running will keep the visually impaired from hearing when and where traffic is moving that we'll be looking into.

Mr. Allyn indicated that this whole project has been moving quickly and we are still working out design details. For example, the red area in the northwest corner at Center still is an unknown. It may be just pavement markings or stamped colored concrete, or something in between. The key will be having something that contrasts with the black asphalt to visually provide the narrowing effect of the bump outs to calm traffic, while remaining flush to allow southbound right buses to make the turn without hopping up on the curb. Similarly, the wider crosswalks may be a typical high-visibility marking in thermoplastic or a more expensive decorative crosswalk with an artistic pattern. As the costs are determined, these details will be worked out to keep the project within budget.

Mr. Gorman asked about the costs of the RRFB's. Mr. Allyn indicated that he had not yet received back the quote for these signs. He has used them before on two previous projects and they are more expensive than a basic sign due to the Blinker Beam and push buttons; however, they are not crazy expensive and should be significantly less than \$20,000. The crosswalk signs will be installed regardless, but if costs are excessively high, the buttons and RRFB's may be dropped or downgraded to a simpler LED outlined sign. Mr. Gorman mentioned that the only other place he has seen them in town is on College Avenue in Uptown at maybe Broadway, and the buttons are rarely if ever used. That is a different setup though with higher traffic speeds and no center median. His main concerns are spending money on something that won't be used and whether it will have an impact on cars. Mr. Allyn indicated that a number of comments that we received during the initial feedback period were from people who either thought that the current buttons weren't working or that they took too long when they did work. That was due to the inherent delay of 8-12 seconds from when the button is pushed to getting a walk signal to allow the opposing walk signal to change to a flashing don't walk, then to cycle through a yellow light for the cars, and then finally a walk signal to cross Front Street. This delay often discouraged the use of the signals by pedestrians. With the RRFB, they will activate instantly upon the button being pushed, which should increase their usefulness. In addition, even if they are not used as much, they will still be an option for those who need them, such as slower walkers.

Mr. Gorman asked if the RRFB's will communicate with each other. Mr. Allyn indicated that was the primary advantage of the Blinker Beam system. The Blinker Beam product will allow the RRFB's on each side of the street to talk with each other so that when the button on one side of the street is pushed, the RRFB's for both directions will flash. At Main Street, there will be two signs facing each direction, with one on each side of the street (four total) and they will all flash simultaneously once a button is pushed.

Ms. Bradley asked how far the crossing distance was from the curb to the center islands. Mr. Allyn indicated that it would be about 14 feet, which is only about 6-7 steps. The center island is about 12 feet wide, so once a pedestrian crosses one lane, they have a safe area where they can shift their attention to traffic coming from the opposite direction before making a second short 14-foot crossing. Ms. Bradley stated that these center islands were the key feature of the improvements that changes the street for the positive, especially for slow walkers. Do the signs have an audio component? Mr. Allyn indicated that he wasn't sure if they had a similar beeping sound with activated like are at some traffic signs but could find out.

Mr. Allyn mentioned that since the center islands provide an easier crossing, the legs with the islands will have the major, wider crosswalks where most pedestrians are encouraged to cross. At Main Street, this east side of the intersection crosswalk aligns with pedestrians exiting the Lincoln Parking Deck and walking north to downtown locations as well as workers traveling between the Government Center and the Law and Justice Building. Regular crosswalks will also be provided on the opposite legs of each intersection (west leg at Main, east leg at Center) for those pedestrians who are comfortable crossing Front Street without the enhanced accommodations. In addition, one thing that has been noticed is that there is very

little crosswalk and pushbutton usage currently; indicating people are generally comfortable crossing the street already with the relatively lower traffic volumes and speeds. However, with the planter box locations, we are attempting to focus them to a more defined point of crossing which helps drivers know where to expect pedestrians to be. It's everyone's responsibility to pay attention when there are two conflicting modes, whether it's cars, bikes or pedestrians, but the more expectations are standardized the easier it is for all.

Mr. Allyn indicated that a vote is not anticipated with this item; the intent is to provide an opportunity for the Commission to provide feedback on the project. In addition, there is a fair amount of information provided in the packets on features such as curb bump outs that, while applicable to this particular project, also pertains to a lot of the sidewalk work that we are continuing to do in the downtown area. Assuming that there are no red flags with this project and its features, Staff will continue to move in this direction as a general practice.

Ms. Blair asked if there was a schedule for this work. Mr. Allyn indicated that the anticipated start date was not known since a number of design details still needed to be worked out and our contractors were currently working in other locations around the City. This work is going to be completed under the annual sidewalk program and the resurfacing program. These projects are set up with general locations of work, but they are bid using pay items. For example, the contractor provides a price for a square foot of sidewalk and a foot of curb that we can then apply where needed. The next step in our process is to determine how to fit what we want to construct into those various pay items and the existing budgets so that we don't need to pull money away from other projects that are just as needed. There was extensive sidewalk work already planned for these three blocks, so this new work is just an extension of that work. For example, with the resurfacing, we will need to upgrade the sidewalk ramps to meet current ADA requirements, so this proposed work just changes how those ramps are re-done. We anticipate this work starting in the late summer or early fall.

B. Information: May Citizen Comments/Complaints Summary

Mr. Gorman requested comments. Ms. Blair mentioned that several items state that signs are scheduled to be installed on or after a particular date and asked if that has been completed. Mr. Allyn indicated that the typical process for sign work is that the Engineering Department marks the location in the field and completes a work order for the sign crews. The same is true for specific pavement marking work (cross walks, etc.). Once the crews receive the work order, they fit it in among their other work as quickly as they can. If there is something that needs to be completed on a specific day such as traffic signal ahead warning signs being installed on the day that the signals are activated, then it is mentioned in the work order and scheduled appropriately. The signs on Dunraven have been installed. Mr. Allyn did not believe that the signs on Westport have been installed.

Ms. Bradley asked about the method of submission for most of the comments/complaints/requests. Mr. Allyn indicated that most within the last month (maybe 60%?) have come from the online system via the app or City website. Another maybe 25-30% have come via the Non-Emergency Request Form submitted by email or direct email comments to traffic@cityblm.org. A handful came via mail or drop-off of the Non-Emergency Request Form completed by hand. Maybe one or two came via phone call.

C. Information: Misc. Updates and Information: I-AA Drive Resurfacing, City Transportation Project Funding Overview Discussion

Mr. Allyn indicated that the City would be milling and overlaying I-AA Drive this summer starting approximately at Bandanas and extending up past Country Companies to Vernon Avenue. The most of the current street is 30 feet wide from face of curb to face of curb and marked with two 15-foot wide lanes. There are a number of driveways along this section. We intend to remark it after the overlay with three lanes at 10-foot wide each with a center turn lane. The City standard is 11-foot lanes, so these will be a bit narrower. We are gathering existing speed information with the 15-foot lanes and following construction, we'll get updated data with the 10-foot lanes. We'll measure speeds again after a year or

two. This will allow us to have real world local data on how lane width affects travel speeds both in the near-term right after implementation and long-term after drivers have become accustomed to the change. We anticipate speeds dropping initially. We are interested to see if that decrease occurs and whether it holds or creeps back up.

Mr. Gorman asked how the speed data would be gathered. Mr. Allyn indicated that we have on-pavement devices called Bluestars that measure changes in inductance as large metal objects (cars) pass over them that are able to provide both count and speed data. They are not quite as exact as radar, but are reliable. They are commonly used to determine the average daily traffic counts statewide. They look like a small black piece of rubber flat on the road and are not noticeable to most drivers. We are not using the large radar “your speed is...” boards that would impact how fast drivers are traveling. The Bluestars are anonymous and do not have any way to connect a measured speed to a specific vehicle.

Mr. Allyn provided a status update on the funding discussion. As Staff started evaluating how to compile and present the data to determine needed funding levels for various levels of service, we thought it best to update a number of the tracking and analysis tools to include pricing from the past several years as well as the effects of the rejuvenator that we have begun to use more extensively. By having this data updated with current costs, we can have a more fruitful discussion based on good information which we feel is worth the additional time. This has been moving forward, but not as quickly as we would like given that it is construction season which brings competing priorities. Mr. Allyn hoped to be ready for the next part of the discussion in the next 2-3 weeks, but mentioned that it will still be construction season. Mr. Gorman confirmed the delay was worthwhile to have good information with the scope and importance of the discussion to be had.

6. OLD BUSINESS: None

7. NEW BUSINESS: None

8. COMMISSIONER COMMENTS: None

9. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 4:26 pm unanimously by voice vote; motioned by Ms. Blair and seconded by Ms. Browne.

Respectfully,

Philip Allyn
City Traffic Engineer