

URBANA TRAFFIC COMMISSION
Tuesday, October 10, 2017

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Craig Shonkwiler, Assistant City Engineer
Bryant Seraphin, Deputy Chief of Police

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Harold "Dean" Hazen, City Council Member, Ward 6, Chair

OTHERS PRESENT:

John Collins, Operations Manager, City of Urbana
Rose Curtiss, Urbana School District #116, Crossing Guard Coordinator
Dorothy Neumann, 301 West Griggs
Jay Rank, Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District
C. Cail-Lewandowski, Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School
Jared Miller, City Council Member, Ward 7

The meeting began at 4:00 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

Bryant Seraphin moved to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2017, meeting. Craig Shonkwiler seconded the motion. The Commission voted 2-0 to approve the minutes of the August meeting.

Additions to the agenda:

There were no additions to the agenda.

Public Input

Those wishing to provide input did so as items were discussed.

Unfinished Business

There was no unfinished business.

New Business

Item #1- Discussion of parking at 301 West Griggs Street.

Dorothy Neumann discussed her concern with the driveway at 301 West Griggs Street frequently being blocked by parked vehicles. She noted that motorists often parked directly behind the sign, which placed the car in front of her driveway. She said that she had contacted Parking Enforcement and the Police Department when this had happened. At least one time, Ms. Neumann stated that she had to drive in the yard to get out of her garage. She mentioned that her neighbor, James Kelly, had

recommended moving the No Parking Here to Corner signage farther west to keep motorists from parking in front of her driveway. She asked if the City would move the sign to the west side of her driveway to keep motorists from blocking her driveway.

Craig Shonkwiler stated that Mr. Kelly had spoken with him about the parking problem. He explained that there used to be a driveway west of 301 West Griggs Street that had since been removed. He said that the suggestion to move the sign to the west of the driveway could be done. He asked Ms. Neumann if she knew whether the motorists lived nearby.

Ms. Neumann said that one motorist she observed attended Adult Education classes at the Urbana School District #116 Administrative Offices on Race Street.

Mr. Shonkwiler said there was an ordinance that addressed parking in front of driveways, but motorists were disregarding the ordinance.

Dorothy Neumann asked when she might expect the sign to be moved.

Mr. Shonkwiler stated that going beyond the established distance might require an ordinance. He said the sign should be moved by November.

Craig Shonkwiler made a motion to relocate the No Parking Here to Corner signage to the west of the driveway at 301 West Griggs Street.

Bryant Seraphin seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 2-0.

A work order will be prepared to change the location of the sign.

Ms. Neumann said that she would continue to place orange cones in front of her driveway to keep access available.

Item #2- Discussion of request for pedestrian crosswalk on Lynn Street at Eliot Drive.

Rose Curtiss reviewed discussions she has with the principal at Yankee Ridge Elementary School regarding students crossing on Lynn Street near Eliot Drive. She mentioned that some pedestrian traffic moved to the southeast corner of the school property when the school district installed an asphalt walkway from the playground to Lynn Street. In her discussion with the principal, there was a concern about students crossing at that location with the amount of vehicular traffic on Lynn Street. She said that she did not believe that the intersection would meet the standards for the installation of the crosswalk, but she thought there might be a way to make the crossing safer with signage and a stop sign on Eliot Drive at Lynn Street.

Craig Shonkwiler mentioned that a resident, Mr. Bengtson, had expressed concerns to the Mayor about the students crossing at Lynn Street near Eliot Drive. Mr. Shonkwiler observed the location before and after school. He noted that there were no sidewalk facilities near the school district path. In the morning, he observed 15 vehicles dropping off students on Lynn Street, three students walking across Lynn Street, and a parent and student bicycling across Lynn Street. In the afternoon, he expressed concern about the bus parking next to the asphalt path since it blocked the view of pedestrians and motorists, not necessarily associated with student pick-up, travelling Lynn Street. During the afternoon dismissal, he observed students coming into the street, motorists making U-turns after picking up students, and a student nearly being hit by a turning vehicle. Regarding the installation of marked crosswalks, Mr. Shonkwiler explained that with no sidewalks along Lynn Street, the installation of crosswalks would not be recommended since pedestrians could not be directed to an access point on the other side of the street. He noted that the installation of a crosswalk did not guarantee a safe area to cross. He added that the particular location was problematic since there was no sidewalk on the other side of road. He asked if the Commission would consider a trial solution to see if a plan could be implemented during the construction of the school. He recommended reviewing the effectiveness of the plan within three months to determine further action.

Craig Shonkwiler moved to install a temporary pedestrian crossing warning sign and a temporary parking restriction sign on Lynn Street near of the terminus of the asphalt walkway at the Yankee Ridge Elementary School and a stop sign on Eliot Drive at Lynn Street during a 90-day trial period under the authority of the Public Works Director.

Mr. Shonkwiler also recommended moving the school zone signage closer to Mumford Drive for southbound traffic so motorists would be alerted to the possibility of students in that area.

Rose Curtiss said she would follow up with the school district and the bus service to determine whether the bus should be loading students on Lynn Street.

Jay Rank said that MTD buses had been re-routed to Lynn Street as part of the Yankee Ridge construction plan during the beginning and end of the school day since Anderson Street was a one-way street at those times of the day.

Craig Shonkwiler said that the signage would be reviewed after the trial period. He said that the parking restrictions would be temporary while construction was underway.

Ms. Curtiss said that students might cross there after the construction was completed.

Mr. Shonkwiler said that the Safe Routes to School map directs students to walk on Mumford Drive and Anderson Street and not to walk on Lynn Street.

Bryant Seraphin stated that students needed to be educated about where to walk.

Rose Curtiss said that safety patrol would work with students next year after the construction was done. She felt the signage would be helpful to warn motorists to be aware of schoolchildren in the area. She said the school district would emphasize safely crossing the street with their students.

Craig Shonkwiler asked that parents be encouraged not to make U-turns on Lynn Street.

Bryant Seraphin seconded the motion.

The motion was approved 2-0.

The Urbana Traffic Commission following the 90-day trial period will review this item.

Item #3- Discussion of traffic control at Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School, 1108 Fairview Avenue.

Craig Shonkwiler explained that the City was contacted when Fairview Avenue was closed without any advanced warning.

Christina Cail-Lewandowski, principal at King Elementary School, said that faculty, staff and parents asked to implement a new traffic plan. She stated she observed parents picking up students in the north parking lot and on the street. In the north parking lot, she noted parents were making U-turns with little room to do so. On Fairview Avenue, she said parents were double-parked waiting to pick up students. She observed students running into the parking lot and in front of cars on Fairview Avenue to get to their parents' cars. Ms. Cail-Lewandowski spoke with Superintendent Don Owen and implemented a traffic plan to remedy the problem. She did state that she did not notify City staff about the plan, but she did ask the Police Department for assistance.

Bryant Seraphin asked where the flaggers were located.

As part of the parking plan, Ms. Cail-Lewandowski said that flaggers were located at the intersections of Fairview Avenue and Harvey Street and Fairview Avenue and Goodwin Avenue.

Deputy Chief Seraphin asked what instructions the flaggers were given when implementing the plan. He stated that he was not comfortable with traffic being restricted.

Ms. Cail-Lewandowski stated that the flaggers were not closing the street, but trying to direct parents and other traffic.

Craig Shonkwiler discussed his observations and noted that the flagger on Fairview Avenue near Harvey Street was telling motorists to turn around and not to continue in front of the school. He was concerned because instructing motorists to turn around left them with no other option except to make U-turns. He was concerned that the buses stopped on Fairview Avenue had their stop paddles extended, which confused motorists since they did not know if it was permissible to pass the buses or if they needed to stop until the paddles were retracted. He added that the action was disruptive to the MTD buses running their routes along Fairview Avenue. Lastly, he mentioned that the flagger on Goodwin Avenue would not allow traffic to travel eastbound on Fairview Avenue at Goodwin Avenue.

Jay Rank was concerned that the MTD drivers encountered the First Student buses with their paddles extended so the MTD buses could not move on their scheduled routes.

Deputy Chief Seraphin said that having the stop paddle extended on the buses while the buses were in the pull-off area was very confusing for motorists. He asked why the buses were not loading and unloading in the area along the west side of the school as the original traffic plan was designed.

Rose Curtiss said that the First Student buses should not have the stop paddles extended unless the buses are actually loading or unloading students.

Christine Cail-Lewandowski said she was working with the bus drivers to reduce the delay between loading the buses and the buses leaving the school.

John Collins commented that it would be safer if the four to five school buses moved to the drive off Goodwin Avenue for loading and unloading students since the drive would remove the buses from the street.

Craig Shonkwiler observed that the flaggers were looking out for students, but stopping traffic was resulting in unsafe traffic maneuvers near the school. He added that the flaggers were, in effect, closing the street by stopping cars and making motorists turn around.

Bryant Seraphin suggested that parents use Fairview Avenue for picking up and dropping off students and that no parents be allowed in the north parking lot so that area could be dedicated to school bus traffic only.

Rose Curtiss said that it was safer to separate the parents picking up/dropping off from the buses loading/unloading so keeping the buses in the driveway and north parking lot and the parents on Fairview Avenue would be safest. She emphasized the importance of allowing students to cross Fairview Avenue at the intersections of Harvey Street and Goodwin Avenue and not midblock.

Christina Cail-Lewandowski asked if a crosswalk could be install on Goodwin Avenue at Dublin Street.

Rose Curtiss pointed out that there was a crossing guard at Goodwin Avenue and Beslin Street, so students should cross Goodwin Avenue at Beslin Street. She did not think it was wise to encourage crossings at that location since Goodwin Avenue traffic did not stop at that intersection.

Bryant Seraphin recommended that the bus students be dismissed on the west side of the school and walkers and riders be dropped off and picked up on Fairview Avenue.

Craig Shonkwiler agreed that the buses should load in the west driveway and that no parents should be in the north parking lot during drop-off and pick-up times.

Christina Cail-Lewandowski expressed concern about parents double-parking in front of the school on Fairview Avenue.

Bryant Seraphin urged Ms. Cail-Lewandowski to contact the Police Department and they would ticket those who were double-parking.

Mr. Shonkwiler stated that the road should not be closed.

Discussion followed about the possibility of one-way traffic on Fairview Avenue. It was agreed that students should not cross in front of parked or moving vehicles.

Rose Curtiss said that it was important to keep traffic moving and parents should avoid delays when dropping off or picking up students.

Jared Miller asked if there was a staggered dismissal for students.

Ms. Cail-Lewandowski said that bus students were dismissed prior to the dismissal of walkers and riders.

Craig Shonkwiler recommended that the school district meet with city staff to develop a plan that does not close the street and yet provides an orderly dismissal plan for traffic.

Ms. Cail-Lewandowski asked if a crosswalk on Goodwin Avenue at Beslin Street was feasible.

Craig Shonkwiler suggested that Ms. Cail-Lewandowski make a request for City staff to study the intersection to make a recommendation for traffic control at Goodwin Avenue and Beslin Street.

Ms. Cail-Lewandowski said that she would wait until a traffic plan was developed.

Jay Rank asked that the First Student bus drivers be instructed to use the stop arm only when loading and unloading students so traffic can flow smoothly.

Bryant Seraphin said that if an unsafe situation should arise, contact the Urbana Police Department. He emphasized that the street should not be blocked. Deputy Chief Seraphin said that the staged release of students was part of a good plan. He encouraged the school to meet with city staff to develop a traffic plan.

Item #3- Discussion of traffic control at Fairview Avenue and Harvey Street.

Craig Shonkwiler reviewed a request by State Representative Carol Ammons for the installation of a four-way stop at the intersection of Fairview Avenue and Harvey Street. Mr. Shonkwiler reviewed the criteria for installing stop signs and noted that the intersection did not meet any of the criteria. He noted that traffic signals were not warranted at that intersection, less than five crashes had occurred during the period from 2011 until July 2017 (only one crash had occurred), and the volume on neither street was sufficient to warrant the installation of a four-way stop at the intersection.

Mr. Shonkwiler recommended that no action be taken based upon the result of the study.

The Commission approved the recommendation 2-0.

Ms. Cail-Lewandowski asked if changes in the traffic plan around King School would impact that decision.

Mr. Shonkwiler said that is was doubtful, as the number of vehicles was too low.

With no other business at hand, the meeting was adjourned at 5:11 p.m.

The next regularly scheduled Traffic Commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, November 14, 2017, at 4:00 p.m. at the Urbana Public Works Department, 706 Glover Avenue, second floor conference room.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Stiehl
Recording Secretary